

Innovations

Igala Stories: A Case for Cultural Identity Mapping for Development

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Abstract

"Once upon a time" might be among the most powerful phrase in human communication. Stories do not just become a lens through how we view our world but also resonate with our personal history and experiences. Man is known as the "Storytelling Animals" given stories are essential to our preservation. For thousands of years, myths, legends, and folktales have been used to transmit culture, knowledge, and wisdom. Stories are instruments for structuring thought and preserving memories or for comprehension of ongoing change by analysing and rereading the present while conscious of the past and the future. There is a story about King Ameh Oboni the Great; Princess Inikpi Oma-ufedo Baba; Oma-Odoko and the Jukun War. A people and a region's ability to stand out and experience sustainable cultural identity and development is significantly impacted by how individuals, institutions and cultural communities perceive and support their storytelling. Storytelling is presented as a tool that individuals, institutions and communities of Igala ancestral descent can use to encourage and manage stakeholder engagement in a multilevel process for promoting cultural heritage and identity. The research design used in the study was historical. The Igalas must establish a connection of applicability between earlier history and contemporary realities to comprehend the issues facing their current society historically. The art of storytelling is connected to the practice of concluding how people must organize themselves politically and socially from first-principles truths. Corporate storytelling relies on three perspectives: Social construction, Organisational symbolism (or organisational storytelling), and Storytelling management. Central to all these stories are values of perseverance, sacrifice, preservation, and honesty, which have contributed significantly to the Igalas' societal foundations. The Igala community are lay experts on their culture and localities in ways that go beyond certified and authorised planning and recognized boundaries. To avoid mistakes of the past and create a clear future, Igala generations today must become committed authors of their heritage and identity. Using colonial accounts and surviving oral history, the Igalas' should define and dissect historical narratives, uncover gaps and pave the future cultural identity way.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Cultural Identity, Igala People, Stories, Storytelling

Introduction

The four-word phrase "once upon a time" might be among the most powerful phrase in human communication (Blase, 2020). These words are a prologue to a story of a time long ago teeming with

fascinating personalities and places. These stories do not just become a lens through which we view our world (Blase, 2020), but also resonate with our personal histories and experiences. It is safe to say that mankind inherently loves stories. Because storytelling has significantly influenced cinematography, characters like Thor, T'Challa, Sinbad, Aladdin and Spiderman have become models across the globe impacting the next generations' values and heritage. Christianity also benefits from storytelling as the Holy Bible which builds the faith and life of a Christian is a book that tells the story of the relationship between God and man in many ways.

Humans can be referred to as the "Storytelling Animals" given that stories are essential to our preservation (Bassano et al., 2019). Human nature is shaped in part by stories and storytelling (Bassano et al., 2019). For thousands of years, myths, legends, and folktales have been used to transmit culture, knowledge, and wisdom (Gottschall, 2012). Throughout human history, telling stories has been a common activity, appearing in routine activities, like meal times, trips, and work songs. "Storytelling has always been a part of human history; there has never been a land or a people without stories" (Bassano et al., 2019). Stories are thus instruments for structuring thought and preserving memories (Bassano et al., 2019), or for comprehension of ongoing change by analysing and rereading the present while conscious of the past and the future (Dawson & Sykes, 2019). It is widely acknowledged that myths, tales, and parables can highlight the main aspects of a culture.

Major religions and cultures have used a couple of stories to communicate their core beliefs, demonstrating the capacity of storytelling to maintain and solidify these beliefs (Dawson & Sykes, 2019). Through the ages, individuals have shared tales about their origins, places of habitation, and travel destinations with one another. Human living relies a lot on a sense of place. Mankind enjoys telling stories and loves to hear stories being told. Storytelling is a component of these modern communication modes and is connected to an integrated territorial identity system's capacity to portray itself narratively and provide a distinct competitive edge. Greater respect should be given to the usefulness of storytelling as a critical instrument for conveying the experience value of a people. Legends and place-specific stories can both fascinate the listeners and liven up the storytellers (Seuss, 1990).

Events and places serve as symbolic markers for the journeys of our lives (Seuss, 1990). Also, tourism services and experiences benefit from stories about events and places, for they serve as an important recollection of encounters (Seuss, 1990). It is acknowledged that sharing stories about people and places can help communities compete more effectively for revenue from tourists and economic development (Bassano et al., 2019). So, once upon a time, there is a story about King Ameh Oboni the Great; Princess Inikpi Oma-ufedo Baba; Oma-Odoko and the Jukun war; and the demise of Queen Amina at the hands of the Igala warriors. These stories have contributed in no small way to the Igala people's cultural heritage.

A people's and a region's ability to stand out and experience sustainable cultural identity and development is significantly impacted by how individuals, institutions and cultural communities perceive and support their storytelling (Bassano et al., 2019). Individuals and community members could indeed share their uniqueness and experience about their favourite legends, events, ceremonies and places through storytelling (Bassano et al., 2019). People are also able to communicate events and encounters of their favourite customs, cultural events and place using storytelling presented in many ways; print, digital and so on (Gottschall, 2012). As civilizations and locations fight to spread culture and knowledge, digital storytelling is becoming more and more significant (Bassano et al., 2019). The value proposition of a people and their lands and the value co-created by local partners, governance structures, and aspirations must be aligned during this communication phase. Storytelling can be controlled to increase cultural awareness, and establish identity and uniqueness (Bassano et al., 2019).

Curiously, it is because of these pivotal moments in the Igala people's history as a whole that they make interesting study topics. The weakness or shortcoming of the innocent people and their king, which is timidity, was exposed in the face of a powerfully advanced society (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). Because history repeats itself and few people learn from it, the cultural heritage and identity lessons are what will keep storytelling relevant for a very long time. To prevent becoming enduring victims of political rule and cultural deterioration, the errors and oversights that rendered the colonised people unable to resist

foreign imperialism must be re-echoed. The formerly colonized people are still not even left alone to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives without continued interference, posing as "friendship," and "aids" with their former colonizers (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). The history of contact with European colonialists has left an everlasting political, social, cultural and economic nightmare for the formerly colonized people (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019).

Simply put, colonization has traumatized the culture of the colonized and, thus, the Igala people. Several indigenous groups throughout the world are trying to document their intangible cultural treasures despite procedural challenges. To unearth the intangible cultural aspects of a people, several of these initiatives involved citizens in story-telling about themselves (Jeannotte, 2015). This paper presents storytelling as a tool that individuals, institutions and communities of Igala ancestral descent can use to encourage and manage stakeholder engagement in a multilevel process for promoting cultural heritage and identity. This paper emphasizes the value of sustaining storytelling as a tactic of communication that involves key players - individuals, institutions and communities, in the formulation of cultural identity and the propagation of cultural heritage (Bassano et al., 2019).

Our study demonstrates the strategic position of storytelling in defining the reputation of cultural sites and events, boosting their uniqueness, and enhancing their meaning. The importance of storytelling in community development and communications initiatives is the primary focus of this article. To chronicle cultural heritage and identity, this research evaluated how well-known cultural mapping approaches capture intangible cultural assets while also pointing out the method's limitations. Although considerably less researched, approaches for mapping intangible cultural assets like spiritual values, cultural identity, social cohesiveness, and heritage are still significantly in their infancy (Jeannotte, 2015). This article describes the use of storytelling as a strategy for appreciating and documenting intangible culture and recognizing the importance of culture in creating sustainable communities in the renewed and developing agenda (UNESCO, 2003).

The Stories

(a) King Ameh Oboni And The British Queen

There was a king called Ameh Oboni the Great, the Attah (king) of the Igala nation. He was a revered Igala king who attended a meeting held in Kaduna consisting of all paramount traditional rulers in Nigeria and also the queen of England (Elizabeth II) in attendance. The Attah was asked to remove his crown to greet the queen, just as other Nigerian traditional rulers out of mandate had removed their caps to greet the queen. Attah Ameh Oboni initially refused the order on two grounds:

- i. It was culturally forbidden for the Attah to remove his crown in public and
- ii. The Attah being a king in his own right does not bow to any other ruler.

The British officials did not relent in trying to enforce the order and so the Attah succumbed. As soon as Ameh Oboni the Great took off his crown, suddenly the venue was swarmed with angry bees (Aruwa, 2022).

Everyone including Queen Elizabeth II of England save the Attah and the Oba of Benin who had earlier left at the Attah's advice, scampered for safety, with many being stung by the bees. Pleas were made to the Attah who eventually wore his crown back and just like the sudden appearance, the stinging bees instantaneously vanished. Infuriated by the embarrassment the colonial lords directed that Attah Ameh Oboni be arrested. Again, their handcuffs could not bind the Attah's hands, so he was escorted into a holding cell. In his final stand against unfair colonial rule, Attah Ameh Oboni disappeared from his cell and reappeared riding on a gentle cool breeze in his chauffeured car on its way to Idah, his kingdom. This event was the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back".

Therefore, a plot by the British colonials, the rulers of northern Nigeria and traitor elements within the Igala kingdom began the plan to dethrone Ata Ameh Oboni the Great for they perceived him to be challenging and uncontrollable. In a bid to remove him, false evidence was fabricated saying that the Attah was involved in human sacrifice during cultural festivals and cosmological commemorations. Hasty

judgement was passed by the colonial lords dethroning and exiling the Attah and banning all cultural festivals and ceremonies. Facing disgrace both spiritually and physically Attah Ameh Oboni decided to commit suicide before his antagonist would execute their judgement, and the story goes on (Region, 2022).

(b) The Martyrdom Of Princess Inikpi – Oma-ufedo Baba

The tragic story of Princess Inikpi is one of fortitude and heroism. She was Ayegba Oma Idoko's lone, adored daughter, a former Atta of the Igala Kingdom. She is referred to by the nickname "Inikpi Oma-ufedo baba" (Inikpi, the father's beloved). According to historical accounts, her place in history began with a conflict between the Benin Kingdom and the Igala people that took a toll on both sides and left the area under siege. Farming was suspended, streams were feared poisoned and the area had become a kidnap haven. When the Atta inquired of the oracle, it said that the princess - Princess Inikpi, the one and only daughter of the king, must be buried alive for them to reverse their fortune and win the war. The monarch was undoubtedly upset, grieving, and crying in secret. He went days without eating or drinking and he wished there was another way. No father would voluntarily consent to have his children buried alive, let alone the Atta's (King's) sole daughter (Miachi, 2012; Kaduna State Archives, n.d.).



*Figure 1: Statue of Princess Inikpi Oma-ufedo Baba marking the exact spot of her burial. The statue and its vicinity are constantly maintained
Source: Author (23 May 2023)*



Figure 2: The square indicating the sacred grounds of Princess Inikpi Oma-ufedo Baba within the Ogba-Ega market

The princess having observed his countenance asked her father why he was feeling downcast. For seven days he refused to tell her, but on the eighth day, he gave up and told her the words of the Oracle. The Princess refused to accept the idea of delaying the action that would preserve Igala land since she loved her father and her people as much as they loved her. The Princess didn't protest or struggle. She deliberately travelled to the banks of the rivers Niger and Benue at Idah - market square (see *Figure 1*),

where she was buried among 9 slaves who would accompany her on her journey to the afterlife. As a result, she consented to be sacrificed. Although it was a sad resolution and a depressing conclusion, the Igala people praised and approved of her bravery. Following the sacrifice, it was said that as the Bini troops advanced once more, they saw the entire town engulfed in flames and turned back, thinking there was no reason to continue the fight in such a burned and barren location (Miachi, 2012; Kaduna State Archives, n.d.).



Figure 3: Current State of Ogba-Ega waterfront; a once great river experiencing the effects of climate change

However, it was Inikpi's blood that tricked them - the impact of the sacrifice was what made it so. The Princess's contribution to saving Igala land from calamity is still remembered as a significant historical moment in the lives of the Igala people. Although the sacrifice was expensive—truly expensive—it restored peace to Igala territory. The late Princess Inikpi, who gave her life so that the Igalas would live, continues to serve as Igala land's unifying force. The Igala people will always remember and honour Princess Inikpi for her bravery and selfless conduct. The princess is memorialized by a statue at "Ega" in Idah (see *Figure 2*, *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*), the Igala nation's capital. Numerous plays, documentaries, and films have been made to honour her story, and numerous documents support the event (Miachi, 2012; Kaduna State Archives, n.d.).



Figure 4: Ogba-Ega waterfront showing its river bed exposed to the effects of climate change and polluted by plastics and dirt
Source: Author (23 May 2023)

(c) A Sacrifice Forgotten – Oma-Odoko And The Jukun War

It is very well known to the Igala people that their habitation and continuity in the lands they find themselves in is in part due to the ultimate sacrifice paid by many of her descendants, most notably by two heroines. Both folklore and written history bear testament to Princess Inipki and Oma-Odoko (or Princess Oma-Odoko) sacrifices of being buried alive so that a war could be won. This story is not about Princess Inipki and her willingness, for it seems she has received compensation. Many daughters born to the Igala people have been named after her, a movie – though with a twisted storyline – in her honour and

certain cultural greetings and oration referencing her act. This story is about Oma-Odoko (adu Odoko) or Princess Oma-Odoko. Is her sacrifice not forgotten?



Figure 5: The neglected state of the renovated statue and sacred grounds of Oma-Odoko by the Nnachaalo River
Source: Author (23 May 2023)

Within the Igala people, two versions of her identity operate giving rise to the two versions of her name. She is known to some as Oma-Odoko (adu Odoko) meaning Odoko's (a powerful Atta Igala) slave girl and to some as princess Omi-Odoko (daughter of Odoko-Atta Igala) (Agbese, 2021). Is her sacrifice not forgotten? Currently in Igala land and amongst her people you seldom and very rarely hear the name Oma-Odoko given to a daughter of the land in honour of her sacrifice. Her real name is not known among the common Igala people as Oma-Odoko/Omi-Odoko, is more of a description than a name. There are no cultural greetings, or orations that reference her act of love. The sculpture made to mark the spot of her burial was placed in the grooves (see *Figure 5* and *Figure 6*), easily missed by a non-observant eye along the Nnachaalo River until it was renovated within the last two decades. The stone sculpture has not deteriorated (see *Figure 6* and *Figure 7(a,b)*) despite being located in the grooves along the river banks where the monument built in her honour is not frequently maintained.



Figure 6: A closer view of the neglected, renovated statue and sacred grounds of Oma-Odoko by the Nnachaalo River
Source: Author (23 May 2023)



(a)Oma-Odoko's statue and scared grounds

Source: Author (August 2005)– Left image

Figure 7(a,b): Memorials in honour of Oma-Odoko and Princess Inikpi for their sacrifice located at Nnachaalo River banks and Ogba-Ega River banks respectively. Both monuments are over six decades old
Source: Author 2005

(b)Princess Inikpi statue and sacred grounds
Source: Author (August 2005) – Right image.

Her sculpture had more beauty in terms of artistry and presentation than that of Princess Inikpi (Oma-ufedo Baba). Could the seeming neglect be proof of the version of her story of being a slave girl to Atta (king) Odoko, as we have come to know from diverse cultures that history is never kind to slaves? Is her sacrifice not forgotten? Once upon a time the Igala kingdom was at war with the Jukun invaders. The Jukun attacking forces had laid siege on Igala land from the North-East on the other side of the Nnachaalo River, cutting off trade, and halting farming and hunting activities. The Igala people could no longer use the river to meet their water needs for fear of kidnapping or death. Atta Odoko consulted the gods through the Obo-chi (oracle) for a solution to the impasse, for though the Jukun forces were fiercer the Igala warriors held their ground preventing an overrun (Miachi, 2012; Agbese, 2021).

Casualties mounted on both sides and a desire to end (be victorious) the war increased for both kings. The oracle brought back the message of the gods to Atta Odoko, that for his attackers to be chased back three things are required. First, they demanded that he give up a most beloved and cherished person from his household. Secondly, the poison given by the deity because of the Atta's offering is poured into the Nnachaalo River (see Figure 8) at its emergence. Finally, the people were not to drink or fish anymore from the river as long as the Igala land remained or they risked attracting death. For Atta Odoko, requests two and three were easy but he struggled with request one for a couple of days. Eventually, as the legend goes Atta Odoko decided to give up on offering his most beloved and cherished slave girl (Miachi, 2012;Agbese, 2021).



Figure 8: The Nnachaalo River currently shrunk to the level of a stream by the effects of climate change and poor infrastructural planning around the site (the red arrow marks the location of Oma-Odoko's sacred grounds).

When Oma-Odoko was notified by the Atta of this decision, she was sad and mourned for days but she agreed for the greater good of the preservation of a people. She Aadu-Odoko (Odoko's slave) was buried alive by the river bank at the dawning of the Nnachaalo River. Upon implementing the demands of the gods the Jukun forces began to die in their numbers causing them to flee the battle and hence the victory of the Igala people. Since the 1600s to date, the Igala people do not fish or drink from the Nnachaalo River. It is believed that the fish from the Nnachaalo never gets cooked if caught by an Igala and if consumed by any Igala can lead to death (Miachi, 2012;Agbese, 2021).

Methodology

The research design used in the study was historical. The historical design allows researchers to collect, verify, and synthesize information from the past (Igala folklore).It enables researchers to further establish facts supporting the idea that storytelling can be deployed to promote cultural heritage and identity. The historical research design is ideal for this study due to its not disruptive nature, which means that the research process had no impact on the study's findings. The historical design was utilized since oral history (stories) provides crucial contextual knowledge that is required to create and deepen cultural heritage and analyze the relationship between heritage, identity and societal development. It was also chosen as a methodology since there is no chance of subject or researcher interaction that could influence the results. The data set (primary and secondary) is frequently helpful in exploring different research problems related to heritage and identity building; therefore, the historical design was also appropriate for the research.

Cultural Heritage And Identity Mapping Discourse

The current UNESCO work on intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development greatly influenced the ideas that served as the foundation for this paper. Intangible cultural heritage is described as follows in Article 2.2 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage:

- i. Oral traditions and expression, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage,
- ii. Performing arts,
- iii. Social practices, rituals, and festive events,
- iv. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe,
- v. Traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2003).

Intangible cultural heritage can only be considered heritage when it is acknowledged as such by the communities, groups, or individuals that produce, maintain, and transmit it (Jeannotte, 2015). Within the context of the above definition, UNESCO acknowledges that intangible culture has a modern component in addition to expressions in heritage and tradition (UNESCO, 2003). According to UNESCO, in intangible cultural heritage, communities and organizations unceasingly recreate these heritages in response to their surroundings, contact with nature, the environment and their history.The Culture and Development

Resolution 66/208 encourages a more obvious and effective inclusion of culture into social, environmental, and economic development plans and programmes at all levels (Jeannotte, 2015). The UN General Assembly makes mention of the need to preserve and advance regional and indigenous traditional knowledge and local environmental management techniques (Cabeca, 2018).

Sustainable development and sustainable communities are considered to be facilitated and motivated by culture. Culture plays a crucial role in enabling sustainable development by giving people and communities a powerful sense of identity and social cohesion and assisting with the creation of more efficient and lasting development initiatives and action plans at all levels (Jeannotte, 2015). Therefore, to comprehend and advance the current consciousness of cultural heritage and identity, it is necessary to look back on the past again for hints. Even if the past frequently aids in our understanding of the present, it is the present that shapes our historical perspective (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). The present was created in the past. The past frequently has an impact on the present (Osanyemi et al., 2017). According to a British colonial governor, the black race is "primitive, highly emotional, and irrational," making them unruly people (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019).

Because of this, the colonizers' depictions of a people and their history are just a tainted and distorted picture. A mindset that denigrates a culture as primitive, desecrates its sacred places and disparages its language as an inert, unsteady rigmarole with words cannot provide a trustworthy account of a people and their heritage (Osanyemi et al., 2017). The degree to which a nation resembles the ideal pattern depicted in their stories has an impact on the natural laws controlling human behaviour at all times, as well as on cultural legacy and identity (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). The Igalas must establish a connection of applicability between earlier history and contemporary realities to comprehend the issues facing their current society historically. As a result, storytelling becomes a useful tool. The art of storytelling is connected to the practice of concluding how people must organize themselves politically and socially from first-principles truths.

This paper argues that storytelling can be used to develop identity and gain a reputation through processes of value co-creation (Bassano et al., 2019). The originality of this work is to explore storytelling as a medium to engage the Igalas people in building cultural identity and community development among themselves. It is only through a person's sense of place that an individual can make meaning and interpret themselves and their community. The use of storytelling as a management strategy has been extensively studied in the literature. Three perspectives on storytelling are used in studies of corporate storytelling: the perspective of social construction, organisational symbolism (or organisational storytelling), and storytelling management (Bassano et al., 2019). According to the social constructivist viewpoint, everyone needs purpose and order in their lives.

Through legitimization and socialization, people actively participate in the building of social reality as they individually construct their meaning (Winchester & Longhofer, 2016). A story can be a tool for social control, acquaintance with dominant narratives can be a sign of adaptation, stories are needed for commitment, and meaning evolving consciously or unconsciously are important characteristics of this field of study. The process of creating meaning within organizations is known as organizational symbolism, which expresses the underlying qualities, philosophical beliefs, or value systems of an organization. The premise is that a culture's deepest values are expressed and produced in its stories, legends, myths, rituals, and rites (Boje, 2017). According to the third viewpoint, storytelling management is a technique that improves the allure and engagement of communication. Corporate storytelling can aid corporate culture dissemination (Artal-Tur, 2018). The application of storytelling in the management of cultural heritage and identity should work to regulate unplanned, or naturally occurring, stories about a people.

According to Artal-Tur (2018) on corporate storytelling, a region may use storytelling to:

- i. Share clear objectives;
- ii. Disseminate and defend values;
- iii. Inspire tourists and locals to visit and experience;
- iv. Preserve memory, ensuring continuity of knowledge and behaviour direction;

- v. Build confidence, trust, and a sense of community;
- vi. Share tacit knowledge, norms, and values;
- vii. Rewrite stories and rework picture narratives;
- viii. Offer value categories and interpretive patterns;
- ix. Reformulate stories and update image narratives (D’Arco et al., 2021).

Through the three stages of creation—building a tale (story-building), telling it to stakeholders (storytelling), and receiving feedback on the story (story-listening) - a community of people can control the storytelling process (Bassano et al., 2019). A sub-stage within the initial stage of story-building is Autobiographical analysis, which chooses the distinctive characteristics of an area (its people's previous behaviour, culture, and values) and significant events that are already remembered by stakeholders as being linked with a location (Bassano et al., 2019). Storytelling corresponds to the point of creating stories, and story-listening relates to the point of consuming stories. This informs the respectable cycle of cultural heritage defined as the process of positioning or repositioning cultural identity (Maizza et al., 2019).

According to Jeannotte (2015), inherited systems of values and cultural expressions including protecting and promoting heritage are part of the shared commons and, consequently, play an important role in the functioning of societies. In ways that go beyond certified and authorised planning and recognized boundaries, the people are experts on their culture and localities. Cultural actors (the people in their community) are lay experts, as noted by Azocar and Ferree (2016) in their article on the sociology of knowledge. This expertise is a product of successful socialization within a certain community, among other factors (Azocar & Ferree, 2016). Also, this expertise is typically not standardized but rather entrenched in the community, where it is informal knowledge that is imparted, created, and transmitted among social groups and communities, and where the power of a story is just as significant as a print (Azocar & Ferree, 2016).

When deciding how to safeguard and promote a community's cultural resources, cultural mapping is frequently done as a technique to inventory and locate these resources (Jeannotte, 2015). As seen in Table 1, the Cultural Resource Framework is extensive and encompasses both tangible and intangible assets. Since they are difficult to locate on a traditional map and are challenging to include in planning activities, intangible cultural resources, often referred to as cultural heritage and identity typically receive far less attention (Jeannotte, 2015). The Igala stories told in this paper were selected because they convey the intangible cultural resources of the people.

Table 1: Types of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Tangible Cultural Assets	Intangible Cultural Assets
Cultural Industries	Values and Shared Beliefs
Cultural Occupations	Stories
Community Cultural Organisations	Customs and Rituals
Cultural Facilities and Spaces	Traditions and Heritage
Cultural and Natural Heritage	
Cultural Events and Festivals	

Source: Jeannotte, 2015

The value of a people and their lands can be elevated and strengthened via the use of storytelling. First, a story illustrates an incredibly captivating material offered to customers in a situation where consuming more experiences than things is being established (Kernbach, 2018). As previously said, storytelling is connected to the strategies for enhancing and communicating a culture's worth as well as identity (Bassano et al., 2019). Also, it is encouraged that public involvement in planning processes take into account people's histories and cultures as the primary factors that should influence a city's organic

evolution when it comes to the intangible aspects of culture and community development (Jeannotte, 2015).

According to an individualistic viewpoint, on the cultural identity of a people, storytelling is employed by all aspects of culture as a simple operational method of interaction for personal development (Bassano et al., 2019). To promote the benefits of individuality and cultural identification, it is crucial to produce stories that live up to audience expectations, i.e., stories in which stakeholders can identify with themselves and that are distinct from those of other cultures (Dawson & Sykes, 2019).

Conclusion

To strengthen the distinctiveness of the Igalá people's intangible cultural heritage, this study investigated the strategic function of storytelling. Central to all these stories are values of perseverance, sacrifice, preservation, and honesty, which have contributed significantly to many Igalás found in sectors such as security (police), oil and gas (fuel attendants), and education (academics).

It is common for European writers to emphasize their perception of historical events and defend their involvement in them while recounting colonial adventures in colonised lands (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). The forced fusion of tribes into various national homelands, which, taken collectively, reflects the lands of European colonial powers in a native, virgin territory that is losing its traditions and customs as a result of the process of cultural hegemony (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). Identities were cast off into the land of no return when kings and stewards who are the embodiment and custodians of a people's cosmology, myths and faith were exiled. The ones left behind were common people who had little to no knowledge of their cultural, religious and social system and had no connection to the cultural custodians. Living, dying, and being buried outside of the king's realm is the height of disgrace.

Some stewards and warriors deemed to be uncooperative with the colonists' mission were given prison or death sentences (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). These upsets by the colonist were not a one-time event but have been perpetuated over the years creating a cultural disruption among the colonised. Another version of King Ameh's story claims that his suffering is a consequence of the gods' wrath (Miachi, 2012; Aruwa, 2022). Nevertheless, a culture of immediate justice and the punishment for evil, as seen by the King's curse on the traitors (Miachi, 2012; Aruwa, 2022), was threatened, tamed, and eventually replaced by a culture of delayed justice, which ultimately denies the wronged person justice. Could the Igalás have initially welcomed the Europeans because they saw their courage - to navigate the treacherous "sacred" rivers of Africa; to seek a cure for diseases hitherto thought to be supernatural plagues - a value they believed, if cross-cultured with theirs would advance a great society?

The Igalás and many other African societies at the period relied solely on oral narrative as a form of record, which prevented them from writing about the process of political dominance and dehumanization that upended their lives and altered how they perceived themselves. The works of European anthropologists and the few oral histories that have survived are the primary sources used by Igalá people today to learn about themselves and their experiences (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019). To transmit values and identity to the new generation, the Igalá people relied on oral history and narration. However, the sudden death or deliberate exile of the custodians who were in charge of the transmission led to a continuous period of uncertainty and a conflict between self-definition, cultural heritage and identity. To avoid the mistakes of the past and create a future with a clear heritage and identity, Igalá generations today must unite and become committed authors of their heritage and identity.

According to Yerima and Udengwu (2019), a committed writer is not out to make a generic remark; they are out to change a specific circumstance or to originate, reverse, or modify a style of thought. With the help of colonial accounts and surviving oral history, the Igalá people should be able to define and dissect historical narratives, uncovering gaps and paving the way for a fresh cultural identity for the future. The same was true of the Romans and the English following the Greek invasion and the Greeks after their dominance by Mesopotamia. Cultural mapping is a strategy that can be used to encourage growth in communities that are experiencing a decrease in their traditional industries and sustainable development

(Jeannotte, 2015). Economic growth can be supported by cultural identity and heritage by focusing on and embracing local stories honouring the past, celebrating the present, and imagining the future.

If a culture is regarded as having a solid and marketable intangible heritage, cultural identity becomes the key differentiator. Identity describes the collection of oral, crafts, food, clothing and visual components used to represent a system (Maizza et al., 2019). The Igala communities can project and strengthen tangible and intangible elements to express their cultural identity (Bassano et al., 2019). Tangible components are the environment (natural, artistic, structural, urban, and infrastructural). Intangible components are conventions and traditions that, as is well known, are difficult for other cultures to readily imitate. Esau & Senese (2022) assert that stories appeal to the human mind's rational and emotional sides. Stories highlight trends and bring to light important information that would otherwise go ignored or untapped (Esau & Senese, 2022).

In reality, storytelling can enable the Igala territories to tell tales that evoke particular moods and emotionally engage present or potential audiences, increasing their sense of territorial connection and belonging. The Igala community can identify themselves and share their unique stories about significant experiences and cherished locations through storytelling. Igala leaders may empower other members of the community by sharing their vision and beliefs through authentic storytelling. It also inspires people and brings about knowledge and change (Driscoll & McKee, 2007). First of all, technological innovations and the widespread use of the internet support the success of storytelling in a variety of industries, including marketing, media, communication, management, etc., where it has evolved into a potent tool for influence.

If the purpose of a storyline is to arouse desire, activate the imagination, foster empathy, and extend the experience, then storytelling involves arousing the urge to recount and personalize the potential or actual event (Bassano et al., 2019). Therefore, the Igalas can adopt effective storytelling to develop participatory mapping by inducing the desire to visit the people and lands, experience their culture and share in their cultural identity. They can employ storytelling essentially to preserve their distinctiveness and cultural identity. This preservation is necessary as a result of unstable geographies, which are defined as the constant shifting of boundaries of relationships between nations and cultures that results in the coexistence of diverse peoples and cultures, attendant life-changing experiences, and the creation of new identities (Yerima & Udengwu, 2019).

The Igala people must construct their cultural identity (language, cuisine, attire, arts and crafts), history (architecture, social environment, and economic structure), and heritage from the stumps of their stories that have endured the test of time. The Igala community will also have to contend with the changing psychological geography of the mind, which take the form of new laws, morals, and attitudes that may or may not conflict with their long-established customs and sense of cultural identity.

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