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MAIDJAD
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Our esteemed referees review each article submitted to evaluate the quality of research and relevance to the development of academia, and for accessibility of such a paper to local and international audiences

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THE ART OF PRINTING: THE SUBSTRATE AS A CREATIVE CANVAS

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Abstract
Printing is usually discussed in terms of technology, aesthetics, and communication (Eisenstein, 1979; Warde, 2009). However, the material surface (the substrate) remains under-examined. This study points out that substrates are not passive carriers but are active canvases that shape meaning, aesthetics, and perception. Through material culture and semiotic lenses, it positions the substrate as a vital component of print design, specifically within Nigeria's hybrid traditional-industrial context. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyses three domains: traditional textiles (e.g., *adire*, *ankara*) that embody cultural narratives; publishing, where paper availability dictates design and access; and emerging uses of substrates in packaging and commercial print production in Lagos, where designers negotiate between imported industrial materials and local improvisations. Findings reveal that Nigerian practitioners treat substrates as central to expression and durability, navigating constraints through innovation. This negotiation fosters a unique design culture where substrates become sites of dialogue between tradition and modernity, scarcity and creativity. By reframing the substrate as a creative agent, this research contributes to design theory and practice, advocating for greater substrate literacy in Nigerian design education and sustainable, local material sourcing.

Keywords*:* Substrate Literacy, Print Design, Material Culture, Nigerian, Adire, Packaging, Arts and Design

Introduction

Printing has long been regarded as a cornerstone of human communication and civilisation, linking the creative imagination of the designer with the material processes of production and function. Historically, scholarship in print design has emphasised technology, aesthetics, innovation, utility, and communication outcomes (Briggs & Burke, 2010; Meggs & Purvis, 2016). However, the surface upon which these designs are realised, the substrate, remains relatively under-theorised. In most accounts, the substrate is framed as a technical requirement rather than an aesthetic or cultural determinant. A technical requirement is mainly about *function*. For instance, if the substrate is paper, the paper must be strong enough to run through a high-speed press without tearing. There is also **an** aesthetic determinant, which is primarily about *perception.* For instance, coated paper (gloss or matte finish) makes printed colours look vibrant and modern, while a cultural determinant is about *meaning*. It suggests that the substrate could carry embedded cultural narratives (e.g., history, stories) or signify identity (e.g., Social Status, Group Membership). This study challenges the assumption that the substrate is framed as just a technical requirement rather than an aesthetic or cultural determinant by positioning the substrate as an active canvas in the art of printing. It argues that substrates shape not only the durability and functionality of a printed artefact, but also its cultural resonance, audience perception, symbolic value and even its functionality.

In Nigeria, especially in Lagos and Aba, the role of substrates offers a rich and vibrant site of inquiry because of the intersection of traditional practices, colonial histories, and modern industrial production. Before the advent of industrial printing, substrates such as handwoven cloth, calabash, bark, and *locally made paper (such as the koda paper used for Arabic manuscripts in the then Hausa-speaking states and Sokoto Caliphate)* served as vehicles of inscription and cultural expression (Bivar, 1968; Picton, 1995). The Yoruba *adire* indigo-dyed cloth, for example, functions as both textile and communicative medium, where the substrate's texture and absorptive quality determine the outcome of resist-dyeing techniques (Akinwumi, 2008). Similarly, carved calabash objects demonstrate how natural substrates were central to ritual, decorative, and everyday communication practices (Picton, 1995). These examples foreground the ways in which substrates were never neutral but carried symbolic, material, and social weight.

The shift to industrial printing substrates began with the establishment of the first missionary presses in the 1840s, most notably with the Church Missionary Society's press in Abeokuta. The founding of *Iwe Irohin* in 1854 and the colonial Government Press in Lagos by 1880 cemented this transition, making imported paper the unchallenged dominant substrate for publishing in Nigeria (Adebanwi, W. (2016)**.** However, this transition also highlighted material constraints: much of Nigeria's publishing industry became dependent on imported paper, the quality of which varied due to economic and infrastructural challenges (Adesanoye, 1995). To this day, the Nigerian print industry remains heavily reliant on imported substrates, from coated and uncoated paper stocks to synthetic substrates used in packaging and outdoor advertising. This dependence underscores the complex relationship between global supply chains and local design practices. Designers and printers often adapt to shortages or fluctuating costs by improvising with recycled substrates or exploring hybrid material applications, reflecting a uniquely Nigerian design ingenuity. (See Fig. 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A & 2B)

Fig.1A: Laminating recycled brown corrugated carton with a new printed sheet

Fig.1B: Repurposing the laminated corrugated carton for packaging

Fig.1C: Repurposing the laminated corrugated carton into gift boxes

Fig.2A: Waste cards in the press

Fig.2B: Waste cards laminated together to increase grammage (thickness)

Fig.2A & 2B: Waste cards can be laminated /gummed together to increase their grammage (thickness) and can be easily repurposed for use in book binding, especially for hardcover bound books.

Theoretically, the reframing of substrates as "active canvases" resonates with Marshall McLuhan's (1964) assertion that "the medium is the message." Substrates, as the material base of printed communication, influence not only the look and feel of the message but also how it is consumed and valued. More recent scholarship in material culture and design studies continues to emphasise that objects, including print substrates, are not inert but actively participate in meaning-making processes (Ingold, 2012; Leander, 2021). For design studies, this perspective invites a deeper appreciation of how the materiality of substrates intersects with creativity, technology, and culture. In Nigeria, where design practices must navigate both scarcity and abundance, the substrate becomes a central site of negotiation between artistic vision and material constraint.

At the professional level, Nigerian designers treat substrate selection as a critical functional decision that directly determines a product's performance, durability, and market success. Beyond aesthetics, substrates are chosen to fulfil essential practical roles. In packaging design, for example, functionality dictates material choice: sachet water packets use thin polyethene film primarily for its sealing and barrier properties, while beverage cartons employ duplex or corrugated board for structural rigidity and protection during transport. This functional imperative intersects directly with affordability and

consumer appeal, as seen in the proliferation of sachet packaging in Nigeria's FMCG sector, where material choice balances cost, product integrity, and brand recognition (Akinola, 2020). Similarly, in publishing, functional requirements drive substrate selection: low-GSM, uncoated paper is chosen for textbooks not only for cost but for reduced weight and durability under frequent handling, whereas glossy coated paper in magazines serves functional needs related to high-resolution image reproduction and visual impact. These decisions reflect a convergence of economic constraints, audience use, and cultural perception. Such examples demonstrate that the substrate operates at the intersection of functionality, design, commerce, and culture, where material performance enables and often dictates creative and commercial outcomes.

Despite this centrality, scholarly engagement with substrates in Nigeria has been sparse. While foundational studies in African print culture have productively focused on content, readership, and historical development (Newell, 2013; Barber, 2018), and textile research on motifs and symbolism (Adediran, 2012), the materiality of the substrate itself has often been overlooked as a primary site of meaning (Bozzoli, 2022). Technical studies in printing and publishing often address substrate properties such as GSM, finish, and durability, but rarely interrogate their cultural implications (Adegbite, 2015). This lacuna provides an opportunity for a hybrid inquiry that combines design practice, material analysis, and cultural theory.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the substrate as a creative canvas in Nigerian print practices. It poses three interrelated objectives:

1. To investigate how substrates function as aesthetic and cultural determinants in traditional and contemporary Nigerian design practices.
2. To analyse how material constraints and global supply chains influence Nigerian designers' substrate choices.
3. To argue for the recognition of substrates as central to both scholarly discourse and professional training in print design.

By pursuing these objectives, this study contributes to three domains of knowledge. First, it extends design theory by embedding substrate materiality within discourses of aesthetics and communication. Second, it enriches African cultural studies by showing how material surfaces embody continuity between indigenous and modern practices. Third, it offers practical implications for design education and professional practice in Nigeria, highlighting the need for "substrate literacy" in curricula and encouraging sustainable innovation in material sourcing.

Ultimately, this introduction frames the substrate not as a silent background but as an active agent in the art of printing. Nigeria's hybrid print culture, where *adire* cloth coexists with digital offset packaging, illustrates that substrates are never incidental; they are canvases upon which culture, technology, and creativity converge.

Literature Review

The literature on printing and design has long foregrounded technology, aesthetics, and communication, while treating the material surface of print (the substrate) as a secondary concern. This review organises existing scholarship into three interlinked strands:

(a) conceptual perspectives on the substrate
(b) theoretical frameworks from material culture and semiotics
(c) empirical studies of Nigerian print and design practices.

Together, they highlight both the neglect of substrates in scholarly discourse and the opportunity to reposition them as creative canvases.

Conceptual Review

In technical literature, a substrate is defined as the material base upon which ink, toner, or dye is deposited to produce a printed image (Fleming, 2013). This utilitarian framing reduces substrates to functional supports, ignoring their aesthetic, cultural, and communicative roles. However, from a design standpoint, the substrate is integral to the visual and tactile experience of print. Paper textures, fabric weaves, and even synthetic surfaces condition how colour is absorbed, how durability is achieved, and how audiences interact with printed artefacts (Meggs & Purvis, 2016). Substrates contribute directly to the sensory and communicative qualities of print. In the Nigerian context, this conceptualisation cannot be divorced from indigenous material traditions. For instance, *adire* resist-dyed cloth depends on cotton's fibre structure and porosity, while *aso-oke* weaving relies on sheen and weight to communicate prestige (Akinwumi, 2008). Carved calabashes and inscribed pottery similarly demonstrate that surface material was as significant as motif or inscription (Picton, 1995). These cases illustrate that substrates are not neutral carriers but active participants in meaning-making. The "substrate-as-canvas" paradigm thus expands print discourse beyond technology into cultural and artistic domains.

Theoretical Framework

Two main theoretical perspectives underpin this inquiry: material culture theory and the semiotics of design.

Material Culture Theory

Material culture theory posits that objects mediate social relations and cultural meaning rather than simply serving utilitarian ends (Miller, 2005; Tilley et al., 2013). Substrates, therefore, embody social values, economic realities, and cultural identities. For example, the continued use of Ankara prints in Nigeria illustrates how fabric substrates signify not only fashion but also belonging, authenticity, and symbolic capital (Adediran, 2012). When such motifs are digitally reproduced on synthetic cloth, the change in substrate alters meaning, raising questions of originality and continuity.

Fig.3A: Handwoven Aso Oke

Fig.3B: Digitally reproduced motif on synthetic cloth

Fig.3A & 3B: The substrate defines cultural meaning. Authentic handwoven Aso Oke (Fig.3A) signifies heritage and prestige, while a printed imitation (Fig.3B) signifies affordability and mass production.

Material culture perspectives further underscore how scarcity shapes creativity. In Nigeria, where imported papers are costly and irregular, printers often improvise with recycled boards or hybrid substrates. Such practices demonstrate how material constraints structure design outcomes,

resonating with broader debates on frugal innovation and adaptive design in the Global South (Radjou & Prabhu, 2015).

Fig.4: Adire Book cover, an example of imported paper coexisting with indigenous substrate.

Semiotics of Design

The semiotics of design emphasises that visual communication operates through signs and that material features themselves carry signifying power (Barthes, 1977). In print, the substrate's sheen, weight, or opacity can signal luxury, permanence, or ephemerality. For instance, glossy coated paper used in Nigerian fashion magazines (Fig.5A) signals aspirational modernity, while low-GSM newsprint in mass-circulation newspapers (Fig.5B) suggests affordability and disposability (Adegbite, 2015). Thus, this theoretical engagement allows us to recognise the substrate as both a material object and a signifying system.

Fig.5A: Fashion Magazine

Fig.5B: Newspaper

This symbolic economy also intersects with institutional authority. Government certificates printed on security paper or PVC substrates derive legitimacy from their material resistance to forgery, while photocopied versions on plain paper are dismissed as unofficial. Here, substrates act as signifiers of institutional credibility as much as communicative carriers.

Together, material culture and semiotic theory provide complementary tools for analysing substrates as active canvases in Nigerian print and design culture. They help explain not only how substrates shape practical design outcomes but also how they encode cultural values, status hierarchies, and social trust.

Empirical Review

Empirical work on Nigerian print culture can be organised into three domains:

(a) traditional practices
(b) publishing and paper use
(c) contemporary commercial printing and packaging.

Traditional Practices

Research in Nigerian textile arts has documented the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of *adire* and *ankara*. Akinwumi (2008) shows how the porosity and absorptive qualities of cotton cloth are central to resist-dye techniques, producing designs that are inseparable from the material surface. Adediran (2012) further demonstrates that motifs acquire meaning only through the physical and tactile properties of the cloth. Similarly, carved calabashes reflect the constraints and affordances of curvature, hardness, and durability (Picton, 1995). However, these studies tend to emphasise motifs, symbols, and patterns, often neglecting the substrate as a central variable. Few directly interrogate how the material itself (cotton fibre, calabash skin, raffia texture) shapes the communicative potential of the artefact. This leaves space for inquiries that foreground the substrate as a cultural and aesthetic agent.

Publishing and Paper

Scholarship on Nigerian publishing has historically focused on historical trajectories, readership, and industry economics (Adesanoye, 1995; Igwe, 2016). While these works document the colonial legacy of imported paper, they rarely foreground the substrate as a site of cultural meaning. Instead, paper is treated primarily in technical terms of grammage, opacity, or durability (Adegbite, 2015).

However, evidence shows that substrate quality shapes both aesthetics and perception. Textbooks printed on low-GSM paper deteriorate quickly, diminishing their longevity, usability, and symbolic value (Okebukola, 2018). Conversely, glossy magazine stock conveys modernity and aspirational identity. Newspaper reliance on cheap newsprint encodes disposability into the medium itself, reinforcing its ephemeral status. These dynamics suggest that paper substrates function not only as technical supports but as determinants of cultural practice and reader engagement.

Commercial Printing and Packaging

More recent studies address Nigeria's expanding packaging and advertising industries. Akinola (2020) observes that packaging substrates, whether flexible films for sachet products or carton boards for premium goods, shape consumer perception and market competitiveness. Packaging substrates must balance cost, durability, and print quality while also signaling brand identity. In Lagos's bustling commercial printing hubs, such as Somolu and Ikeja, designers and print operators frequently experiment with recycled carton boards and hybrid substrates due to severe cost constraints. Their ingenious, context-specific innovations include creating hybrid substrates such as:

i. **Laminated Boards:** A recycled cardboard core fused with a new, cheaper sheet of paper to create a clean, printable surface.
ii. **Reinforced Duplex:** Two or more layers of floppy duplex board glued together to achieve the rigidity of cost-prohibitive, white-lined chipboard.

Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative, interpretive design that combines documentary research, case study analysis, and semi-structured practitioner interviews. The emphasis is on interpreting substrates as both physical media and cultural texts. A qualitative design is appropriate for two reasons:

a) First, substrates are not neutral carriers of ink, but material choices imbued with symbolic, economic, and cultural meaning.
b) Second, Nigerian printing has historically been shaped by resource constraints, indigenous practices, and hybrid material experimentation (Barber, 2006; Adesokan, 2011).

Therefore, the interpretive framework allows us to situate substrates as dynamic mediators of design outcomes rather than as background materials.

Data Sources

Archival and Documentary Sources:

The study consulted archives such as the National Archives in Ibadan and the National Library of Nigeria for records on colonial-era printing, including the use of cheap wood-pulp paper in early missionary presses (Falola, 1999). Print trade documents, such as the Chartered Institute of Professional Printers of Nigeria (CIPPON) reports, provide industry standards and debates around sourcing, cost, and quality. Government reports on publishing subsidies, such as the Universal Basic Education Commission's (UBEC) 2022 Mass Procurement of Textbooks Initiative**,** highlighted how substrate choice is dictated by policies prioritising cost-effective mass production over material quality or durability (UBEC, 2022). Technical manuals from Nigerian print suppliers (e.g., AfriPaper, Lagos; Academy Press PLC) were also reviewed to cross-check contemporary substrate types available locally: carton boards, coated papers, flex films, and specialty substrates such as PVC for ID cards.

Case Studies:

Case studies were purposively selected to illustrate traditional, cultural, and industrial engagements with substrates in Nigeria.

a) ***Indigenous Textile Substrates (Adire, Aso Oke):***
Adire (indigo-dyed cloth from Abeokuta) is a classic example of substrate-as-message. Here, the cloth itself is not just a support but an expressive agent, with resist-dye techniques creating designs that signify cultural identity (Picton, 1995). Similarly, *Aso Oke*, woven with metallic threads, demonstrates how substrate properties (sheen, weight, tactile richness) embody notions of prestige.

a) ***Mass Newspaper Printing (The Punch, Vanguard, Daily Trust):***
These outlets rely on low-cost, low-GSM newsprint. Practitioners interviewed noted that the fragility of the paper shapes both the aesthetics (ink spread, ghosting) and the temporal status of the newspaper (ephemeral, disposable, recyclable).

b) ***Packaging and Commercial Printing (Lagos and Aba hubs):***
Nigeria's packaging industry relies heavily on substrates such as corrugated board, duplex board, and flexible plastic films. Case studies included Lagos-based packaging for products like Indomie Noodles cartons and sachet water branding, where the choice of thin polyethene films enables affordability but contributes to environmental waste (Onyido et al., 2018). Aba's informal printing economy also showcases ingenious substrate improvisation, where operators substitute unavailable or costly materials with salvaged boards and laminated sheets.

Practitioner Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather firsthand insights into the material negotiations of Nigerian print practitioners. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure diversity across the print sector.

The interviews were conducted in Yoruba, Pidgin English, and Standard English depending on participant preference.

Analytical Framework

The analysis employed thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013), structured around material culture theory and semiotics of design.

a) **Material Culture Coding:** Categories included availability, cost, durability, and environmental implications of substrates. Example: sachet water films coded under "low-cost accessibility vs. environmental degradation."
b) **Semiotic Coding:** Categories focused on how substrates signify value, temporality, or prestige. Example: *Aso Oke*, as a substrate, was coded under "material signifier of social status."

Triangulation revealed a critical continuity: while printing technology has evolved for the Nigerian printer (from manual presses to digital workflows), the Nigerian substrate market has not, perpetuating a dependency on imported coated stocks that mirrors the colonial-era importation of wood-pulp paper.

Ethical Considerations

"Ethical Considerations" refers to the formal steps taken to ensure this study was conducted in a morally responsible way. It means the active protection of the rights, well-being, and dignity of everyone and everything involved in this research, including:

- Protecting the identity of the participants, ensuring they participated voluntarily without any harm to their persons.
- Ensuring the traditions and crafts of communities (like the *adire* artisans) are not exploited or misrepresented.
- Protecting the confidential business information of companies that is not public knowledge.

This study was conducted in accordance with the core ethical principles of social research: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Informed consent was a priority. All participants received a detailed explanation of the research aims, and their consent was obtained. To ensure confidentiality, the names of individuals and most companies have been anonymised. Well-known brands and products that are central to the case studies (e.g., Indomie noodle cartons) are named as they are essential to the public context of the analysis and are not considered confidential information.

Limitations

This methodology acknowledges its limits: the study does not include laboratory testing of substrates' physical properties, and the sample size, while diverse, is small relative to Nigeria's vast printing sector. Nonetheless, the purposive sampling ensures depth and cultural breadth, allowing the study to speak meaningfully to both scholarly theory and design practice.

Justification of Research Method

The chosen hybrid method resonates with Nigerian realities, where substrate choice is often shaped less by ideal design theory than by marketplace realism, cultural tradition, and pragmatic improvisation. As Adegbite (2015) has argued, printing in Nigeria is as much about material negotiation as it is about design vision. By combining archival, case study, and practitioner voices, this methodology demonstrates how Nigerian print designers and artisans continually reimagine "the canvas" under shifting constraints, thereby elevating the substrate to a central object of scholarly and professional inquiry.

Table 1: Case Studies and Practitioner Insights on Substrates in Nigerian Print and Design

Domain	Substrate Examples	Case Study / Context (Source, Date, Location)	Practitioner Insights (Source, Date, Location)	Analytical Significance
Indigenous Textile Printing	Cotton cloth, *Adire*, *Aso-Oke*	*Adire* dyeing pits in Abeokuta (Field notes, May 2024); *Aso-Oke* Weavers in Iseyin (Field notes, April 2024)	"If the cloth is too thin, it cannot carry our stories. The dye will betray you." – Veteran *Adire* Artisan (Interview, Abeokuta, 12 May 2024)	Substrate is not neutral; material properties shape narrative durability and cultural meaning.
Newspaper Printing	Low-GSM newsprint	Production floors of major dailies, e.g., *The Punch* (Lagos) (Industry report, 2023)	"Newsprint teaches us humility—print today, trash tomorrow." – Press Operator (Interview, *The Punch*, Lagos, 22 March 2024)	Fragility of substrate encodes temporality and disposability into design outcomes.
Commercial Packaging	Corrugated board, duplex board, kraft, polyethene films	**Lagos:** Dufil Prima Foods (Indomie carton production) (Company report, 2022). **Aba:** Informal packaging workshops (Field notes, June 2024)	"Designers dream in gold foil, but we dream in what the customs officer clears at the port." – Production Manager (Interview, Ikeja Packaging Plant, Lagos, 5 April 2024)	are dictated by import constraints, affordability, and environmental costs.

Digital Print & Branding	Gloss-coated papers, PVC cards, synthetic substrates	Branding studios in Yaba, Lagos (Field notes, March-June 2024)	"Clients see gloss as premium—even if the design is weak." – Senior Designer (Interview, "Brand Axis" Studio, Yaba, Lagos, 18 March 2024)	Substrate acts as a semiotic cue for value and prestige, sometimes outweighing design quality.

This table works as a methodology bridge:

a) It shows the range of substrates studied.
b) It anchors voices of practitioners alongside cultural/industrial cases.
c) It highlights how analysis (semiotics + material culture) will interpret these insights.

Findings

The analysis of archival data, case studies, and practitioner interviews revealed six central themes regarding the role of substrates in Nigerian print culture.

Substrate Availability as a Structural Constraint

A central finding of this study is that across the Nigerian print ecosystem, the availability of substrates and not just merely creative intent is the primary determinant of design outcomes. This was starkly illustrated in the case of Aba's informal packaging sector, where designers consistently downgraded designs from multi-colour prints (Fig.6A) to simpler, one/or two-colour designs on repurposed brown cartons (Fig.6B) due to material scarcity and cost. The aesthetic and perceived value of the final product was fundamentally dictated by material access, not design vision.

Fig.6

Fig.

Substrate as Semiotic Marker of Value

Interviews in the course of this study confirmed that substrates really function as potent semiotic markers of status. As a Somolu-based branding consultant in Lagos noted, *clients perceive gloss-coated card stock as 'premium' and newsprint or kraft paper as 'ordinary.'* This perception aligns with semiotic theory, framing substrates not as passive surfaces but as active signifiers of prestige and value (Barthes, 1977; Okwuosa, 2019).

Case Example: Within the Nigerian context, the material distinction is stark. University convocation brochures, symbolic artefacts of academic achievement and social mobility, are meticulously produced on imported gloss-coated art paper and hoarded as keepsakes. Conversely, student union flyers on low-GSM bond paper are treated as ephemera and discarded immediately. This hierarchy was observed at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) 2024 Convocation ceremonies**.** The formal brochure, printed on high-gloss, heavyweight paper, was treated as a commemorative object. In contrast, flyers for student events on campus, printed on thin, uncoated bond paper, were routinely discarded. This contrast reveals how substrate choices encode not just functional but symbolic value systems in Nigerian print culture (Field notes, Lagos, January 2024).

The Persistence of Indigenous Substrate Cultures
Despite the dominance of imported papers, traditional substrates (e.g., *Adire* cloth, raffia, leather) remain highly relevant in artistic and ceremonial contexts. During a workshop observation in Abeokuta on 12 May 2024, a veteran adire artisan explained the concept of the cloth as a "living surface" (Yoruba: *aṣọ alàáyè*), emphasising that the substrate 'remembers' each stage of the resist-dyeing process, thereby embodying a narrative in its finished pattern. Unlike disposable newsprint, these substrates are valued for their durability and role in the continuity of heritage (Adepoju, 2020). This finding highlights a material duality within Nigeria; while the commercial print economy thrives on disposability, indigenous craft economies emphasise endurance and cultural transmission.

The Paradox of Plastic: Affordability vs. Ecological Cost
This study identifies a central paradox in Nigeria's print ecosystem: the substrates that are most critical for economic accessibility, particularly polyethene sachets and flex banners, are also the most environmentally damaging. The non-biodegradable nature of waste from these materials constitutes a significant portion of urban waste, clogging drains and contributing to flooding (Onyido, Adeleke, & Chukwuma, 2018). Paradoxically, the very properties that make these materials an environmental problem, their low cost, durability, and water resistance, also make them the only viable option for small businesses and advertisers operating in a high-volume, low-margin economy. This creates a vicious cycle: the most affordable and accessible substrates for marketers impose the highest long-term social and ecological costs on the local communities that must manage the waste.

Audience Perception and Material Literacy
Finally, audience reception of the substrate shows a significant gap in material literacy. Surveys conducted in design classes with students at Yaba College of Technology indicated a prevalent tendency to equate "good design" with a "shiny finish" (e.g., gloss lamination, foil stamping), prioritising surface effect over typographic nuance, compositional layout, or cultural resonance. This suggests that a substrate's superficial properties can often eclipse fundamental design craft in shaping audience judgments. This finding aligns with more recent scholarship on critical making and material awareness (Rosner, 2018), which argues that a focus on surface aesthetics without understanding material provenance or impact is a key challenge in contemporary design culture.

Taken together, these findings reveal a layered ecosystem of substrates in Nigerian print culture that indicate the following:

I. Structural factors (import dependence, tariffs, exchange rates) constrain material choice.
II. Semiotic dynamics encode prestige or disposability through substrate.
III. **Indigenous practices demonstrate that materials can be used differently,** prioritising cultural preservation and longevity.
IV. Practitioner negotiations embody adaptive pragmatism.
V. Environmental challenges complicate the ethics of substrate reliance.
VI. Audience literacies shape reception more than designers often assume.

This synthesis positions substrates not merely as technical supports but as cultural actors mediating Nigeria's unique design economy.

Discussion
The findings confirm the central proposition of this study: substrates in Nigerian print culture are not passive supports but **active agents** that shape design outcomes, cultural meanings, and audience perceptions. This section interprets the six themes through the dual theoretical lenses of material culture and semiotics, situating them within broader debates on global dependency, local agency, sustainability, and education.

Substrates as More Than Technical Support
The findings reinforce that substrate cannot be reduced to technical specifications such as grammage or opacity. Instead, they are **constitutive elements of meaning-making**. In Lagos and Aba, the availability of substrates determines whether designs materialise as multicoloured, foil-embellished cartons or downgraded brown-box prints. In Abeokuta, the porosity of cotton cloth enabled resist-dye patterns that embodied cultural narratives. Material culture theory (Miller, 2005) frames these practices as evidence that objects possess "social lives." Substrates, whether gloss-coated art paper or *adire* cloth, carry embedded meanings that influence how print products are valued, consumed, and remembered.

Negotiating Between Global Dependence and Local Agency
Nigeria's heavy reliance on imported substrates situates its print industry within volatile global supply chains. Currency instability, tariffs, and shipping delays directly shape what designers can produce. However, as the findings reveal, local agency emerges through improvisation.

Practices such as the "Aba Special" (laminated duplex boards; see Fig.2A & 2B) or the "Shomolu Save" (reducing colour separations; see Fig.6A & 6B) exemplify what Radjou and Prabhu (2015) describe as frugal innovation**.** These are not merely coping strategies but creative adaptations that generate distinctive Nigerian aesthetics. For instance, varnish and metallic inks used to mimic foil stamping produce visual textures that, over time, may become recognised stylistic markers of Nigerian packaging.

This negotiation between dependence and agency reflects a broader postcolonial dynamic. While the substrate economy remains tethered to global imports, local practitioners reassert creative control by bending available materials to their purposes. The result is a hybrid design culture in which scarcity catalyses innovation rather than suppressing it.

Substrates as Semiotic and Symbolic Media
The semiotic analysis underscores that substrates function as symbols of value, status, and legitimacy**.** In Nigeria, gloss-coated paper does not simply improve print quality; it indexes prestige. Newsprint, by contrast, encodes temporality and disposability.

Examples such as convocation brochures versus student flyers illustrate how substrate choice embodies social hierarchies. The former, printed on imported gloss, is preserved as a commemorative artefact, while the latter, on cheap bond, is discarded within hours. This symbolic economy resonates with Barthes' (1977) argument that surfaces are sign systems that mediate social meaning.

The same logic applies to institutional authority. Government certificates on secure substrates (watermarked paper or PVC) derive credibility not only from textual content but from material resistance to forgery. Here, the substrate itself guarantees legitimacy. Such cases highlight how the semiotics of substrate extend beyond aesthetics into trust, authority, and memory.

Environmental Contradictions of Modern Substrates
Perhaps the most urgent implication of the findings lies in sustainability. The Nigerian print industry's reliance on polyethene sachets, PVC banners, and other non-biodegradable substrates creates significant ecological burdens. Drainage blockages, urban flooding, and mounting landfill waste are the material consequences of affordable substrate choices.

This paradox, where the cheapest and most accessible substrates impose the highest ecological costs, echoes global critiques of unsustainable design economies (Irwin, 2015). However, in Nigeria, the stakes are higher: low-income consumers depend on sachet packaging for affordability, while small-scale printers rely on PVC banners for profitability.

The juxtaposition of *adire*'s enduring cotton cloth with the disposability of sachet plastic illustrates this contradiction vividly. One material transmits heritage across generations; the other persists as waste with no cultural value yet. Addressing this paradox requires investment in sustainable local alternatives, such as:

- Paper pulp from agricultural waste (sugarcane bagasse, rice husks, banana stems).
- Cassava-starch bioplastics for sachet packaging.
- Locally sourced cotton substrates for hybrid print applications.

Such innovations could mitigate environmental damage while embedding print culture within Nigeria's own material resources.

Material Literacy and Audience Perception

The finding that students and consumers equate gloss and shine with design excellence reveals a critical gap in material literacy. This misrecognition not only reinforces the semiotic economy of prestige but also perpetuates unsustainable practices. Rosner (2018) argues that "critical making" requires awareness of material provenance and impact. Applied to Nigerian design education, this suggests curricula must expand beyond software proficiency to include teaching on substrates**.** Future designers should be trained to evaluate substrates in terms of sustainability, cultural resonance, and symbolic meaning, not just surface effect.

Such education could shift consumer perceptions as well. By teaching audiences to value durability, provenance, and ecological responsibility, Nigerian design culture can move beyond the fetishisation of gloss. This, in turn, could stimulate demand for sustainable alternatives and create a feedback loop that reshapes the substrate economy.

Conclusion

This study has examined the role of substrates in Nigerian print and design culture, arguing that they are not neutral carriers but active canvases that shape creative outcomes (design choices), cultural meanings, and social/audience perceptions.

Drawing on material culture theory and semiotics, and supported by archival records, case studies, and practitioner interviews, the research demonstrates that the material surface is central to how design is produced, consumed, and remembered in Nigeria.

The findings revealed a layered material economy where imported papers and plastics coexist with indigenous substrates such as cloth, raffia, and bark. This hybrid nature reflects both Nigeria's dependency on global supply chains and its resilience through local adaptation and improvisation.

Contributions to Knowledge

Theoretically, the research advances material culture and semiotic perspectives by situating substrates within Nigeria's specific socio-economic realities. Substrates here not only bear ink but also actively communicate social hierarchies, cultural values, and institutional legitimacy.
This is demonstrated through several key findings:

I. **Social Hierarchies:** The choice of substrate instantly signals status. For instance, the example in the findings earlier stated that a university convocation brochure printed on imported glossy paper was treasured as a keepsake, symbolising the elite achievement of higher education. In stark contrast, student union flyers on low-grade newsprint were discarded immediately, marking the information and its readers as temporary and ordinary.

II. **Cultural Values:** Indigenous substrates embody core cultural principles. The use of handwoven, durable *adire* cloth for ceremonial attire communicates values of heritage,

patience, status and authenticity. Its materiality stands in direct opposition to the disposability of mass-produced synthetic substrates, representing a cultural value of endurance and memory.

III. **Institutional Legitimacy:** Substrates are used to confer authority and trust. Official government documents or bank certificates printed on secure, high-quality substrates with watermarks or holograms (e.g., PVC for national ID cards) are designed to be hard to replicate. This material complexity grants them institutional legitimacy and public trust, whereas a photocopy on plain paper would be immediately dismissed as unofficial.

Empirically, case studies of Nigerian print practitioners show how material scarcity and consumer preference influence creative decisions (Fig.6A & 6B above), confirming that the substrate is as much a design tool as typography, colour, or layout.

Implications for Education

The findings underscore the urgent need to embed substrate literacy in Nigerian design education. Current curricula prioritise digital software and visual composition, often neglecting the material foundations of print. By incorporating critical pedagogy on substrates, covering provenance, sustainability, functionality and cultural significance, design schools can cultivate practitioners who evaluate materials not only for surface effect, such as costs, but also for ecological and social implications. This shift could foster a generation of designers equipped to innovate responsibly in a rapidly changing material economy.

Implications for Policy and Industry

Policy interventions are vital to address Nigeria's structural dependence on imported substrates and the ecological burdens of plastics. The following priorities are recommended:

a) **Paper from Agricultural Waste (Local Production):** Investment in mills that process agricultural waste (e.g., sugarcane bagasse, rice husks, banana stems) into paper pulp, turning abundant post-harvest waste into a valuable resource and reducing burning practices that contribute to air pollution.
b) **Sustainable Alternatives (Bio-Based Plastics):** Research and scaling of cassava-starch bioplastics to replace polyethene sachets. This could provide a biodegradable alternative to polyethene films, directly tackling the sachet waste problem while supporting cassava farmers.
c) **Regulation:** Gradual restrictions on single-use plastics in packaging and outdoor advertising.
d) **Local Textile Reinforcement:** Empowering the local cotton industry to produce specialised substrates for print and packaging, reducing the need for imported textiles and creating an integrated supply chain from farm to designer.
e) **Incentives:** Tax breaks or subsidies for firms adopting eco-friendly substrates.

Such measures would reduce environmental damage, create green jobs, and strengthen Nigeria's creative economy by stabilising material supply chains. For the industry, embracing sustainable substrates would enhance competitiveness, especially as global markets increasingly demand eco-conscious practices.

Implications for Practice

For practitioners, the study highlights that substrate choices are communicative acts**.** Whether selecting gloss-coated paper for prestige, recycled board for affordability, or indigenous cloth for heritage, designers signal value systems that audiences interpret materially. Recognising substrates as semiotic agents can sharpen professional judgment and encourage innovation.

Moreover, documenting adaptive strategies in Lagos and Aba reveals that improvisation is not a compromise but a creative practice in its own right. By formalising these techniques within professional discourse, Nigerian practitioners can elevate local ingenuity from necessity to recognised expertise.

Forward-Looking

The future of Nigerian print and design culture depends on how substrates are understood, sourced, and taught. If current dependence on imported papers and plastics persists, the sector will remain vulnerable to global volatility and ecological crisis. However, by cultivating substrate literacy, investing in local material innovation, and valuing indigenous practices, Nigeria can transform its material economy into a site of resilience and leadership. To regard the substrate as a canvas is to acknowledge its agency in shaping design futures. Substrates are not merely surfaces upon which ideas are printed; they are cultural and ecological actors whose meanings extend far beyond the pressroom. The challenge and opportunity for Nigerian design is to harness this material agency toward creativity, sustainability, and cultural continuity.

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THE LANGUAGE OF LINES: A STUDY OF STYLISTIC VARIATIONS IN THE DRAWINGS OF ADIWU, TALATU ONKALA, AND NADAMA MUSTAPHA GARBA.

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Abstract
This study, titled "The Language of Lines: A Study of Stylistic Variations in the Drawings of Adiwu, Talatu Onkala, and Nadama Mustapha Garba, investigates two Nigerian artists' use of lines as a stylistic and expressive element in drawing. The research explores the formal qualities of line, such as weight, direction, character, and rhythm, as seen in the artworks of Adiwu, Talatu Onkala, and Nadama Mustapha Garba. Organic and nature-inspired linear patterns characterise Onkala's works. Mustapha's illustrations exhibit conceptual visual elements with floral and socio-political subject matter. Employing formal analysis, contextual interpretation, and archived research, the study reveals the individual stylistic idiom and cultural sense embedded in their linear practices: Onkala's lines evoke natural systems and introspection, while Mustapha's lines often convey conceptual abstraction and socio-political meaning. The findings provide insights into how contemporary Nigerian artists employ line to create diverse visual languages that engage cultural, conceptual, and aesthetic dialogues.

Keywords: Lines, Drawing, Stylistic variations, Adiwu, Talatu Onkala, Nadama Mustapha Garba, Formal/Contextual analysis, Documentary, Research, Contemporary, Nigeria

Introduction

Line remains a fundamental and expressive element in visual art and drawing practice. Within the Nigerian contemporary art scene, artists use line not just for structural depiction but as a visual language tool to communicate emotion, culture, ideology, and socio-political commentary. This study focuses on the stylistic variations in the use of lines in the drawings of two Nigerian artists: Adiwu and Talatu Onkala, whose linear expressions are organic, web-like, and patterned. Onkala' works are exemplars of line as a tool for natural metaphor while Nadama Mustapha Garba who explores line within conceptual and graphic tradition (which is visual motifs of recurring symbols, patterns and stylistic elements), suggesting deeper cultural narratives but continued exploring some of the attributes of conceptual art such as appropriation, and use of unconventional media, but used just charcoal, pastel, and graphite in the creation of his works which makes it unique and giving him the ability of making a cocktail of philosophies, discarding what is not required at a specific time and highlighting what is preferred to achieve the required outcome. Both artists represent different approaches to linear expression within Nigerian contemporary drawing practice. This research aims to analyse and compare how these drawing styles articulate and postulate visual languages within contemporary Nigerian drawing practice.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the critical function that line plays in creative composition and expression, there is no scholastic record addressing stylistic and contextual variations of line in contemporary Nigerian drawing. While general studies on drawing and painting techniques in Nigeria exist, focused comparative investigations into how individual artists like Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba uniquely explore and manipulate line remain limited. This lack of critical and scholarly documentation has resulted in a lack of interest in how line functions not only as a formal element but also as a strong visual language for transmitting cultural, conceptual, and personal narratives. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this scholarly gap by analysing and comparing the distinct linear styles and contextual influences that characterise the works of these artists.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to critically examine how line functions both stylistically and expressively in the drawings of Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba. The research seeks to explore how these artists use lines to convey personal and cultural statements and engage the spectators through a unique linear idiom. Specifically, the study sets out to achieve several interconnected objectives. First, it seeks to analyse the formal qualities of line as used by each artist, paying attention to other relevant elements such as rhythm, texture, shape, form, space, as well as line directionality, weight, and spatial modulation. Consequently, this is achieved using the method of overlapping, size and scale, perspective, value, and contrast. By doing so, the research uncovers the distinct stylistic signatures that define each artist's approach to drawing; consequently, it will help understand the artists' oeuvre, provenance, market value, historical significance, and attribution.

Secondly, the study examines the cultural, environmental, and conceptual factors that inform the artists' choices in line deployment. This involves investigating how personal background, socio-cultural influences, and thematic intentions shape the way the line is utilised in their respective works. Furthermore, the research intends to compare and contrast the stylistic differences between the two artists, with a focus on how their divergent approaches to line affect the interpretation and reception of their drawings. Finally, the study seeks to situate the analysis within the broader framework of contemporary Nigerian drawing practices, contributing to ongoing scholarly conversations about stylistic variation, identity, and visual language in Nigerian art.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analysing selected line-based drawings produced between 2009 and 2020 by Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba. The scope is limited to pen-and-ink and mixed media drawings where line is the primary compositional element. Both formal (visual) and contextual (cultural, thematic) dimensions of line use are considered. The research also

contextualises both artists within the contemporary Nigerian art discourse, particularly in relation to linear stylistics.

Literature Review

The concept of line as a fundamental element in art and design has been extensively discussed in art scholarship. According to Ocvirk et al. (2002), line remains one of the most expressive and versatile elements in visual composition, capable of defining forms, creating textures, and conveying both movement and emotion. Similarly, Arnheim (1974) asserts that line is not merely a boundary but a psychological and perceptual tool that guides the viewer's experience of an artwork. In the Nigerian context, scholarly works on drawing and linear expression have increasingly gained attention. Notable among them is the research by Gushem (2006), which examines "The Language of Linear Forms' in contemporary Nigerian Painting, emphasising the communicative power of line as both a formal and narrative tool. In addition, Oloidi (2002) discusses stylistic developments in modern Nigerian art, stressing how artists manipulate formal elements like line to establish personal styles and cultural identity.

Specific to Adiwu, Talatu Onkala, several studies highlight her distinctive use of organic lines and environmental references. Adiwu and Gushem (2015), in their jointly published research, discuss how spider webs serve as both inspiration and metaphor in her linear explorations, suggesting that her work transforms everyday natural patterns into aesthetic statements. Similarly, Adiwu (2016) provides an aesthetic overview of her spider cobweb paintings, focusing on how she uses both delicate and forceful lines to simulate natural erosion patterns and webs.

On the other hand, Nadama Mustapha Garba has contributed scholarly articles exploring the dialogic relationship between line and floral motifs, notably in his 2019 study titled A Visual Dialogue Between Lines and Floral Motifs in Painting. He explains how he integrates controlled linear arrangements to communicate themes of nature and cultural symbolism. His works often show a calculated, geometric manipulation of line, in contrast to Onkala's more organic and free-flowing style.

Furthermore, general theoretical art texts such as Barthes (1977) and Gude (2004) provide interpretive tools for understanding how line can carry semiotic and contextual meanings that extend beyond formal aesthetics into the realm of visual communication. Sullivan (2005) also emphasises that art practice should be viewed within its social and cultural contexts, making contextual analysis vital for any study focused on contemporary Nigerian artists.

Despite these existing contributions, there remains a notable gap in comparative studies that focus on stylistic variations in line-based drawings among contemporary Nigerian artists, especially between female and male practitioners from different geographical zones and cultural backgrounds. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by providing a comparative formal and contextual analysis of line usage in the works of Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba, thereby advancing scholarly knowledge in contemporary Nigerian drawing studies.

Kalilu and Woods (n.d.) assert that lines in Nigerian drawing serve communicative and typological functions. According to Kalilu (n.d.), line remains one of the most versatile elements of visual language in Nigerian art, capable of serving descriptive and symbolic functions. Kalilu and Woods (2014) further emphasise the narrative potential of line in African art, noting that Nigerian artists frequently use linear arrangements to embed cultural identity, social commentary, and personal narratives within their compositions. Adiwu Talatu Onkala's work engages systematic line patterns drawn from nature (e.g., spider-webs), emphasised in her thesis and journal articles. Nadama Mustapha Garba's exploration of graphic line as a conceptual visual language is noted in academic critiques. However, there is limited direct comparative discourse on line styles in contemporary Nigerian drawing, creating a scholarly niche for this study.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design. The research methodology is structured around visual (formal), contextual analysis, and documentary research. The study employed formal image analysis of the preferred artworks by both artists. This includes examining the composition and detailed description of the visual elements and principles of design, such as line, shape, texture, and space. Adiwu Talatu Onkala's drawings show evidence of organic and tactile exploration of line with composition resembling spider webs and natural erosion patterns. Conversely, Nadama Mustapha Garba employed well-calculated, precise lines that form the artistic representation of flowers in a non-realistic, abstract manner. This style emphasises simplified forms or breaking down flowers into basic shapes and lines, and distorted proportions. This technique results in beautiful, expressive artworks that capture the essence of flowers in a creative, non-literal way.

In addition to formal analysis, the study incorporated contextual analysis as an essential methodological component. This phase focused on understanding the cultural, environmental, and socio-political factors that influence each artist's linear expression. For Adiwu Talatu Onkala, the contextual analysis examined how environmental themes and natural patterns, like spider webs and erosion lines, inspire her work. Her works draw heavily on environmental contexts, reflecting her fascination with natural formations like spider webs and eroded landscapes (Adiwu & Gushen, 2015). These serve as metaphors for resilience, cultural memory, and human interconnectivity. For Nadama Mustapha, the analysis explored how socio-political realities, floral symbolism, and conceptual narratives from Northern Nigeria influence his controlled, graphic, linear style. His drawings are contextually rooted in socio-political commentary and conceptual art traditions. His use of floral motifs and linear precision often serves as a visual metaphor for growth, change, and social dialogue (Mustapha, 2019). His drawings also align with contemporary Nigerian movements that use conceptual line art for public discourse.

Lastly, the research involved a documentary review of relevant literature, including academic journal articles such as Adiwu, T. O, & Gushem, P. O. (2015). The Spider and its Web; Adiwu, T. O. (2016).Spider Cobweb Paintings of Talatu Adiwu: An Aesthetic Overview; Gushem, P. (2006).The Language of Linear Forms in Contemporary Nigerian Painting and Oloidi, O. (2002). Trends in Contemporary Nigerian Art. The Art Historian: exhibition catalogues, artists' statements, and online scholarly resources. This helped to situate the study within the broader discourse of contemporary Nigerian art and drawing practices.

By triangulating data from these multiple sources, the study ensured depth, credibility, and contextual relevance in the analysis and interpretation of findings. It concluded the stylistic variations in the linear practices of Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba.

Conceptual Framework.

This study is anchored on three interrelated theoretical concepts: Formalism, Semiotics, and Conceptual Art Theory, all of which provide a multi-dimensional lens for analysing the stylistic variations in the drawings of Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba. Formalism serves as the foundation for analysing the visual and structural qualities of line in the selected works. This theory focuses on the formal elements of art such as line, shape, texture, rhythm, and spatial arrangement (Bell, 1914; Greenberg, 1961). Through this lens, the study critically examines how each artist utilises line to create distinct stylistic effects independent of content or narrative.

The study employs Semiotics (Theory of Signs) to investigate how lines function as visual signifiers carrying symbolic meanings within each artist's work. Based on the semiotic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) and Rowland Barthes (1977), the research explores how Onkala and Mustapha's linear expressions communicate environmental, cultural, and socio-political narratives to their audience.

The research also draws on Contextual Art Theory, which asserts that artworks are not isolated objects but are deeply embedded within social, historical, and cultural contexts (Gude, 2004;

Sullivan, 2005). This framework is beneficial for examining how each artist's geographical background, gender, identity, environmental experiences, and Nigeria's socio-political environment influence their linear styles.

By integrating these three conceptual frameworks, the study achieves a broader understanding of both the formal qualities and the contextual meanings embedded in the linear language of Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha. This combined approach allows for a richer, multi-layered interpretation of the artists' works, balancing visual aesthetics with cultural and conceptual significance.

Additionally, scholars like Kalilu and Woods (n.d) have highlighted the centrality of line as both a formal and communicative device in African drawing traditions. Their works argue that linearity in contemporary Nigerian visual arts is not purely decorative but serves as a critical narrative tool that conveys history, identity, and socio-political themes. This theoretical position provides a relevant framework for analysing the linear styles of Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha (Kalilu & Woods, 2014).

Biographical Sketches of the Artists

Adiwu Talatu Onkala (PhD)

A prolific painter from Zaria Art School, born on December 7, 1982, in Kwajjaffa in Borno State of Nigeria. She is an indigene of Plateau State, where she attended and obtained her primary and post-primary education certificates from 1990 to 2001. She has earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree (B.A) in Fine Arts (2006), Master of Fine Art Degree in (2010), a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (2012) from the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna-Nigeria and has also completed her Doctoral studies where she was awarded a PhD in Painting from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in October 2015, with this, Adiwu Talatu Onkala is the first female Doctorate holder in the studio area produced by Zaria Art School. She widely took part in art exhibitions in Nigeria and abroad, including participation in important group shows, seminars, and workshops.

Through her body of works and publications, she has established a landmark within the Nigerian painting scene by departing from the recurring mode of creative and realistic interpretation of natural forms to that of abstract or semi-naturalistic representations of nature. She is also concerned with creating a platform for young female artists and academics to follow their dreams of achieving across disciplines such as textile design, ceramics, and sculpture. She aspires to continue making aesthetic statements using natural forms aligned with postmodernist ideologies in modern Nigerian painting. Adiwu Talatu Onkala is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Environmental Studies, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, where she is steadily rising up the ranks (Shirley Kabwato, 2018).

Works of Adiwu Talatu Onkala;

Plate 1: *Teething*, Adiwu Talatu Onkala, 16.5 x 23.4 ft, 2019, Private Collection, Maiduguri-Borno, Nigeria, Pen and Ink on Cartridge Paper.

Teething 2019 is a black pen and ink drawing set against a white background. The semi-naturalist composition is a partial realistic rendition of what one may describe as eroded teeth. The composite position is that of an exaggerated, perfectly full lip exposing three horizontal levels of teeth at various stages of disintegration. The upper lip is shown to have been pushed upwards, giving a clear and unobstructed view of the gum's teeth. The lower lip, which is represented as fuller, also provides a clear, unobstructed view of the teeth.

The central focus for the viewer, as probably intended by the artist, is the displaced layers of the teeth. Inspired by the actual teeth of an adult but represented in a distorted and somewhat conceptual manner, the viewer is exposed to not the regular two rows of teeth but three layers/rows of finally crafted teeth, seeming to crush each other both horizontally and vertically. Each tooth is rendered in clear-cut lines of black and little to no visual disturbance, except for the occasional and careful overlapping of teeth against the middle and lower rows. In between the upper and middle rows of teeth, the artist introduces abstract floral motifs, a symbolic testament to the consistent growth that envelops all natural things.

While the use of lines is minimal, straightforward, and generally boundary and shape-defining, the upper and lower lips are besieged with an array of lines that both elevate and confuse the visual

journey of the viewer. The interplay of lines is predominantly vertical in movement but aligns in a linear manner surrounding the upper arched lip. The interplay of lines partitions both the upper and lower lip and the surrounding areas into uneven spaces which are subsequently filled with either thick, thin, wavy lines; amoebic free-flowing shapes surrounded by dark or textured black ink, or are left plain white, thus enhancing both contrast depth as well as perspective.

On the left side of the teeth composition, the lines converge to form other organic forms/shapes of varying sizes made to stand out by the surrounding textured background achieved through the hatchy movement of pen on the white surface. At the same time, the upper lip and its surrounding surface are purely an interplay and display of free-flowing lines complemented by equally diagonally placed free-flowing forms that align with the arching placement of the upper lip; the surrounding spaces of the lower lip showcase floral, abstract shapes and motifs. Additionally, the use of lines in the surrounding spaces of the lower lip is thinner and more closely clustered than that of the upper lip area, which is more spacious and almost devoid of any identifiable motifs. While the upper section of the work is a display of strong, heavy lines and white spaces, the lower section is a visual display of thin, wavy lines, floral motifs, and organic and amoebic patterns closely clustered together.

Nonetheless, shapes in this drawing define boundaries through the use of line. They are irregular shapes, with straight lines, curved, wavy, squiggly, jagged, rough, smooth, and solid lines. In this work, the shape of a closed line serves the function of lines, giving direction and leading the spectator visually. Additionally, the work is not dominated by any particular shape, as there is a variety of shapes within the composition. Balance, which is the distribution of visual weight in the composition, creates a sense of order, equivalence, and solidity with visual stability within the scene. Also, contrast is found in the composition, which generates visual appeal and a stark difference within and around the dental area in the work. There is the employment of black and white values to create depth and intrigue in the composition; there is size contrast in the linear rendition of the teeth to generate visual hierarchy and focus.

Textual contrast is also applied in the use of different linear design textures to add visual appeal and represent differences within the scene. Visual emphasis is used to draw attention to the focal point of this drawing, which is the 'Teething' in linear brevity (this refers to the use of concise and efficient lines to convey the essence of the subject, capturing the essential characteristics and features of the subject with a minimal number of lines, avoiding unnecessary details). The simplified representation of the dental anatomy is the aspect of the composition that really stands out and catches the viewer's attention. Movement, which has to do with the ways the spectator's eyes travel within the composition, guides the eyes from one element to another in the work. The point of focus in this drawing is the artist's exploration of thin and solid lines to create fine details and evoke a sense of calm, which produces a strong visual presence.

One could argue that the intention of the artist in the purpose of the work is to show the power of linear expressiveness in the rendition of human anatomy in art, and to understand how the body works and consider all its parts. The mood of the work is that of the creative skill and ingenuity of the artist; of being original and inventive in her innovative exploration of concepts and forms reminiscent of Uli's poetic lines. The authors believe that Adiwu Talatu Onkala's drawing of 'Teething' is intended to give a sense of her drawing being deeply rooted in linearity. This is indicated by the dominant use of line throughout the composition. The artist uses lines to direct the observer's eyes across the work. It is these authors view that, the drawing is well organized based on how almost precise and technical use of line, and how visually successful the premeditated theme and mood is portrayed: that is, the artist deliberately choosing and crafting elements to convey a specific message or idea, elicit a particular emotional response from the spectator and creating a cohesive and impactful visual experience.

Plate2*: The Illusion of Freedom*, Adiwu Talatu Onkala, 2 X 3.45 ft, 2021, Artists Collection Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria, Pen and Ink on Cartridge Paper

This piece is a striking example of Adiwu Talatu Onkala's linear eloquence, executed in pen and ink on cartridge paper in 2021. It is produced on standard-sized paper, and the place of creation was not stated. This is a profile portrait of a young woman in abstract realism, shown from the mid-torso up, against a light background. She is looking up in amazement straight to the viewer's left. On the right side of the composition are multiplicities of solid lines emanating at the back of the head at the background, within the profile are undulating movements of lines as a result of the multiple overlapping of linear impression, there are different type of curvilinear impression on the profile such as simple curve that does not cross itself, complex curve that crosses itself and open curved line that is open when its endpoints do not meet, there are also other curvilinear lines such as swirls, spirals and circles that formed abstract patterns on the composition.

The cheekbone is bounded by curved lines or represented by curved lines. Curvilinear motion is also observed on the neck beneath the jaw. Other lines observed on the composition are vertical lines, horizontal lines, diagonal lines, and zigzag lines. Also, there is the depiction of an oval eye alternated on the cheek, on the torso, and on the forehead. There are also concentric spiral motifs reminiscent of Uli agwo lagwo of southeast linear expression, fixed between the heavy solid lines behind the profile. On the left side of the composition is a space receiving the gaze of the subject. The drawing seems to rely heavily on the elements of lines as a tool of expression, as observed on the profile; there are varieties of curvilinear movements within the scene that produce forms in the artwork. Heavy dark lines are used to define the forms within the composition in curvilinear motion; also, solid horizontal and diagonal lines are used to create the forms on the backdrop of the composition. There is also a swirling flow of linear expression on the general composition; a movement or flow which is created by a uniformly rotating, infinitely long twist and spiral coil. Similarly, there are jagged lines, dashed dotted lines, broken lines, bumpy lines, and fine thin lines at the far left side of the torso within the scene as they flow into the space.

Different kinds of linear impressions within the scene, which are both literal and implied lines, curve lines, smooth lines, solid lines, jagged lines, rough lines, thin lines, all create a calming effect, a sense

of movement and freedom, and an understanding of energy in the composition. The work uses a variety of lines that work together. The use of space in this drawing helps in creating pictorial depth and perspective by the overlapping of the design elements and the use of space versus space crowded with details. The shapes in the work are geometric, having straight lines and perfect curves, horizontal lines and vertical lines; however, the work is not dominated by any one particular shape, as all the shapes are alternated or repeated across the composition. Similarly, the work also uses principles of composition as the shapes in the drawing create balance and a harmonious effect. Contrast is also found in the use of a variety of shapes, like curved lines versus jagged lines or geometric shapes versus natural shapes. The work equally creates a sense of movement as the eyes of the spectator are drawn and guided through the linear impression across the composition.

One could argue that the point of focus is the general composition with special emphasis on the linear patterns in the composition, to evoke a sense of structure, solidity, and form. It appears that the artist's purpose of the composition or what the artist is trying to communicate with the work may be that the experience of freedom might not be a reflection of the reality of the human situation and circumstances. It raises the prospect that people might be radically different from other things in reality, and it opens up the possibility that freedom and even 'reality' might not be an either-or kind of thing. The mood of the work is that of delusion or false belief or judgment about external reality, which is held despite incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, occurring mainly in mental conditions reminiscent of Jonathan Stroud's statement that freedom always comes at a price. The authors believe that this piece might be exploring a sense of what freedom is all about. This is indicated by the line of the composition, which draws the spectator's eyes across the composition following the upward gaze of the subject straight to the viewer's left. In addition, the authors are judging the artwork on how well organised it is, how well done technically, and how successful it is in showing the intended mood and theme.

Nadama Mustapha Garba (PhD):
Nadama Mustapha Garba is a citizen of Nigeria from Zamfara State. He holds a bachelor's degree in industrial design from 1997, an M.F.A PhD in 2014 and a PhD in Painting in 2018, all from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; following his degrees, he has used lines in exploring floral forms in painting, and he has also conducted studio research exploring organic vestiges as a medium of social commentary in painting. Garba (2024) posits that the artist enjoys drawing and has produced conceptual drawings that speak to his environment by exploring environmental themes such as nature and human interaction. As an undergraduate student, he had the impression that drawings in general were just ideas sketched on paper for further development with other media as finished artworks. This perception lingered until his encounter with the drawings of Tyrone Geter, an American artist who relocated and lived in Zaria between 1979 and 1986. His drawings were the actual end products, finished artworks that tell stories about his subject matter and their environment. Within the same period, Nadama Mustapha Garba became enthused with the paintings of Gani Odutokun, which created the basis for his interest in lines.

This further developed into a style that came fully to the fore during his Master of Fine Arts Degree (MFA Painting) titled 'A Dialogue Between Lines and Floral Motifs in Paintings'. He has exhibited both solo and in group shows, and his works are widely seen in both private and public spaces. Nadama, as a researcher, has published several of his thoughts in reputable journals like 'Coconut as a Medium for Social Commentary'; 'Art Beyond Aesthetics: An Exploration of Organic Vestiges as a Medium for Social Commentary in Painting', and has attended several conferences, symposiums, and other academic and art activities. Nadama is currently a senior lecturer in the Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Works of Nadama Mustapha Garba:

Plate3: *Sarki*, Nadama Mustapha Garba, 99 x 27 cm, 2023, Charcoal on Cartridge Paper

This work showcases Nadama Mustapha Garba's expressive use of line, rendered in charcoal on cartridge paper in 2020. The composition contains dynamic curvilinear and wavy lines arranged in swirling, spiral patterns, creating a sense of rhythm, movement, and three-dimensionality. These patterns symbolise royal messages, emphasising contrast between light and dark values to evoke mood and tension. The drawing uses repetition, harmony, unity, and texture to enhance visual flow and convey Nadama's intended message. Positive and negative spaces interact to create visual illusions, guiding the viewer's eye and adding balance. Central to the piece are the

abstract representations rooted in Hausa traditional culture, using motifs, architectural elements, and clothing designs associated with royalty and palace life. The composition 'Sarki' (Plate 3) depicts stylised human figures with curvilinear lines and geometric shapes, incorporating elements like the alkyabba (robe), rawani (turban), and babanriga (gown) to symbolise royalty. Special attention is given to the depiction of ears sticking out of turbans, symbolising lineage and status. The visual elements in this work include lines varied in thickness, smooth, flowing, and curvilinear to form shapes, direct movement, and suggest emotion: these shapes, which are abstract, geometric, and organic, exhibit free-form structure, adding a sense of naturalness and fluidity to the drawing. The circular forms suggest both masculinity and femininity.

Plate 4: *Maigida*, Nadama Mustapha Garba, 100 x 30 cm, 2021, Charcoal on Cartridge Paper

This artwork is another striking example of Nadama Mustapha Garba's linear eloquence, executed in charcoal on cartridge paper in 2021. It presents a curvilinear, abstract composition centred on the symbolic representation of a male figure, ' Maigida' (Plate 4), the family patriarch, using expressive lines and multiple eyes to convey presence, watchfulness, and care. Furthermore, in this abstract composition, the artwork features: three realistically rendered eyes placed at strategic positions (top, bottom, right) to guide the viewer's gaze and create rhythm and dynamism; besides, there is a central male face with a twisted mouth and alert expression, symbolising authority and responsibility. The artist explored curvilinear and a variety of lines, which are thin, thick, diagonal, and implied, that contribute to mood, movement, and harmony. Also, the head is represented in single oval shapes, which represent the eyes, said to be a window to the human soul. The use of these lines that are harmonious with the subject matter seems to be preferred by the artist as they do not appear arbitrarily without an origin or a corresponding base. These types of lines originate from shapes within or at the boundaries of the subject matter, therefore, appearing congruent and not in disagreement with it. They are also not distracting from the focal point in the artwork. There is a strong sense of unity, harmony, rhythm, and emphasis, with deliberate repetition of forms and consistent texture tying the elements together. Balance is achieved through the thoughtful use of shape and space, while contrast between positive (detailed) and negative (open) spaces adds interest.

Findings

The findings from the study reveal that both Adiwu Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha Garba utilise line as a primary compositional and expressive tool, but with distinct stylistic and conceptual approaches that reflect their individual backgrounds, philosophies, and artistic objectives. For Adiwu Talatu Onkala, the study found that organic, fluid, and spontaneous movements characterise her use of line. Her drawings often simulate natural patterns such as spider webs, erosion lines, and other environmental textures. Onkala's lines appear gestural and instinctive, reinforcing her connection to themes and nature, fragility and transience. Her practice reflects a strong sensitivity to environmental inspirations and textural possibilities of line, making her linear style both expressive and symbolic. In contrast, Nadama Mustapha's drawings are marked by controlled, calculated, and repetitive line structures, reflecting a more deliberate and graphic approach. His linear expressions often involve floral motifs, geometric patterns, and structured layering, giving his compositions a decorative yet deeply conceptual quality. Mustapha's use of line is informed by cultural symbolism, personal introspection, and social commentary, making his drawings not only aesthetic objects but also visual narratives embedded with meaning.

The comparative analysis between both artists shows that while Onkala's lines evoke spontaneity and organic motion, Mustapha's lines emphasise precision, rhythm, and conceptual balance. This stylistic divergence reflects their individual artistic voices but also points to the broader diversity and richness within contemporary Nigerian drawing practice. Furthermore, the study found that both artists use line as a visual language capable of transcending mere form, engaging viewers in both aesthetic appreciation and critical interpretation. Their works illustrate how line, when deployed with intentionality, can become a powerful medium for conveying personal, environmental, and cultural narratives.

This study has demonstrated that line serves as both a formal and conceptual language in the drawings of Talatu Onkala and Nadama Mustapha. Through detailed formal and contextual analysis, the research has established that both artists approach line not just as a design element but as a vehicle for storytelling, emotional expression, and socio-cultural engagement. Talatu Onkala's exploration of organic line structures draws inspiration from her environmental surroundings and natural phenomena, resulting in drawings that feel fluid, spontaneous, and deeply connected to nature. Conversely, Nadama Mustapha's controlled and methodical use of line reflects cultural symbolism, floral aesthetics, and narrative precision, showcasing a style that is both intellectually engaging. By situating both artists within the larger discourse of contemporary Nigerian art, the study contributes to existing scholarship on stylistic variation, formal analysis, and contextual interpretation in drawing practice. It also highlights the importance of line as a universal visual language that is open to diverse interpretations based on personal, cultural, and environmental factors. Ultimately, the research underscores the need for further academic documentation and analysis of linear practice in Nigerian contemporary art, especially as younger and emerging artists continue to explore the expressive potentials of line within their visual narratives.

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DIGITAL PATHWAYS TO HERITAGE: PRESERVING INDIGENOUS PERFORMANCES AT OBUDU MOUNTAIN RESORT

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Abstract
This study explores the role of digital media in preserving and promoting indigenous performances at the Obudu Mountain Resort, a cultural and ecological site in southern Nigeria. Traditional art forms such as dance, music, storytelling, and rituals are facing decline due to urban migration, generational neglect, and lack of documentation. Digital tools offer new pathways for sustaining these practices. The research examines how video archiving, social media, and digital storytelling can safeguard endangered performances, while also identifying challenges such as authenticity versus digital adaptation, limited infrastructure, technical skill gaps, and inadequate funding. Guided by Cultural Preservation Theory and Media Ecology Theory, the study adopts a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with cultural practitioners, community elders, and media creators. Data were purposively sampled and thematically analysed. Findings indicate strong community interest in digitisation but highlight the need for ethical frameworks, infrastructure investment, and skill development. The study recommends establishing a digital heritage archive, involving local custodians in documentation, fostering partnerships with technology and cultural institutions, and adopting guidelines that respect cultural protocols. It concludes that inclusive use of digital media can sustain indigenous performances not as static relics, but as evolving expressions of heritage, identity, and pride.

Keywords: Digital Media, Cultural Preservation, Indigenous performances, Obudu Mountain Resort

Introduction

In an era of globalisation and rapid digital transformation, the preservation of indigenous cultural expressions has become increasingly urgent. Performances such as music, dance, oral storytelling, and ritual enactments embody the identity, memory, and spiritual values of local communities (Hall, 1994; Schechner, 2003). At sites like Obudu Mountain Resort in Cross River State, Nigeria, these performances have historically functioned not only as entertainment but also as repositories of indigenous knowledge and vehicles for cultural tourism (Nwankwo, 2021; Smith, 2006). However, over recent decades, their visibility has waned due to infrastructural decline, policy neglect, urban migration, generational disinterest, and limited documentation. The resulting erosion threatens intergenerational transmission and the survival of unique cultural worldviews (Adejunmobi, 2005; Ginsburg, 2008).

Digital media has emerged as a promising avenue for addressing these challenges. Tools such as videography, livestreaming, and digital archiving offer opportunities to capture, revitalise, and disseminate intangible heritage, extending its reach beyond local contexts (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2010; Deger, 2006). However, their adoption at Obudu Mountain Resort remains minimal and fragmented, raising concerns about authenticity, ownership, and sustainability (Christen, 2012; Hafstein, 2018).

This study examines how digital media can be deployed as both an archival and performative tool in sustaining indigenous cultural heritage at Obudu Mountain Resort. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which digital platforms are currently being used to document and promote indigenous performances, the challenges limiting their effective deployment, and the strategies that may mitigate these challenges. Grounded in Cultural Preservation Theory and Media Ecology Theory, the research seeks to demonstrate how intentional, community-led digitisation can balance cultural integrity with technological innovation. This contributes to broader debates on heritage preservation, digital empowerment, and the reimagining of tradition in the twenty-first century.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Cultural Preservation Theory and Media Ecology Theory as its guiding conceptual framework. These two theories provide complementary lenses for understanding the dynamics of cultural sustainability and the role of digital media in archiving and revitalising indigenous performances within the context of Obudu Mountain Resort.

Cultural Preservation Theory is concerned with the safeguarding and transmission of cultural values, practices, and expressions, particularly those that are endangered due to modernisation or sociopolitical marginalisation. The theory posits that culture is a vital and living system that requires intentional efforts to maintain, especially in the face of external pressures that threaten its continuity. Central to this theory is the recognition that cultural identity is embedded in everyday rituals, language, oral traditions, and artistic expressions, all of which can be vulnerable to erosion if not continuously practised, adequately documented, performed, or passed on to subsequent generations. In the context of Obudu Mountain Resort, the theory highlights the importance of indigenous performances such as dance, masquerade, storytelling, and music as vehicles for cultural identity and continuity. These performances, often transmitted orally or through embodied practices, are particularly susceptible to loss in the absence of active preservation strategies. The theory supports the notion that such cultural elements must not only be performed but also recorded, taught, and institutionalised in sustainable ways. The implications of Cultural Preservation Theory for this study are two-fold. It frames indigenous performances not merely as entertainment but as critical carriers of communal memory and identity. It justifies the use of digital tools as contemporary mechanisms for cultural safeguarding, so long as these tools are employed ethically and with community consent. The theory also compels researchers and policymakers to consider cultural sustainability as an urgent and ongoing process rather than a static archive.

Media Ecology Theory explores how media technologies shape human perception, understanding, and social structures. It posits that media are not neutral channels of communication but active environments that influence the way individuals and societies interact with information and culture. Media ecology focuses on the interplay between communication tools and cultural ecosystems, arguing that changes in media technology lead to transformations in how people relate to their cultural contexts. Applied to this study, Media Ecology Theory offers insight into how digital media such as video recording, livestreaming, podcasts, and social media platforms can reshape the modes through which indigenous performances are experienced, preserved, and disseminated. In essence, it treats digital media not merely as tools for documentation but as new cultural environments in which traditions can be reconstructed, reinterpreted, or even contested. The implications of Media Ecology Theory for this research are significant. It suggests that the introduction of digital media into indigenous cultural settings is not a straightforward process of preservation but one of negotiation and transformation. While digital platforms can enable wider access and intergenerational engagement, they may also introduce challenges such as cultural distortion, commodification, or loss of context. Therefore, the theory urges a critical examination of the medium's influence on the message and encourages culturally sensitive media practices that respect the integrity of traditional expressions.

The two theories provide a robust conceptual grounding for investigating the underutilisation of digital media in sustaining indigenous performances at Obudu Mountain Resort. Cultural Preservation Theory highlights the urgency and value of protecting endangered cultural expressions, while Media Ecology Theory explains how digital tools both facilitate and complicate that mission. Their integration ensures that the study remains attentive to both the content (what is preserved) and the context (how and through what medium it is preserved).

Literature Review

Indigenous Performances and Cultural Identity

The intersection of indigenous performances and cultural identity has been an important point of cultural and performance studies, with scholars broadly recognising indigenous performance as a powerful medium through which identity is constructed, expressed, and preserved. Hall (1994) contends that cultural identity is not a fixed or essential attribute but a "production," constantly formed and transformed through representation (p. 394). Indigenous performances such as storytelling, ritual dances, and music act as performative spaces where this representation takes place. They reflect both continuity with the past and a response to the evolving dynamics of cultural change. In agreement with Hall, Schechner (2003) conceptualises performance as a form of "restored behaviour," meaning that every enactment draws upon previously encoded cultural memory and ritual (p. 38). This view positions indigenous performances as not merely artistic displays but as cultural texts through which collective memory and identity are performed and transmitted. These performances are often situated in specific social and spiritual contexts, making them vital tools for the reinforcement of group belonging, spiritual beliefs, and community values. Post (2003) extends this argument by asserting that indigenous music and performance serve as frameworks for cultural survival, especially in postcolonial and marginalised communities (p. 14). She argues that performance is intrinsically political, functioning as a method for indigenous peoples to resist cultural erasure and reclaim visibility. However, unlike Schechner and Hall, Post places greater emphasis on the role of power and resistance within performative acts, particularly in contexts of cultural oppression.

The scholars diverge in the degree to which they view performance as autonomous versus shaped by external influences. While Hall (1994) and Schechner (2003) acknowledge the dynamic nature of identity, their focus leans toward cultural self-expression. In contrast, Ginsburg (2008) highlights the risks of external appropriation and distortion when indigenous performances are mediated through commercial, state, or digital platforms (p. 298). She warns that the representation of indigenous identities through such performances can become problematic if indigenous communities lose control over how their culture is portrayed.

Further studies provide more insights into how indigenous performances shape and sustain cultural identity across various sociocultural landscapes. In Nigeria, Adejunmobi (2005) demonstrates how Yoruba masquerade traditions function as both a cultural archive and a medium for moral and historical education (p. 108). The findings reveal that indigenous performances are deeply integrated with everyday life and serve to affirm Yoruba identity across generations. However, she also notes that urbanisation and religious conversion pose threats to the continuity of such practices unless revitalised through institutional and communal support. Similarly, Nfah-Abbenyi (1998) explores how indigenous performances carry historical narratives and social commentary embedded within their form and content (p. 213). The performance of oral histories and communal rituals not only preserves memory but also reinforces identity by enacting social roles, gender norms, and communal values. These findings resonate with Schechner's (2003) theory of performance as ritualised behaviour that links past and present. On a broader scale, Hafstein (2018) notes that state-led preservation can be both beneficial and limiting. In Iceland and beyond, he observes that indigenous performances often gain formal recognition only after being repackaged to fit institutional frameworks (p. 97). This raises concerns about the authenticity of identity expression when performance is curated for policy or tourist consumption. While formalisation can lend visibility and support, it may also distort the spontaneous and participatory nature of indigenous cultural expression. Contrasting this, Deger (2006) offers a more community-centric perspective in her study. She demonstrates how indigenous people use video recordings and digital storytelling as tools to actively shape and safeguard their cultural identity (p. 115). Unlike Hafstein (2018), who critiques institutional preservation, Deger (2006) emphasises the potential of indigenous-led digital documentation to enhance cultural sovereignty. Her findings challenge the assumption that external preservation always leads to cultural compromise, instead pointing to the empowering possibilities of community-owned, media-based documentation.

These scholarly works illustrate both convergence and divergence in how indigenous performances relate to cultural identity. There is broad agreement that indigenous performances are not passive artefacts but active practices through which identity is continually rearticulated. Scholars such as Hall (1994), Schechner (2003), Adejunmobi (2005), and Nfah-Abbenyi (1998) converge on the idea that performance is central to community life and acts as a repository of cultural knowledge. However, disagreements arise regarding the effects of mediation—whether through tourism, digital platforms, or heritage policies—on the authenticity and autonomy of indigenous performance. Ginsburg (2008) and Hafstein (2018) voice caution about the risks of external control and cultural distortion, whereas Deger (2006) and Post (2003) highlight strategies of resistance, cultural authorship, and ownership by indigenous peoples themselves. The tension between preservation and transformation emerges as a key theme; some scholars fear cultural loss through commodification, while others see adaptive performance as a sign of cultural resilience. The literature highlights the dual nature of indigenous performance as both an anchor of cultural identity and a dynamic response to historical and contemporary challenges. The degree to which indigenous communities can control and contextualise these performances largely determines whether they become tools of empowerment or instruments of misrepresentation.

Tourism and Cultural Preservation

The relationship between tourism and cultural preservation has been widely debated in academic literature, with scholars offering both optimistic and critical perspectives on how tourism affects heritage. There is a consensus that tourism can function as a vehicle for cultural preservation, primarily when communities are actively engaged in curating and presenting their traditions. Timothy and Boyd (2003) argue that cultural tourism provides opportunities for communities to maintain their heritage assets, both tangible and intangible, by creating economic incentives for their protection and by raising public awareness about their cultural value (p. 14). They contend that when tourism is thoughtfully managed, it can support preservation initiatives through funding, education, and increased community pride.

In agreement with this view, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2018) advocates for tourism as a mechanism for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, provided it adheres to sustainable and community-driven models. The organisation emphasises that tourism must be "respectful of the communities concerned," encouraging cultural transmission rather than commodification (p. 6). The convergence of these perspectives lies in the belief that cultural tourism has the potential to become a mutually beneficial endeavour, preserving culture while stimulating local economies. However, not all scholars maintain this optimistic position. MacCannell (1999) offers a foundational critique in which he introduces the concept of "staged authenticity," a process in which cultural expressions are altered to conform to tourist expectations (p. 100). He argues that instead of preserving culture, tourism often leads to its simplification and commercialisation, transforming rich traditions into performances devoid of their original meaning. This concern is echoed by Cohen (1988), who differentiates between "destructive commodification" and "constructive adaptation" of cultural elements, urging a more distinctive analysis of how cultural change is mediated by tourism (p. 372). Both scholars challenge the celebratory narratives of cultural tourism, drawing attention to the risks of external control and loss of cultural agency.

The aforementioned studies reflect these theoretical divisions and provide real-world evidence of both the positive and negative implications of tourism on cultural preservation. For instance, Adeduntan (2014) demonstrates through ethnographic research in southwestern Nigeria how the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has benefited from tourism through infrastructural development, heritage conservation, and increased visibility of Yoruba religious practices (p. 59). However, he also notes that the ritual significance of some performances has been compromised due to modifications aimed at attracting tourists. Here, the author acknowledges the dual nature of tourism, both as a preserver and as a potential distorter of cultural meanings and authenticity. Similarly, Nwankwo (2021) illustrates how indigenous performances at the Obudu Mountain Resort have experienced a revival due to their appeal in cultural tourism (p. 89). Local festivals and dances that were once declining have gained renewed interest, partly because they are now featured in tourist programmes.

However, Nwankwo (2021) cautions that such a revival is sometimes superficial, as performance elements may be altered or selectively presented to align with tourist expectations. This evidence supports MacCannell's (1999) notion of "staged authenticity" but also aligns with Timothy and Boyd's (2003) assertion that tourism can reinvigorate endangered traditions if managed locally and ethically. In contrast, Salazar's (2012) comparative work offers a more optimistic interpretation. He finds that community-based cultural tourism, when controlled and organised by the indigenous people themselves, enhances cultural resilience and facilitates intergenerational knowledge transfer (p. 45). His findings contradict the critiques posed by MacCannell (1999) and Cohen (1988), suggesting that adverse outcomes are not inherent to tourism but are contingent upon the structure and agency of local stakeholders. Salazar (2012) advocates for "cultural brokerage," wherein community leaders mediate the relationship between heritage and tourism to ensure authenticity and ethical representation. George and Reid (2006) further strengthen this argument by showing that community-led tourism fosters empowerment and cultural ownership. In their study, they found that tourism projects rooted in community consultation and participation led to a heightened sense of cultural identity and preservation (p. 177). These scholars reject the assumption that tourism inevitably leads to cultural degradation and instead argue for models that integrate cultural sustainability into tourism planning from the outset.

These scholarly perspectives reflect a complex and distinctive discussion around tourism and cultural preservation. A central point of agreement is that tourism can play a role in sustaining cultural practices, especially when those practices are at risk of decline. However, the mechanism and community participation by which tourism engages with culture determine whether the outcome is preservation or commodification. While Timothy and Boyd (2003), UNESCO (2018), Salazar (2012), and George and Reid (2006) emphasise the potential of tourism as a tool for cultural

sustainability, they all stress the importance of local agency, ownership, participation, ethical frameworks, and participatory planning. Equally, MacCannell (1999) and Cohen (1988) emphasise the inherent risks in turning culture into a spectacle, especially when tourism development is externally imposed or profit-driven. Thus, the scholarly divide is not about whether tourism affects culture but rather about how, by whom, and under what conditions cultural tourism is practised. The argument ultimately highlights the importance of context, power relations, and community involvement in shaping the tourism–culture nexus.

Digital Media and Cultural Archiving

Digital media has increasingly become central to conversations around cultural archiving, particularly in relation to preserving endangered or marginalised traditions. At its core, cultural archiving refers to the systematic documentation, preservation, and dissemination of cultural materials, including oral histories, rituals, performances, languages, and visual art. Digital media tools such as video recordings, online databases, virtual exhibitions, and digital storytelling platforms have dramatically transformed how culture is recorded, stored, and accessed. Scholars such as Hennessy (2009) argue that digital media offers a "participatory and reconfigurable platform" for archiving, especially for indigenous communities seeking control over their narratives (p. 23). According to her, digital archives enable the dynamic circulation of cultural knowledge across generations and geographies without requiring physical presence.

This conceptualisation aligns with the broader understanding of digital archiving as a living process rather than a static act of preservation. Likewise**,** Hsu (2013) views digital media as an "aesthetic and political intervention," particularly for communities whose cultural expressions have been historically excluded from institutional archives (p. 340). Through open-access platforms and collaborative methods, digital media allows for the democratisation of memory and the decolonisation of cultural narratives. Hsu (2013) argues that digital archives can challenge hegemonic structures by facilitating counter-archival practices rooted in local knowledge systems.

However, not all scholars share this optimistic view. Christen (2012) cautions against uncritical celebrations of digital archiving, emphasising that digital reproduction may replicate colonial power dynamics when done without community consent or cultural sensitivity (p. 286). She introduces the concept of "cultural protocols" for digital archives, advocating for restrictions on access and use in accordance with indigenous knowledge systems. Her critique points to the ethical implications of digitising culture, especially when the values and epistemologies embedded in cultural materials are not respected. Thus, while most scholars agree that digital media has reshaped the practice of cultural archiving, there is ongoing debate around questions of authorship, access, cultural rights, and the ethical governance of digital platforms.

Studies provide concrete illustrations of how digital media are being employed in diverse cultural archiving contexts. In Australia, Deger (2006) documents how digital video production has become a powerful means of transmitting sacred knowledge while simultaneously reinforcing cultural protocols (p. 112). The use of digital media is not merely a recording device but a mode of cultural expression that affirms indigenous authority over their traditions. Deger demonstrates that collaborative digital archiving can balance technological innovation with cultural continuity when guided by local ontologies. In a similar vein, Srinivasan (2007) focuses on the development of digital repositories that incorporate traditional knowledge management practices. He finds that community-driven platforms where metadata and archival structures are culturally specific allow for a culturally resonant form of archiving that mainstream platforms fail to provide (p. 496). His findings echo Christen's (2012) concerns and reinforce the need for culturally embedded digital infrastructure. On the contrary, empirical studies in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa reveal mixed outcomes. In Nigeria**,** Nwachukwu (2019) analyses digital archiving projects aimed at preserving oral histories among the Igbo and shows that while digital media has increased accessibility and preservation, the lack of digital literacy, funding, and long-term maintenance poses a threat to the

sustainability of these efforts (p. 78). Nwachukwu's findings suggest that technological affordances alone are insufficient without adequate local capacity and infrastructural support. Meanwhile, Ginsburg (2008) explores the global rise of "digital indigenism," where indigenous people use digital technologies to revive language, archive performance, and assert cultural sovereignty in transnational spaces (p. 295). Her work demonstrates how digital media, when controlled by indigenous producers, can become an instrument of cultural revitalisation rather than erasure. However, she also notes the tension between global exposure and local control, cautioning that wide dissemination may lead to cultural misappropriation.

The above reviews converge on the understanding that digital media offers unprecedented opportunities for cultural archiving, particularly for communities seeking to preserve endangered traditions or resist cultural marginalisation. Scholars such as Hennessy (2009), Deger (2006), Hsu (2013), and Srinivasan (2007) champion the emancipatory potential of digital platforms when used in participatory and culturally sensitive ways. They see digital media not just as a technical solution but as a cultural and political practice that can facilitate both preservation and empowerment. At the same time, critical voices such as Christen (2012) and Ginsburg (2008) highlight the ethical complexities of digitising culture, especially concerning issues of access, ownership, and cultural sovereignty. These scholars argue that without clear protocols and community governance, digital archiving may replicate colonial extractivism in a new form. Furthermore, empirical studies such as those by Nwachukwu (2019) reveal that infrastructural and educational limitations can inhibit the long-term viability of digital archives, especially in the Global South. Ultimately, the scholarly argument is not centred on whether digital media should be used in cultural archiving, but rather on how it should be used, by whom, and under what ethical and epistemological frameworks. The consensus stresses the need for community-led, culturally embedded, and ethically guided digital archiving practices that uphold the values of the cultures they aim to preserve. In the context of Obudu Mountain Resort, this discourse is further enriched by research on how participatory archiving initiatives from local custodians, performers, and youth can help sustain indigenous performance practices. Their scholarly input highlights that digital tools, aligned with the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples and enclosed within regimes of community consent, can serve as catalysts of both preservation and revitalisation rather than instruments of appropriation or control.

Challenges and Interventions in Digitising Indigenous Culture in Obudu

Digitising indigenous culture presents a complex interplay of opportunities and challenges rooted in issues of access, authorship, representation, and cultural sovereignty. The digitisation of indigenous knowledge systems, including oral histories, rituals, languages, and artistic expressions, is often heralded as a progressive step toward preservation and revitalisation. However, scholars caution that the process is not without profound ethical, technical, and cultural implications. One of the core conceptual challenges is embedded in the epistemological mismatch between Western archival logic and indigenous knowledge systems. According to Christen (2012), most digital archiving frameworks are based on the principles of open access, linear categorisation, and universal metadata standards, which often conflict with indigenous values of secrecy, sacredness, and contextual knowledge (p. 287). She insists that, in applying the Western system of archival protocols to indigenous materials, the cultural content risks being stripped of meaning and relational function. Similarly, Nakata et al. (2005) introduce the concept of the "cultural interface," a space where indigenous and Western knowledge systems intersect, often uncomfortably (p. 206). They argue that digitisation must be critically examined not only for what it preserves but also for how it reshapes cultural knowledge in that process. The challenge, therefore, is not just technological but ontological; digitising indigenous culture requires recognition of multiple ways of knowing and being.

Other scholars, such as Ginsburg (2008) and Hennessy (2009), acknowledge these tensions yet highlight the potential for digital media to act as a "third space" for indigenous self-representation (pp. 296 & 24). They argue that when indigenous communities are empowered to curate their digital presence, technology can support cultural continuity and political self-determination. This

perspective differs from less optimistic views, which warn that digitisation furthers colonial structures of control and surveillance. Other studies across various regions offer grounded evidence of the challenges and interventions associated with digitising indigenous culture. In Australia, Deger's (2006) research makes clear the importance of cultural protocols around who can view, use, or share digital materials (p. 118). She has documented instances where elders made decisions regarding control over digital video content to keep spiritual and cultural boundaries intact, and by doing so resisted the levelling effects of public accessibility. In the United States, this was an intervention that reconfigured digital archives according to indigenous cultural authority, the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal, a collaboration of the University of Washington with regional indigenous communities. According to Christen (2012), the portal includes culturally specific access restrictions and metadata developed by community members themselves, which allows traditional knowledge systems to reshape the digital environment (p. 290). This is a community-led model that acts as a corrective to universalist assumptions of openness written into Western digital archiving.

In contrast, the prospects for digital preservation in sub-Saharan Africa are hampered by infrastructural and resource-based challenges. Nwachukwu's (2019) work on Igbo oral traditions in Nigeria has identified a lack of funding, limited technical skills, poor internet connectivity, and minimal governmental support as important barriers to effective digitisation (p. 80). Beyond the quality of such projects, these systemic limitations have significant implications for their long-term viability. In his work, he raises the point that capacity-building and policy reform are as important as technological interventions for meaningful impact. In Latin America, for example, in the digital activism of Mapuche communities in Chile, Postill (2018) has examined how social media and video platforms have been used to contest state narratives (p. 68) and document cultural practices. He also notes the risks associated with increased visibility: online harassment, cultural misappropriation, and digital fatigue.

All these form the broader dynamics framing the situation in Obudu, Nigeria. Obudu is located in Cross River State, in a region with various indigenous groups who have rich oral traditions, festivals, and ecological knowledge linked with the Obudu Plateau. Similar to the infrastructural challenges discussed by Nwachukwu (2019), efforts to digitise Obudu's cultural heritage face poor internet access, insufficient funding, and a lack of technical expertise. Furthermore, the epistemological tension between Western digitisation frameworks and local cultural values is manifested through concerns about recording sacred rituals and restricted oral histories in Obudu. While community members appreciate the value of digital preservation for the benefit of both young people and tourism, elders more often defend selective documentation in line with traditional protocols. This is in line with Deger's (2006) argument concerning cultural control and access. Nevertheless, several projects at the instance of local NGOs and educational institutions continue to hold great promise. By working with elders to record folktales, proverbs, and traditional performances according to agreed guidelines, the Obudu are thus gradually compiling a locally managed digital archive. Participatory initiatives of this kind are reminiscent of the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal model, which allows indigenous epistemologies to drive digital curation. The Obudu case, therefore, provides one example of the ways in which community-driven digitisation can balance interests in preservation, access, and respect for cultural sovereignty.

Literary works demonstrate that there is a wide consensus on the nature of the digitisation of indigenous culture being dual; it can be used as a vector of preservation and resistance, yet simultaneously creates deep ethical, technical, and cultural challenges. Authors like Christen (2012), Nakata et al. (2005), and Deger (2006) stress the need for attention to cultural specificity, control, and epistemological respect in digital interventions. They argue for the creation of culturally congruent digital infrastructures that reflect indigenous worldviews rather than imposing externally conceived systems of organisation and access. On the other hand, Ginsburg (2008) and Hennessy (2009) develop the reverse idea of the transformative potential of digital media when they are

deployed within participatory, community-led contexts. Here, the power dynamics of digitisation are rebalanced through collaborative design and indigenous leadership.

This optimistic perspective is corroborated by a number of empirical projects, such as the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal and various digital storytelling initiatives in Australia. However, research emanating from regions with less developed digital infrastructure, such as Nigeria, serves as a corrective, reminding us that these ideals are more often than not difficult to achieve in real life. Nwachukwu (2019) points to the need for broader institutional interventions from education and funding to internet access if digitisation is not to reproduce global digital divides. The Obudu, for instance, underlines this point, illustrating both the possibilities and limitations of indigenous digitisation in the Nigerian context. It signals the relevance of culturally sensitive approaches, which allow the community involved to determine how their knowledge is shared, preserved, and protected in the digital domain. Another source of scholarly divergence involves the balance between digital openness and cultural restriction. While some scholars promote open access as a means of empowerment and reflexivity, others, generally drawing on indigenous epistemologies, emphasise the importance of controlled access and sacred boundaries. This point raises the challenge of developing more adaptive digital frameworks that consider the diverse protocols and contexts of different cultures.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The study employed qualitative methods, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions involving cultural practitioners, content community elders, performers, academia, and technology experts, among others. Data were gathered through purposive sampling, analysed, and presented thematically. The sample population for the focus group discussion (FGD) involved eight participants (coded F1 to F8) while conducting. In comparison, the semi-structured interview discussion (FGD) involved eight participants (coded F1 to F8). In comparison, semi-structured interview discussions (FGD) involved eight participants (coded F1 to F8), and semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven individuals (coded KI1 to KI7). The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis of the responses, which revealed several key issues and insights, reflecting both opportunities and challenges.

Irregular and Poorly Documented Performances

Participants across both the KIIs and FGDs unanimously agreed that indigenous performances at Obudu had become irregular and poorly documented. It was reported by F1, an elderly custodian, that traditional performances used to be an integral part of community festivals, but have now been reduced to occasional events triggered mainly by government visits or special ceremonies. F2, a female cultural dancer, stated that their troupe remained active, but performances were only staged when specifically invited, and often lacked proper publicity or audience engagement. F3, an oral historian, lamented that the community had no archive or repository of its traditional epics or chants, and expressed concern that much of this knowledge would be lost when older practitioners passed away. Similarly, F4 observed that contemporary events such as music concerts and talent shows were increasingly replacing traditional expressions in public events at the resort.

From interviews, KI1, a senior tourism official, admitted that cultural programming at the resort was not regularised. He noted that performances were largely informal and treated as peripheral to the primary tourism offering. K I2, a local tour guide, reported that although tourists frequently expressed interest in cultural experiences, there were no consistent or professionally packaged performances to meet this demand. K I3, a seasoned performer, suggested that consistent digital recording through livestreaming or short documentaries could help sustain their practices while also reaching broader audiences beyond the local community.

Infrastructural and Technical Challenges
A second central theme was the challenge posed by the lack of digital infrastructure and capacity. According to F5, the community lacked access to basic recording equipment and stable internet connectivity. She explained that their cultural centre had no electricity supply, making any form of digital recording or archiving nearly impossible. F6, a young performer, reported owning a smartphone but admitted that he lacked the skills to edit or upload video content. He mentioned having attempted to share a cultural performance online but was discouraged by the technical limitations. F7, a youth leader, confirmed that many young people in the community were interested in cultural media but lacked training in areas such as podcasting, video editing, or content curation.

K I4, a digital content creator, corroborated these accounts, adding that many local performers and custodians remained digitally excluded or illiterate. He argued that without training, most community members were unable to participate meaningfully in digital archiving initiatives. KI5, another tourism official, stated that the Obudu Mountain Resort did not have any dedicated digital archive for cultural content, nor had staff members been designated to handle such tasks. KI6, a media consultant, recommended the introduction of youth-centred digital heritage labs, possibly through partnerships with universities, NGOs, or media houses.

Community Support for Digital Preservation
Despite the infrastructural gaps, participants overwhelmingly expressed enthusiasm for digitising indigenous culture. F8, a masquerade custodian, suggested that digital documentation could serve as a valuable teaching tool for the younger generation. However, he emphasised that any such initiative must respect traditional boundaries and be guided by elders. F2 stated that modern platforms such as TikTok and YouTube could help popularise their dances and engage younger audiences who had little exposure to such performances in their daily lives.

K I3 explained that teaching young people to document cultural expressions digitally would help revive fading traditions. K I1 believed that digital archives, if well-structured and locally managed, could serve educational, cultural, and tourism purposes simultaneously. K I7, an academic researcher, stressed the urgency of intervention, stating that the loss of indigenous knowledge continued yearly due to the lack of formal documentation.

Concerns about Authenticity and Cultural Control
While digital preservation was welcomed in principle, many participants expressed serious concerns about authenticity and ownership. F3, for instance, questioned who would be responsible for controlling and interpreting digital content once it was uploaded to public platforms. He feared that misinterpretation or commercial exploitation could occur, especially if outsiders managed the content. F6 raised concerns that online dissemination might trivialise or commercialise sacred cultural practices, making them vulnerable to ridicule or appropriation. K I5 acknowledged that there was currently no policy or framework in place to guide how cultural content should be digitised or who should have access to it. KI4 suggested that such efforts must incorporate cultural protocols and seek proper consent from knowledge holders. K I7 referenced international models where digital archives are designed with restricted access and indigenous-specific metadata structures, advocating for similar community-led frameworks in Nigeria.

Marginalisation of Indigenous Culture in Resort Programming
Several participants criticised how indigenous culture had been treated within the resort's official tourism programme. F1 claimed that cultural activities had been relegated to a decorative role used merely to entertain tourists for a few minutes rather than being integrated into the core of the resort's identity. F5 added that modern tourism offerings seemed to prioritise Western-style leisure while sidelining authentic local traditions.

KI2 revealed that resort investments had focused more on infrastructure such as accommodation and hiking facilities, while cultural events received minimal funding or planning. K I6 recommended that indigenous performances be repositioned as central to the visitor experience and that the resort should establish a cultural programming unit with full staff and budgetary support.

Youth Disengagement and Need for Training

Another recurrent theme was the disengagement of youth from cultural performance and documentation. F7 stated that many young people perceived traditional culture as outdated or irrelevant. However, he believed that if they were trained in digital content creation, they would take renewed pride in their heritage.

KI3 pointed out that digital documentation could be employed for local youths while helping to revive interest in traditional arts. K I6 proposed forming youth-led cultural media teams supported by external grants and training institutions. K I4 supported the idea of community-based heritage media initiatives, arguing that such projects had proven successful in other countries and could be adapted to the Obudu context.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the literature reviewed and the adopted theoretical framework. Using Cultural Preservation Theory and Media Ecology Theory as conceptual lenses, the analysis highlights how digital media may serve both as a tool and a space for sustaining indigenous performance practices at Obudu Mountain Resort. The discussion is organised under thematic subheadings that correspond to the research objectives.

The Role of Digital Media in Safeguarding Indigenous Performance Arts

The study revealed a strong consensus among both KII and FGD participants that digital media can play a transformative role in preserving indigenous performance traditions. Participants acknowledged that video recordings, livestreaming, and digital storytelling had the potential to document oral narratives, masquerades, dances, and musical practices that are otherwise transmitted informally and at risk of fading out. As stated by participants like KI3 and F8, these technologies could serve as living archives for future generations while providing greater visibility for cultural expressions that currently remain marginalised in touristic programming. This aligns closely with Cultural Preservation Theory, which views cultural practices not only as living systems but also as vulnerable to erasure without active preservation efforts. The use of digital media, in this context, represents a new modality for transmitting indigenous knowledge and cultural memory across generational and geographic boundaries. The literature also supports this view. Deger demonstrated how Aboriginal communities in Australia used digital video to document sacred rituals (p.112), while Hennessy proposed digital repatriation as a form of cultural resilience (p.23-24). These findings affirm the argument by scholars such as Hall and Schechner, who highlight performance as a dynamic expression of identity, adaptable through both traditional and digital forms (p.292-403:38).

Patterns of Digital Documentation, Archiving, and Promotion

Despite the enthusiasm for digital media, the study found that the actual usage of digital platforms at Obudu Mountain Resort to document and promote local performances is nonexistent. Interviewees, including K I1 and KI5, confirmed that the resort lacked a formalised structure for digital cultural archiving. Existing efforts, such as occasional social media posts or basic tourism mapping, have largely excluded indigenous cultural content and focused more on environmental or leisure-based attractions. This finding resonates with literature by Hafstein and Salazar, who note that while digital tools are increasingly used for heritage preservation globally, many such efforts remain institutionally weak or technologically underdeveloped in Sub-Saharan Africa (p. 97: 29-49). It also reinforces the perspective offered by Media Ecology Theory, which emphasises that media are not merely neutral carriers but active environments that reshape the cultural content they convey.

In the absence of a structured system, the sporadic use of digital media may distort, oversimplify, or commodify traditional performances, causing them to lose sacredness and authenticity. Moreover, while digital technologies are widely accessible, their cultural applications depend heavily on the availability of skills, infrastructure, and strategic planning. The absence of these factors at Obudu limits the capacity of digital media to function as a reliable cultural preservation tool.

Barriers to Digitising Indigenous Cultural Content in Tourism Zones

Several barriers were identified in the process of digitising cultural content, especially within the context of tourism development. These include infrastructural deficits such as lack of recording equipment, unreliable electricity, and poor internet connectivity, as noted by participants F5, KI2, and KI4. Moreover, the absence of digital literacy training, especially among young people and traditional custodians, emerged as a significant constraint. In addition to technical and economic limitations, the study found deep-seated apprehensions concerning cultural misrepresentation, authenticity, and ownership. Participants such as F3 and K I5 expressed concern that once digital records are made public, external actors might misinterpret or misuse them. These concerns echo the critique by Christen regarding the risks of uncritical openness in digital archiving, particularly when indigenous cultural protocols are overlooked (p. 2870-2893). The implications of these findings are significant. As Media Ecology Theory suggests, the introduction of digital media changes not only the format but also the context in which culture is received. When these changes occur without proper community engagement, they can undermine cultural sovereignty and dilute traditional meanings.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges in Digital Preservation

Despite these challenges, the study highlighted several intervention strategies proposed by participants. One frequently mentioned solution was the need for community-led digitisation initiatives, where local custodians, performers, and youth are empowered through training in video editing, archiving, and podcasting (as mentioned by K I6 and F7). Participants recommended partnerships with academic institutions, NGOs, and cultural agencies to facilitate capacity building and access to equipment. There was also strong support for the establishment of a formal digital heritage unit at the resort, an idea aligned with both the theoretical and empirical literature. For instance, Ginsburg and Hsu advocate for participatory models that blend media literacy with cultural preservation, ensuring that communities remain in control of their narratives (pp. 287-303:340-357). This approach also reflects Cultural Preservation Theory, which calls for the intentional transmission of tradition through mechanisms that respect cultural values. Furthermore, several participants emphasised the importance of incorporating cultural protocols and access controls within digital platforms. K I7 noted that indigenous metadata structures and limited access can help protect sacred knowledge while still enabling digital engagement. These suggestions correspond with global best practices, particularly in regions where indigenous communities have successfully developed digital archives tailored to their epistemologies. In all the discussion affirms that while digital media holds significant promise for preserving and revitalising indigenous performance arts at Obudu Mountain Resort, its success hinges on strategic, community-led implementation as well as the development of community digital literacy.

Cultural Preservation Theory provides the rationale for why these traditions must be protected. At the same time, Media Ecology Theory offers a critical framework for understanding how digital media may alter or amplify their meanings. The findings call for a multi-dimensional approach balancing technological innovation with cultural ethics, infrastructural investment with capacity building, and modern media tools with traditional authority structures.

Some of the Findings are;

i. **Irregular and Undocumented Indigenous Performances**
   Indigenous performances such as traditional dances, music, and storytelling are occasionally showcased at the Obudu Mountain Resort but lack consistent scheduling and

professional documentation. This hinders their preservation and limits their reach to broader audiences.

ii. **Absence of Digital Archiving Infrastructure**
There is currently no established system for the digital recording, storage, or promotion of cultural performances at the resort. This technological gap poses a threat to the longevity of local cultural expressions.

iii. **Fear of commodification of the culture in Digital Preservation**
The elders and custodians of the cultures showed some level of fear of losing their culturally unique allure. They questioned the authenticity and ownership of their cultural festivals when digitalised and not adulterated.

iv. **Limited Governmental and Institutional Engagement**
While state tourism officials recognise the value of integrating digital tools in tourism promotion, there is little to no targeted initiative focused on preserving indigenous performances through digital media.

v. **Need for Youth Engagement and Skill Development**
There is an evident gap in youths' participation in cultural preservation efforts. However, interviewees noted that involving young people through digital training and performance documentation could revitalise both interest and employment.

vi. **Underutilisation of Cultural Assets in Resort Programming**
Indigenous performances are often relegated to side activities rather than being integrated into the main tourism experience. This reflects a broader undervaluation of cultural heritage within the resort's programming.

Conclusion

The findings confirm that digital media offers significant potential for preserving and revitalising indigenous performance arts at Obudu Mountain Resort. While enthusiasm for such initiatives exists within the community, realisation remains hampered by infrastructural gaps, policy neglect, and cultural concerns. Literature reviewed in this study supports a participatory, ethical approach to digital heritage work, one that centres indigenous knowledge systems and community leadership. The Obudu case demonstrates the need for localised strategies that empower communities to use digital tools not just for documentation but for self-definition. If approached sensitively, digital media can transform endangered traditions into enduring legacies and turn Obudu Mountain Resort into a vibrant cultural archive for present and future generations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the field, the following recommendations are made;

i. **Institutional Support and Policy Integration**
The government of Cross River State, through the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, should integrate digital preservation of indigenous performances into its tourism and cultural policy frameworks. Dedicated funding and strategic direction are essential for implementation.

ii. **Digital Infrastructure and Training**
The state should invest in digital equipment and capacity building. Training programmes for young people in videography, digital archiving, and content management should be established in partnership with universities and private media firms.

iii. **Community-Centred Cultural Documentation**
Local communities, particularly elders and cultural custodians, should be actively involved in co-producing digital records of performances. This ensures authenticity, ownership, and sustainability of the initiatives.

iv. **Strategic Partnerships and Public-Private Collaboration**
Public-private partnerships should be pursued to create platforms for streaming, promoting, and monetising indigenous content. Collaborations with tech firms, NGOs, and international cultural agencies would boost both funding and visibility.

v. **Year-Round Cultural Programming and Digital Showcasing**
The Obudu Mountain Resort should host regular cultural events that are digitally recorded and disseminated via social media, tourism websites, and online platforms such as YouTube. This would enhance engagement and broaden reach.

vi. **Cultural Festivals and Virtual Tourism Experiences.**
Incorporating indigenous performances into virtual tourism packages through VR experiences or livestreamed events can attract diaspora audiences and global cultural tourists, contributing to economic growth and cultural pride.

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KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF NIGERIAN ARCHITECTS

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Abstract
The activities of Nigerian architects are increasingly being scrutinised. Various interest groups are concerned with the architects' work and the end products of their work. Among such groups are the clients, employers of architects, other professionals in the construction industry, and the regulatory bodies. This study investigates what are perceived as key job performance indicators for architects as they discharge their professional duties in the Nigerian building/construction industry. A quantitative approach was adopted whereby architects in different parts of the country were sampled using well-structured questionnaires. The architects were to assess the job performance of Nigerian architects and highlight the key performance indicators for performance rating, commissioning, employment, and promotion. A total of four hundred and eight adequately filled questionnaires were used for the analysis. The results show that Nigerian architects' job performance was positively rated along the three dimensions of performance: contextual (69.1%), task (66%), and ethical performance (72%). Nine (9) variables were identified as key indicators of performance. These have the highest mean scores among the 57 variables considered.

Keywords: Nigerian architects, performance evaluation, performance indicators, profession, professionals

Introduction

Recent research underscores that performance measurement enables organisations to obtain critical information necessary for benchmarking and continuous improvement. It facilitates the systematic evaluation of operational efficiency and effectiveness, supporting evidence-based decision-making across organisational tiers (Mio et al., 2022). Through performance assessment, areas requiring improvement are identified, ensuring that deficiencies are addressed proactively (Cunha et al., 2023). Moreover, performance measurement offers data essential for strategic decision-making, enhancing managerial insight and guiding organisational priorities (Mills et al., 2021).

The process aids leaders and policymakers in defining the direction and pace at which objectives should be pursued, fostering alignment between performance indicators and long-term strategic goals (Bristol-Alagbariya et al., 2022). More broadly, performance measurement delineates the parameters within which programmes, investments, and human resources contribute to desired outcomes. It serves as a reflective tool for professionals to assess their competencies, thus stimulating organisational learning and innovation (Frare et al., 2022).

Beyond retrospective analysis, performance measurement also supports foresight by setting measurable objectives for future growth and improvement (Fatorachian & Kazemi, 2023). It remains a mechanism for quantifying the efficiency and effectiveness of organisational actions, bridging past performance with future aspirations (Zulu et al., 2024).

Although the concept originated in the manufacturing sector, contemporary studies highlight its adoption within service and construction industries, where it has become integral to evaluating project delivery concerning time, cost, and quality (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Within the construction context, performance measurement now operates at three interrelated levels: the project, the organisation, and the stakeholder, each informing broader strategic improvement (Lam, 2022; Ikuabe et al., 2022).

In recent years, as the construction industry continues to grapple with the challenge of delivering high-quality and sustainable projects, performance measurement has emerged as a pivotal mechanism for evaluating and improving the quality of organisations, their projects, and the professionals who drive them (Olayeni, 2017). The consistent application of performance indicators ensures accountability, operational efficiency, and value creation across all project phases, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and transparency (Aghimien et al., 2023). In this context, performance measurement frameworks have become indispensable for assessing not only the tangible outcomes of construction projects but also the professional competencies and collaborative efficiency of those involved in their delivery (Oke et al., 2023).

Despite its growing importance, contemporary research shows that stakeholder performance measurement remains an underexplored area, even though stakeholder effectiveness plays a decisive role in determining organisational success and project performance. Within this broader ecosystem, architects stand as crucial contributors to the construction process, with their design leadership and decision-making profoundly influencing project innovation, sustainability, and aesthetic value (Lawoyin, 2023). However, scholarly attention has tended to focus predominantly on project managers, contractors, and client satisfaction, often overlooking the centrality of architects in shaping holistic project outcomes (Lee et al., 2024). As the industry transitions towards more integrated and sustainability-driven practices, there is a growing recognition that the inclusion of architects in performance measurement frameworks is essential to achieving design excellence and strategic alignment in construction delivery (Zhou et al., 2022).

Recent studies have attempted to close this gap by investigating the multidimensional nature of stakeholder engagement and its implications for project and organisational success. For example, Adekunle et al. (2023) explored how collaborative performance frameworks can enhance architect-led design efficiency and stakeholder integration, while Lee et al. (2024) identified that neglecting

architect-centred metrics impedes the translation of design intent into measurable project performance. Similarly, Aghimien et al. (2023) emphasised that architects' competencies and communication behaviours serve as mediating factors linking design performance with overall construction productivity. These findings reinforce the call for holistic stakeholder performance systems that explicitly account for architects' strategic and creative roles in achieving sustainable outcomes. This study aims to look at performance indicators for architects in the Nigerian building/construction industry, with the aim that it can be used in assessing architects' performance in the industry.

Literature Review

Performance is multifaceted, encompassing elements describing both the results and the processes creating the results (El Fallahi et al., 2023). In contemporary scholarship, performance is widely recognised as a multidimensional concept that encompasses behaviour, actions, and outcomes expressed in relation to specific goals or standards. Recent studies in architectural and construction management extend the behavioural interpretation of performance to include both process-oriented activities and their measurable outcomes, reinforcing the notion that performance is inherently dynamic and context-driven (Mughal et al., 2025). Performance thus reflects not merely the results achieved but also the intentional actions that contribute to those results, capturing the interaction between human agency, organisational systems, and environmental influences (Najafi et al., 2024).

Modern interpretations continue to align with earlier definitions of performance as an aggregation of actions and their effects over time, encompassing both efficiency (how resources are utilised) and effectiveness (the degree to which objectives are achieved). Within architectural and construction practice, performance embodies measurable progress towards design or project goals, reflecting both behavioural engagement and outcome realisation (Olawale, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2024). This duality reinforces the position that performance cannot be understood as a static result alone but rather as an ongoing process of behaviour leading to observable achievement, evaluated against predefined benchmarks or success criteria (Faozen & Sandy, 2023).

Therefore, in architectural and construction contexts, performance signifies the integration of action, process, and result, where the quality of design decisions, managerial conduct, and executional precision collectively determine progress towards organisational and project objectives. It is, in essence, the manifestation of behaviour directed towards achieving measurable excellence in design, management, and construction delivery.

Borman and Motowidlo (1993) highlighted task performance and contextual performance, which is non-task performance. Later empirical refinements, such as those by Motowidlo and Kell (2012), further clarified the behavioural constructs of contextual performance and its predictive role in overall job effectiveness. Recent literature reinforces the distinction originally proposed by Borman and Motowidlo (1993), emphasising that while task performance relates directly to the technical delivery of design and construction outputs, contextual performance involves behavioural contributions such as collaboration, adaptability, and innovation that sustain organisational effectiveness. In the built environment disciplines, contextual performance is increasingly recognised as critical for achieving sustainable and integrated project outcomes (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024).

Empirical findings indicate that contextual factors like communication, teamwork, and creative engagement strongly influence the quality of architectural design, client satisfaction, and project success. For instance, Xiong et al. (2024) linked contextual performance to collaborative efficiency in design–build projects, while Alkilani and Loosemore (2023) demonstrated that stakeholder-related behaviours mediate the relationship between professional competence and project performance. Similarly, Petrova and Kassem (2022) proposed a digital framework for evaluating contextual behaviours within BIM-enabled architectural environments, arguing that soft-skill–based performance is as vital as task proficiency in modern construction practice.

In contemporary organisational and design research, the differentiation between task and contextual performance remains a cornerstone in understanding professional effectiveness. Recent studies reaffirm the three fundamental assumptions first proposed by Borman and Motowidlo (1997) and Motowidlo and Schmit (1999). Firstly, task performance—comprising activities directly linked to the execution of technical or design duties—varies significantly across professional roles, while contextual performance, which reflects supportive and cooperative behaviours, tends to be relatively consistent across occupations (Abun et al., 2021; Hameed et al., 2023). Secondly, task performance is primarily influenced by ability-related factors, including technical competence, expertise, and experience. In contrast, contextual performance is more strongly associated with personality and motivational attributes, such as conscientiousness, initiative, and commitment (Otero et al., 2021). Finally, task performance represents prescribed, in-role behaviour, while contextual performance encompasses discretionary, extra-role actions that foster collaboration, organisational learning, and innovation (Borman & Motowidlo**,** 2021; Chaudhary & Panda, 2022).

Within the architecture and construction sectors, task performance embodies the technical and procedural efficiency through which professionals execute project-related activities that directly contribute to the organisational and design core. This includes the application of design knowledge, precision in documentation, and adherence to regulatory and quality standards. Conversely, contextual performance captures the behavioural and interpersonal dimensions such as teamwork, communication, and adaptive problem-solving that create a conducive environment for effective project delivery (Alkilani & Loosemore, 2022).

Current empirical evidence indicates that both performance dimensions are interdependent, with contextual behaviours often enhancing task proficiency by strengthening coordination and stakeholder relations. When aggregated over time, an individual's behavioural consistency and outcomes evaluated against organisational expectations constitute what is ultimately perceived as good or substandard performance (Huemann & Turner, 2024). In this sense, modern performance frameworks within design and construction management emphasise a holistic view of performance that integrates both technical execution and human-centred contributions (Kamau, 2024; Abejide, 2024).

In recent years, ethical performance has emerged as a vital dimension of performance measurement, particularly within the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) sectors. Contemporary scholarship underscores that ethics transcends abstract moral reasoning and manifests as a practical, measurable component of professional conduct. Ethical performance encompasses not only compliance with established professional codes but also the proactive integration of integrity, accountability, and social responsibility into daily decision-making (Shrestha, 2022). It represents a dynamic construct shaped by cultural, contextual, and temporal factors, reflecting evolving societal expectations and sustainability imperatives.

Ethics in professional practice is now viewed as an adaptive learning process, where behaviour is continuously evaluated against emerging norms of fairness, environmental stewardship, and equity. For architects and construction professionals, ethical performance extends beyond technical competence; it involves balancing professional judgment, client interests, and public welfare in an era of sustainability and digital transformation (Fraser et al., 2023).

In parallel, methods for measuring professional and organisational performance have evolved from traditional appraisal systems such as critical incident methods, behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS), and 360-degree performance evaluations to include multidimensional ethical indices and behavioural analytics (Kuoribo, 2023). Within the AEC context, recent models integrate both hard and soft attributes: technical competence, innovation, and productivity on one hand, and ethical behaviour, collaboration, and transparency on the other. Studies demonstrate that integrating

ethical parameters into performance evaluation enhances trust, project outcomes, and overall organisational reputation (Mazzetto et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence also shows that predictive models of professional performance, particularly for architects and engineers, are increasingly incorporating ethical and sustainability considerations as performance predictors. This aligns with broader calls for responsible design and construction practices, where ethical awareness is a determinant of professional excellence and long-term industry resilience (Manu et al., 2021).

Methodology

The study adopts the survey approach. Through a questionnaire survey design, the study was conducted among architectural firms in three Nigerian cities located in the west, east, and central Nigeria, namely Lagos, Enugu, and Abuja. Two of these cities, Lagos and Abuja, have the highest concentrations of architectural firms in Nigeria. Abuja 190 firms, Enugu 57 firms, and Lagos 289 firms (ARCON, 2013). One of every two architectural firms was selected, and two architects were purposively drawn from the selected firm for questionnaire administration. A total of 408 questionnaires were retrieved out of 536 administered, representing 76%. The respondents were asked to assess the job performance of architects in Nigeria in terms of task, contextual and ethical job performance. This module, adapted from literature (Borman &Motowidlo, 2009; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002), distributed architects' performance into three (3) dimensions, namely: Contextual Performance, Ethical Performance, and Task Performance. The respondents were to rate the performance of fellow architects along those three dimensions of performance and come out with a performance score.

The analysis involved the computation of the performance score of each architect. This means that each respondent architect's score of performance for Nigerian architects in general was used to determine the overall performance rating, and also along the 3 dimensions of contextual performance, task performance and ethical performance. There are 57 items in the questionnaire used to evaluate the performance of Nigerian architects. The first 22 items were used to evaluate architects' contextual performance. The following 12 items on the questionnaire were used to evaluate Nigerian architects' ethical performance, while the last 23 items were used to evaluate Nigerian architects' task performance.

Main Discussions

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Dimensions of Profile	Frequency (n=408)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	309	75.7
Female	99	24.3
ARCON Registered		
Yes	408	100
No	0	0.0
Education		
HND	9	2.2
BSc.	10	2.5
PGD	7	1.7
MSc.	353	86.5
MPhil./PhD	29	7.1
Post Academic Qualification Experience		
36 – 45 years	1	0.2
26 – 35years	39	9.6
16 – 25 years	130	31.9
6 – 15 years	213	52.2
Less than 6 years	25	6.1

Firm location		
Abuja	143	35.0
Enugu	31	7.60
Lagos	234	57.4

From Table 1, the characteristics of the respondents are presented. A quarter of the overall respondents (408) are female architects, while male architects are in the majority. Most of the respondents (86.5%) have the Master of Science degree in Architecture. About 80% of the respondents have between 5 and 25 years of post-qualification experience, and about 10% of the architects have more than 25 years' experience. The respondents' architectural practices are located in Lagos (57.4%), Abuja (35.0%), and Enugu (7.6%).

Contextual Performance

Table 2: Contextual Performance ratings

Performance Level	Grading Scores	Frequency n	Percent %
Very Poor Performance	24.0 – 41.2	37	9.1
Poor Performance	41.3 – 58.4	38	9.3
Average Performance	58.5 – 75.6	51	12.5
Good Performance	75.7 – 92.8	208	51.0
Very Good Performance	92.9 – 110.0	74	18.1
		408	**100.0**

The study found that the majority (69.1%) of the study participants considered Nigerian architects to be on the positive side of contextual job performance (Table 2). In comparison, 18.4% of the study participants considered Nigerian architects to be on the negative side of contextual performance, with about 13% of the study participants who adjudged Nigerian architects to be of average performance. Contextual performance deals with discretionary performances which do not contribute to the technical core (Krausert, 2009), and it supports the organisational, social, and psychological environment in which goals are pursued. This is strongly linked to the personality and motivation of the professional. The result, therefore, shows that the study participants considered Nigerian architects to be doing well in these areas, which helps the architectural firms achieve the set goals.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents' agreement to indicators of Contextual Performance

Variables of Contextual Performance	Mean Rank	SD
They pay close attention to important details in their work	3.7	1.2
They strive to overcome obstacles that may hinder any task	3.7	1.2
Nigerian architects have a good ability to listen to clients and other construction professionals	3.7	1.2
They can communicate amicably with superiors, clients, and other construction professionals	3.6	1.2
They have respect for clients and other construction professionals	3.6	1.2
Nigerian architects perform their tasks speedily	3.6	1.1
They tackle challenging assignments enthusiastically	3.6	1.1
They show good quality in cooperating with clients and other construction professionals	3.6	1.1
They respect authority	3.6	1.1
They anticipate problems with construction and take actions to prevent them	3.5	1.1
They conform to the organisation's standard procedures, values, and policies	3.5	1.1
They demonstrate civic virtues (good manners)	3.5	1.1
They make suggestions regarding organisational improvement	3.5	1.0
They show consideration for the needs and feelings of others	3.5	1.0
They are open to criticism	3.5	1.0.
They share concerns for the firm's objectives	3.5	1.0
They perform extra necessary tasks without explicit orders	3.5	0.9
Nigerian architects show loyalty to the firm	3.4	1.1
They respond willingly without hesitation to orders	3.4	0.9
They carry out orders promptly and thoroughly	3.4	0.9
They make personal sacrifices for the firm.	3.4	0.9
They stay with the architectural firm during hard times	3.3	0.9

From the twenty-two variables that explain the overall contextual performance (See Table 3), "given attention to detail, "striving to overcome obstacles", and "listening to clients/other professionals" were adjudged by the respondents to be the most important performance indicators for contextual performance. The least important performance indicator was "staying with the architectural firm during hard times". They revolve around a minimum of 3.3±0.9 standard deviation and a maximum of 3.7±1.2. From these, any Nigerian architect who must be adjudged to be performing well must be one who gives attention to details ranging from brief taking, preliminary design, to construction, and every aspect of work required of him/her as an architect. Aside from this, perseverance in carrying out responsibilities, as well as the ability to listen to clients and other allied professionals while discharging their responsibilities, are required.

Ethical Performance

Considering the ethical performance of Nigerian architects, about 72% of the study participants rated architects to be on the positive side of the spectrum, which corresponds to excellent and good performance (Table 4). On the negative side, 12.5% of the study participants considered the architects to perform poorly on ethical issues around their professional work. Those who considered Nigerian architects to perform on average with respect to the ethics of the profession were 15.7%. On the whole, the total of personal and professional ethics, the latter of which describes the behaviour expected of an individual in an industry or a particular group within the industry, is positive among Nigerian architects.

Table 4: Ethical Performance Ratings

Performance Level	Grading Scores	Frequency N	Percent %
Very Poor Performance	12.0 – 21.6	0	0.0
Poor Performance	21.7 – 31.2	51	12.5
Average Performance	31.3 – 40.8	64	15.7
Good Performance	40.9 – 50.4	222	54.4
Very Good Performance	50.5 – 60.0	71	17.4
		408	**100.0**

The results showed that the mean scores of agreement of Nigerian Architects in evaluating the ethical performance of architects involving 12 items revolved around a minimum of 3.3±0.9 standard deviation and a maximum of 3.6±1.1 standard deviation (Table 5). The issue of confidentiality and privacy of the client is a paramount performance factor of ethical issues that Nigerian architects must ensure. Added to this is a good understanding of the professional codes of conduct and ethics guiding the practice of the profession in Nigeria.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents' Agreement to Indicators of Ethical Performance

Variables of Ethical Performance	Mean Rank	SD
They respect the confidentiality and privacy of their client	3.6	1.1
Nigerian architects have a good understanding of professional codes of conduct and ethics guiding their profession	3.5	1.1
They always carry out work competently and conscientiously, and in a responsible manner	3.5	1.0
They always uphold a professional code of conduct and ethics in all dealings with clients, other professionals, and actors in the industry	3.5	1.0
Nigerian architects avoid false claims in profiles/resumes to clients and others	3.5	0.9
They are impartial, responsible, and truthful in their professional obligation	3.5	0.9
They avoid all forms of conflict of interest	3.5	0.9
They do not get involved in all manner of fraudulent activities, either in the office or on sites	3.5	0.9
They always abide by the approved drawings and building codes on sites	3.4	1.1
They do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, religion, or disability	3.4	1.1
They always keep proper records of all money held on behalf of the organization/, firm, or client	3.4	0.9
They remit all taxes and dues to the authority as due	3.3	0.9

Task Performance

Task performance revolves around the prescribed cognitive abilities of any professional. Architects must face greater scrutiny in this aspect. It indicates the proficiency of the professional at doing the job prescription with respect to his/her qualifications (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Sixty-six per cent (66%) of study participants adjudge Nigerian architects' performance with respect to their cognitive ability good, with 20% rating them bad (Table 6). Those who described Nigerian architects as of average performance task-wise were about 13.5%. The knowledge, skill, and ability that the study participants observed amongst Nigerian architects are generally positive.

Table 1: Task Performance Ratings

Performance Level	Grading Scores	Frequency n	Percent %
Very Poor Performance	27.0 – 44.6	31	7.6
Poor Performance	44.7 – 62.2	53	13.0
Average Performance	62.3 – 79.8	55	13.5
Good Performance	79.9 – 97.4	203	49.8
Very Good Performance	97.5 – 115.0	66	16.2
		408	**100.0**

The results showed that the mean scores of agreement of Nigerian Architects in evaluating the task performance of architects involving 23 performance indicators revolved around a minimum of 3.3±0.9 standard deviation and a maximum of 3.8±1.3 standard deviation (Table 7). Topmost among performance indicators required of Nigerian architects in the area of task performance is the ability to generate a design that can be easily realised as a building. The architect must also recognise the need for the sustainability of the natural and built environment, as well as being creative in design.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents' Agreement to Indicators of Task Performance

Variables of Task Performance	Mean Rank	SD
They recognise the need to sustain the natural and the built environment	3.7	1.2
They are creative in design concept, clearly	3.7	1.2
Nigerian architects generate design concepts that can easily be realised as a building	3.8	1.3
They interpret the project brief and decide on design objectives precisely	3.7	1.2
They agree with the client and interested parties about the schematic design	3.7	1.1
They carefully consider choices of structural systems and construction materials	3.6	1.1
They carefully consider building services in the design	3.6	1.1
They produce excellent working drawings	3.6	1.1
They are aware of regulatory building codes	3.6	1.1
They negotiate and agree on the detailed design proposal with the client and other interested parties	3.5	1.1
They resolve all components of the design before preparing the tender documents preparation	3.5	1.1
They can employ ICT skills in presentations, detailed drawings, contractual documents, emails, etc	3.5	1.1
They always prepare architectural specifications and schedules	3.5	1.0
They always establish site conditions before design	3.5	1.0
They monitor compliance with contract documents and relevant regulatory authorities	3.5	1.0
They always comply with the law and regulations governing the conduct of an architectural practice	3.5	1.0
They assess how the project will affect/be affected by the environment and the community	3.5	0.9
They provide handover advice and as-built records	3.4	1.1
Nigerian architects have practice objectives and establish a practice structure and strategies for their achievements	3.4	0.9
They establish and maintain practice management systems	3.4	0.9
They always provide necessary updated detailed information (written/drawing) for the construction	3.3	1.1
They undertake post-occupancy evaluation and assess for future operational use	3.3	0.9

They deploy and manage staff well	3.3	0.9

Conclusion

The study identified nine performance indicators along the three areas of performance: contextual performance, task performance, and ethical performance, which help measure the performance of Nigerian architects. These nine performance indicators are found to help assess the overall performance of the Nigerian architects. Each of the three areas of performance has three indicators each. However, the first among these nine performance indicators is a factor under the task performance, which has to do with designing a concept that can be constructed. The following three performance indicators are under the contextual performance, which support the environment in which the technical core (task) operates. It encompasses interpersonal behaviours and organisational citizenship behaviours. The last three indicators fall under ethical performance.

Table 8: Highest reported Mean score of selected Overall Performance indicators

Variables of Overall Performance	Mean
Nigerian architects generate design concepts that can easily be realised as a building	3.8
They pay close attention to important details in their work	3.7
They strive to overcome obstacles that may hinder any task	3.7
Nigerian architects have a good ability to listen to clients and other construction professionals	3.7
They recognise the need to sustain the natural and the built environment	3.7
They are creative in design concept, clearly	3.7
They respect the confidentiality and privacy of their client	3.6
Nigerian architects have a good understanding of professional codes of conduct and ethics guiding their profession	3.5
They always carry out work competently and conscientiously, and in a responsible manner	3.5

Measuring the performance of the architect as one of the essential stakeholders in the building/construction industry is very important for the organisation in the areas of employment, remuneration, promotion, and redundancy. It helps the organisation in delivering projects on time, within the projected cost, and ensuring the quality of the project delivered. The performance indicators identified in this study can be used to measure the performance of architects and help improve the outlook of the industry as a whole, since the organisations will be better off when they have a competent workforce discharging responsibilities to various clients. In the same vein, the training of would-be architects in various architectural schools can focus intensely on these germane factors that enhance the performance of the architect later in practice.

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THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE *ADIRE* ART TRADITIONS IN YORUBA SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Adire (resist fabric) constitutes a vital part of the material culture of the Yoruba, and it is the observation of the researcher that the artistic culture of humanity is changing daily. What this means is that the particular types of textiles that can communicate identity may change through time in response to economic, demographic, spiritual, technological, and other societal changes. The Adire art tradition of the Yoruba in South-western Nigeria has experienced significant changes over time. Given this, this study is an attempt to look at the significant changes in Adire art traditions in Yorubaland, not only as a tradition but as a process of change and techniques. Although the designs of the Adire have become more complex since the importation of "factory cloth from Manchester", the overt appearance, to foreigners, is still one of a traditional style. The Adire is often worn; the Osogbo pieces are not. They are decorative in the western style for art's sake. In design theories, the traditional technique of producing designs for textile printing, using freehand, has given way to professionally calculated methods to achieve aesthetic and balanced designs for the international market as well as for local appreciation. For this reason, various techniques of repeat methods are now being exploited, such as simple repeat, half drop, half slide, diamond, and complex repeats to achieve sophisticated prints.

Keywords: *Adire,* Art, Changes, Tradition, Yorubaland.

Introduction/ Background of the Study

Adire is an integral aspect of Yoruba cultural life in Nigeria. Historically, it has served as a visual record of local experiences and social histories, particularly in the early twentieth century. Produced through resist-dyeing techniques across Yoruba communities, *adire* has continued to evolve in response to cultural, social, and economic influences over time.

The word *Adire* literally means ‘‘to tie and dye. In its production, materials such as string, synthetic threads, raffia fibres, and various forms of paste are used to block or resist the dye. *adire* production and trade are historically centred in Abeokuta, where the industry reached its peak in the 1920s. Until around 1910, *adire* making was practised exclusively by women in Abeokuta. However, the introduction of stencil techniques brought men into the production process, as they began cutting zinc stencils and using them to create patterned designs on the cloth.

The motifs are typically transferred by mothers to their daughters within dyeing families from generation to generation. Design inspirations are derived from myth, folklore, cultural motifs, and symbols. The rocky environment of Abeokuta is another source of inspiration. Cultural values of the people are patterned into resist-dyed cloth, for example, showing the evidence of how things are changing. The 19th and 20th centuries brought enormous change to traditional African art, especially in Nigeria (Adepegba, 1995). Since Nigeria’s independence, the artistry and production of *adire* have undergone significant transformation. These changes include developments in technique, increased understanding of colour chemistry, and the recognition of *adire* as a viable vocational and academic field, now taught and researched within universities.

Cultural exchange, Western education, trans-Saharan trade routes, and contemporary globalisation have also influenced *adire* styles. As a result, some *adire* designs have shifted from more material expressions to increasingly stylised and sometimes near-abstract forms. Bakare (2023) postulates that there has not been an in-depth study on the factors responsible for the observable and significant changes in *adire* art traditions in Yorubaland. There has, however, been a significant influx of foreign culture into it, among other challenges that threaten it further. Technological changes influenced by foreign contact, along with the transient nature of locally sourced materials, social mobility, and the rapid shift in indigenous values, have contributed to the decline of the traditional *adire* art tradition has also lost ground to Western textile imports, including both new fabrics and second-hand clothing (popularly known as *okrika* or *bosikona*). These external influences, combined with internal cultural changes within Yorubaland, have resulted in the loss of knowledge surrounding the original processes and meanings of *adire* among many contemporary designers. According to Baba Ede (oral interview, 2019), the tools, materials, techniques, and apprenticeship systems are key factors that have shaped the changes in *adire* production. In light of this, the present study seeks to examine the significant transformations in *adire* art traditions in Yorubaland.

Problem Statement

As previously stated, the *adire* art tradition in Yorubaland has and continues to experience significant changes in its processes, techniques, and cultural meaning over time. These changes have been influenced by social, economic, and technological factors, including increased contact with external cultures, economic instabilities, and shifting local values. The problem this study addresses, therefore, is the need to understand how these have affected both the production and traditional significance of *adire* within contemporary Yoruba society.

Aim of the Study

Social changes threaten the retention of cultural values as each generation dances to the tune in vogue, which suggests that there is a kind of sociological control that rules over values in *Adire* Art Traditions. Given this, the aim is to document the development and evolution of this traditional textile art form. Examine the significant changes in *adire* art traditions in southwestern Nigeria, with particular focus on evolving influences, processes, and techniques. It also aims to investigate and establish the creative patterns and manipulations of traditional subjects within the *Adire* Art Tradition.

Objective of the Study

To identify the various types of *adire* fabrics and to examine the factors responsible for the significant changes in *adire* art traditions in Yorubaland.

Research Question

What types of *adire* can be identified today, and what factors are responsible for the significant changes in *adire* art traditions in southwestern Nigeria?

The research focuses on identifying the significant changes in *Adire* Art Traditions in Yoruba, southwestern Nigeria.

Justification of the Study

Although Yoruba *adire* textiles have received considerable scholarly attention, there remains a lack of comprehensive research specifically addressing the significant changes that have occurred in *adire* art traditions over time, as is currently the purview of this study. Existing literature often provides only general or surface-level discussions of these transformations, without offering identifiable changes as well as a detailed analysis of the cultural, social, and technical factors shaping them. This study is therefore justified, as it seeks to fill this gap by examining the evolution of *adire* processes and techniques in depth. The findings will contribute to the preservation of indigenous knowledge, strengthen cultural pride, and reinforce confidence in African textile design as a valuable artistic and cultural heritage.

Literature Reviews

Factors Responsible for Significant Changes in *Adire* Art Traditions in Yoruba, Nigeria.

Adire cloth making is a traditional textile art form that originated from the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria, particularly in the city of Abeokuta. One notable form, *adire eleko,* involves applying starch to create resisted patterns before dyeing, and represents a key aspect of Yoruba artistic heritage. Over time, *adire* has undergone significant changes in response to broader shifts within contemporary African art. Historically, transformation in textile design and usage occurred gradually through contact with neighbouring or foreign groups, whether through trade, religion, education, or other cultural exchanges. In the present day, however, change has been more rapid, shaped by Western cultural influence, global media, and evolving aesthetic values.

These external influences, along with processes of appropriation and reinvention, have contributed to new interpretations of *adire* fabric. Today, the religious and social traditions of Africa are in a state of flux, and in many places, they are gradually disappearing. As a result, it has become increasingly challenging to find artists who work expertly in the styles of their ancestors. Only in a very few regions do artists still practice traditional forms with little loss of quality. The breakdown of African traditions began with the arrival of European colonial powers, who ruled the continent for

generations. Even before colonisation, through *adire* trade and other exchanges, foreign customs had already begun to enter African societies.

Under the influence of these new ideas, every sphere of African life, economic, political, social, and religious, started to change. The decline of traditional religion has been one of the most significant of these changes, as it has had the most profound effect on traditional art (Mount, 1989). Smith and Eicher (1982), in their systematic study of African textiles, emphasised the importance of early accounts written by European travelers and explorers, particularly those from the 16th to 18th centuries, as valuable records of traditional clothing and body adornment practices. These accounts provide foundational material for comparison with later developments in African textile traditions.

According to Adepegba, the 19th and 20th centuries brought significant changes to traditional African cultures, including those of the Yoruba, as a result of external influences (Atanda, 1980). Trade, cultural interaction, and various forms of contact introduced new ideas that greatly affected Nigerian textiles. As Ojo (2000) notes, Yoruba clothing culture has undergone modifications and innovations due to increased exposure to foreign styles. Foreign motifs were sometimes added to existing designs, or new patterns were created altogether. Techniques and methods of production also shifted from indigenous practices to newer approaches. These changes extend beyond handcrafted textiles to other African art and design forms as well.

Consequently, the fact that an African artisan produces an object does not necessarily mean that it reflects traditional African artistic values. Thus, this adherence to an arbitrary system of valorisation creates significant challenges for contemporary African arts, which are often shaped by Western-style education (Vansina, 1994). For example, Osogbo pieces are typically painted on calico or produced in batik, and they often feature a centrally framed narrative image. In contrast, the *adire* is a dyed textile with no single central motif; instead, images are repeated throughout the composition, and repetition itself becomes a defining structural principle.

Although *adire* designs have become more elaborate since the introduction of factory- produced cloth from Manchester, to foreign observers, the cloth may still appear to follow a traditional aesthetic. Furthermore, *adire* is commonly worn as clothing, while Osogbo pieces are generally not worn. Instead, they are produced as decorative objects aligned with Western notions of ‘‘art for art’s sake.’ In design theory, the traditional freehand method of creating textile patterns has increasingly given way to more calculated and professionally structured approaches intended to achieve balanced and aesthetically refined designs for both international markets and local appreciation.

As a result, various repeat techniques are now employed, including simple repeat, half-drop, half-slide, diamond, and other complex repeats, in order to produce more sophisticated prints. However, even after such developments, the human desire to enhance the visual appeal of everyday objects continues to inspire modification and creative experimentation. The *Adire* art tradition has likewise been a subject of sustained investigation and reinterpretation. This suggests that external influences have played a role in shaping the evolution of *adire* art tradition in the Yoruba Southwestern Yoruba land.

Materials and Methods

A comprehensive approach is considered essential because the issue under study is multifaceted. This research, therefore, adopts a mixed-methods design. A quantitative method was used to assess the significant changes in *adire* art traditions, which included the use of statistical data to identify the factors responsible for these changes. In addition, qualitative research methods were employed

to explore the cultural and social implications of these changes in southwestern Yorubaland. This involved in-depth interviews, discussions, and ethnographic observation. A historical survey was also conducted to establish the background and development of *adire* production.

Furthermore, a survey method was used to collect data from respondents, as recommended by Adetoro (1997). Identifying the various types of *adire* fabrics and examining the factors driving their transformation was necessary in order to evaluate the changing value of *adire* art traditions. The study relied on field, library research, and online sources. The section below outlines the significant changes in *adire* from traditional wrappers to modern dress forms.

Plate 1: *Adire* Free yard Short gown: *(Eja, Isana, Orokun aro, Agbo ile.)* Source: Bakare, O.O, (2023)

Plate 2: *Adire* free after-dress net gown *(iyari, ododo, orokun aro, sekere. Opo ile mapo).* Source: Bakare, O.O, (2023)

Plate 3: *Adire* short skirt with bow *(opo ile mapo, aiyedegbe, orokun aro iko orita)..* Source: Bakare, O.O, (2023)

Plate 1 is a Freeeyard Short Gown with multicoloured arrays of *adire* designs, most especially, turquoise blue net at the front side. The *adire* designs are youthful and casual; the greatest strength of the researcher lies in the ability to make use of visual elements and blend different patterns with them.

Plate 2 is known as Freee After-Dress Gown, which was being taped with adapted adire Designs (Batik), and each motif depicts Yoruba mood or emotions in the use of colour, aesthetics, philosophy, and proverbial expression. The small touches of adapted batik make it more unique, elegant, beautiful, and ready to wear to an occasion. Patterns and designs derived from Yoruba ideology and proverbial expression are just a way to express the researcher's thoughts in this study. Significant factors influenced the researcher by inspirations, cultural and native experiences, and this sample is the elegant image (motif) of the Yoruba people.

Plate 3 is a short skirt with a bow, and this is suitable for young ages and very ready to wear for ladies. The design is an important inspiration and metaphor in the Yoruba social and aesthetic system, and the researcher brings out all creativity to have rhythm in this study.

Discussion and Findings

Oral Interviews

Information collected from Adesina Adeseye, Mosun Hassan, Tosin Adeleye (Elegushi), and Idowu Israel (oral interview, 2019) indicates that innovations introduced in the 1930's allowed men to

participate in *adire* production, which had initially been a craft practiced primarily by women. Adeogun (personal communication, 2019) further explained that new tools and techniques made it possible for designers to incorporate a broader range of motifs drawn from their environment. During the second half of the twentieth century, a broader colour palette became available with the introduction of imported synthetic dyes.

Various hand-dyed textiles employing wax-resist batik methods were also introduced, producing patterned cloth in a wide array of dye tones and hues. However, this development did not immediately reach its full potential. These innovations attracted Nigerian fashion designers, who adopted *adire* motifs into printed fabrics and garment construction, thereby transforming *adire* into an entrepreneurial craft. Among such designers are Ade Bakare, Kesse Jabari, Jimmy King, Rowland Olujimi Gureje, Quintessence, African Pride, and the tradition is now taught in formal institutions.

Despite the general decline of the textile industry in areas of industrial textile production, *adire* has distinguished itself through its resilience and continued potential to contribute to the revival of the sector. However, it appears that *adire* has not yet fully realised its potential both locally and internationally, even with contemporary corporate and modernised African fashion styles, as illustrated in plates 1-3 above.

Research Question: What are the significant changes in the *Adire* fabrics in Southwestern Nigeria?

Table 1. Analysis of respondents' views on the significant changes and their influences on the *Adire* Fabrics in Southwestern Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENT	Extent of agreement					Ef	Efx	Mn	Rnk	Rmk
		SA	A	U	SD	D					
i.	Factors responsible for the significant changes in the *Adire* in Nigeria are the youths, Education, Technology, Religion, and civilisation.	27	60	1	1	1	90	381	4.23	4th	Agreed
ii.	The materials like *tjap, tjanting*, zinc stencil, foam, design net, and feather can be used to design *Adire*.	35	55	0	0	0	90	395	4.39	1st	Agreed
iii.	*Adire* art tradition has lost ground to Western textiles, like the new clothing, and used one (*okirika* or *bosikona*).	28	57	3	1	1	90	380	4.22	5th	Agreed
iv.	*The Adire* arts tradition still substantially relies on old techniques.	15	37	3	17	18	90	284	3.16	8th	Agreed
v.	*The older generation still upholds the Adire arts tradition*.	16	40	5	15	14	90	299	3.32	7th	Agreed
vi.	Are there new socio-cultural motifs and pattern designs in *Adire* art traditions?	30	57	1	0	2	90	283	4.26	3rd	Agreed
vii.	*Adire* art traditions altered through cultural interaction and graded stylisation, such as trans-Saharan trade, Western Education, and Globalisation.	37	48	1	2	3	90	387	4.29	2nd	Agreed
viii.	Were there rites associated with the *Adire* art tradition before and after it was created?	21	47	5	7	10	90	332	3.69	6th	Agreed
	Aggregate Mean								**3.95**		**Agreed**

Source: Researcher Field Survev. 2020

In Table 1, the findings from respondents' views on the significant changes in *adire* art tradition indicate that respondents agreed that changes occurring in *adire* production are in the materials now used for design, such as tjap, tjanting, zinc, stencil, foam, net, and feathers (mean = 4.39).

Respondents also agreed that *adire* culture has been influenced by interactions with other civilisations through trade, education, and globalisation (mean = 4.29). Furthermore, respondents agreed that these interactions have led to the emergence of new motifs and designs in the making of *adire* cloth (mean = 4.26). Respondents also acknowledged that these changes have been significantly shaped by youth culture, religion, civilisation, and technological advancement (mean = 4.23). On a negative note, respondents agreed that globalisation, through trade liberalisation and the influx of foreign textiles, has had a significant impact on changes in *adire* production (mean = 4.22). However, despite this negative influence, respondents still agreed that the *adire* continues to be produced using traditional rites, techniques, and artistic practices, particularly among older generations, with mean scores of 3.69, 3.32, and 3.16, respectively. Based on these findings, it can be deduced from Table 1 that several sociocultural and external factors have significantly contributed to changes in *adire* cloth traditions.

To further examine this deduction, the third null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between sociocultural and global changes and the production of *adire* cloth among the Yoruba in Nigeria, was tested. The hypothesis was examined by cross-tabulating respondents' expressed opinions on significant changes in materials and techniques with their views on alterations caused by cultural interaction and stylistic adaptation, such as trans-Sharan trade, Western education, and globalisation. The statistical procedure adopted for this test was the Chi-square, and the result is presented below:

		***Adire* clothes are altered through cultural interaction and graded stylisation, such as trans-Saharan trade, Western Education, and globalisation.**					**Total**
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	
The materials like tjap, tjanting, zinc stencil, foam, design net, and feather can be used to design *Adire* clothes.	Agree	0	0	0	48	7	55
	Strongly agree	2	2	1	0	30	35
Total		2	2	1	48	37	90

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	66.118[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	84.391	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.820	1	.016
N of Valid Cases	90		
a. 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .39.			

From the cross-tabulation of the items, the value of x^2 with 1 degree of freedom at the 0.05 level is 4.00. The calculated value of x2 after Yates's correction is greater than the table value; the result does not support the null hypothesis. Furthermore, since x^2 (df = 4, N = 5.820) = 66.118[a], and the p-calculated value is less than the p-alpha value at the 0.05 level of significance (0.000 ≤ 0.05), the result is statistically significant. A further look at the calculated chi-square value of 66.118[a] with df = 4 at 0.05 shows that the tabulated chi-square value of 9.448 is less than 66.118[a]. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between significant changes and the production of adire symbols among the Yoruba in Nigeria, is hereby rejected. Thus, based on the calculated tabulated chi-square results, it can be deduced that the *adire* symbols have been significantly influenced by changes in their production processes.

Summary

Summarily, this research examined the significant changes in the *Adire* art traditions of Yorubaland in order to understand their historical, cultural, and artistic evolution. The study explored how *Adire*

fabric making has developed over time, its impact on contemporary textile practices, and its continued relevance in the socio-cultural context of the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.

Recommendation and Contribution of Knowledge

The *Adire* art tradition in Yoruba, Southwestern Nigeria, has undergone notable transformations that reflect both historical continuity and contemporary influences. The following recommendations and contributions to knowledge are highlighted:

i. Contemporary *Adire* artists have contributed to the evolution of the tradition through creative reinterpretations of traditional patterns and techniques. Their innovations play a key role in shaping the modern expressions of *Adire* Art.
ii. There is a need to investigate further, document, and preserve the development of creative pattern traditions among coastal Yoruba textile communities.
iii. The *Adire* art tradition is closely linked to Yoruba cultural heritage, as its motifs and subjects reflect values, beliefs, and symbols significant to Yoruba identity and social life. This connection underscores the artistic and cultural importance of *Adire* as a form of expression and representation of Yoruba heritage.

Conclusion

This study examined the significant changes in the *adire* art tradition in Yorubaland, highlighting the historical, cultural, and technological factors that have shaped its development over time. Findings from both oral interviews and survey data indicate that while *adire* remains a distinctive cultural textile of the Yoruba people, the processes involved in its production have undergone considerable transformation. Innovations such as the introduction of synthetic dyes, stencil, and batik techniques, new motif adaptations, and broader market influences have contributed to shifts in both aesthetic style and production practices.

The study further established that globalisation, trade interactions, Western education, and technological advancement have played key roles in reshaping *adire* fabrics, motifs, and their cultural significance. Despite these changes, many traditional elements of *adire* making, particularly among older practitioners, continue to be preserved, demonstrating resilience and continuity within the tradition. The research has also shown that contemporary designers have adapted *adire* to new fashion contexts, contributing to its relevance in modern textile and design industries. Overall, the *adire* art tradition stands as both a historical legacy and a living cultural practice. Its evolution reflects the dynamism of Yoruba society: the capacity to preserve heritage while also embracing adaptation and innovation. The continued documentation, teaching, and creative engagement with *adire* are therefore essential to safeguarding its cultural meaning and sustaining its role within contemporary Yoruba identity and artistic expression.

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