

**URBAN MARKET REVITALIZATION & CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SELECTED
MARKETS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE**

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**A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BSc.) DEGREE
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DECLARATION

This is to declare that I, EKHATOR EGHOSA student of the Department of Architecture, University of Benin with MAT.NO: ENV2103339 conducted the research on this project topic: **URBAN MARKET REVITALIZATION & CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SELECTED MARKETS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE**, under the supervision of ARC. (MRS) G.E.O IFADA and that all the information provided in this report was taken from the proper factual sources of information. All academic material used in this work and its sources has been duly acknowledged.

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study titled **URBAN MARKET REVITALIZATION & CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SELECTED MARKETS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE** was carried out by EKHATOR EGHOSA, with Matric Number **ENV2103339** under my supervision and meets the regulation governing the award of the Bachelor degree in Architecture of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. We certify that it has not been submitted for the Bachelor's degree in this or any other university and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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Date

Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God, the author and finisher of our faith who has been with me since the beginning of my life on earth. Also, I dedicate this project with great love and affection to my parents, Teachers, friends, and loved ones.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty who has done wonders for me thus far; I would also like to thank my father, mother and my siblings for their love and support. I am also grateful to my colleagues who were always willing to share their knowledge and expertise.

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ABSTRACT

Urban markets in Benin City function as vital economic spaces and cultural landmarks that reflect community identity, traditional practices and social interaction. Recent modernization efforts across Nigerian cities have focused heavily on physical redevelopment, often neglecting the cultural significance and spatial dynamics that shape these markets. This study examines the relationship between urban market revitalization and cultural sustainability in selected markets in Benin City—Oba Market, Uselu Market, Ekosodin Market, Orgie-Ode Market. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 100 respondents through questionnaires, interviews, field observations and photographs.

Findings indicate major infrastructural and organizational challenges, including inadequate drainage, sanitation, security and spatial planning, which affect market efficiency and user experience. Despite these issues, traders and users maintain strong cultural attachment to the markets, underscoring their historical and symbolic importance. The study concludes that revitalization strategies must integrate cultural preservation with infrastructural improvement to ensure sustainable and socially inclusive market renewal. Recommendations emphasize participatory planning, heritage-sensitive design and improved governance frameworks.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

From the dawn of civilization, marketplaces have been among the oldest and most resilient socio-economic institutions. Historically, they were more than mere sites of exchange; they were *retailscales*—public spaces where economic activity converged with social, cultural, and political life (Watson, 2020). In ancient Greece, the Agora functioned as both a market and a democratic assembly ground. Similarly, the Roman Forum combined commercial exchange with civic functions, illustrating how markets were integral to the governance and identity of societies. In Asia, vast commercial networks such as the Silk Road thrived through caravanserais, which were not only trade hubs but also spaces of intercultural exchange and the diffusion of knowledge (Rösch, 2019). In medieval Europe, periodic fairs and open-air markets gave rise to entire towns, transforming seasonal trade into permanent urban settlements. Thus, across time and place, markets have operated as multifunctional institutions, acting as the economic heart and cultural pulse of societies. Recent studies reinforce this historical centrality by demonstrating that markets continue to serve as cultural anchors and socializing spaces that sustain community bonds and local identities (Agboola *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, research on *retailscales* demonstrates that marketplaces continue to shape and be shaped by modern urban planning imaginaries, maintaining their position as evolving, contested, and multifunctional public spaces (Boamah *et al.*, 2020). They stand, therefore, as some of the most enduring legacies of human settlement, evolving with shifting social, political, and economic conditions while retaining their role as central spaces of interaction.

In Africa, traditional marketplaces remain a cornerstone of urban and rural life. Unlike Western shopping malls, which prioritize standardized consumer experiences, African markets embody cultural sustainability, operating as spaces where identity, memory, and resilience are performed (Anifowose *et al.*, 2018). These markets function not only as commercial hubs but also as communal arenas where relationships are negotiated, festivals are marked, and traditions are preserved. They reflect indigenous systems of spatial organization, where traders group according to goods, be it spices, textiles, or foodstuffs, and where negotiation and social bonding are as important as the transactions themselves. Yet, these markets have also become sites of tension. Research shows that attempts to impose modernist planning principles often produce

disruptions, displacing informal traders and undermining cultural practices (Dobler, 2022). Indeed, the politics of market redevelopment in African cities frequently result in uneven outcomes, where modernization projects privilege formal traders or elites while marginalizing the informal vendors who sustain much of the urban food system (Watson, 2020). Still, despite these challenges, studies highlight the persistence of open-air markets in African food systems, showing that households across urban and peri-urban areas continue to rely on them as primary sources of affordable goods (Robinson *et al.*, 2022). This persistence underscores both their economic indispensability and their cultural embeddedness.

Nigeria exemplifies these dynamics vividly. As the most populous country in Africa, its economy is sustained in large part by traditional markets, which operate as vital centers for distribution, employment, and social cohesion. From Balogun and Idumota in Lagos to Oja’ba in Ibadan and Oba Market in Benin City, these spaces represent both economic powerhouses and cultural archives. Yet they also suffer from chronic challenges. Balogun (2015), in his study of Ibadan’s Oja’ba and Oje markets, identifies poor spatial organization, sanitation deficits, congestion, and weak governance as central limitations. Many Nigerian markets operate without adequate fire prevention systems, ventilation, or waste management structures, exposing traders and buyers to risks. At the same time, modernization pressures from urban authorities seeking revenue to developers seeking to reshape the cityscape often clash with traditional users, producing winners and losers in the process (Dobler, 2022). Informal vendors, in particular, remain vulnerable, as their lack of tenure security makes them susceptible to displacement during redevelopment projects (Watson, 2020). Furthermore, Nigerian markets are struggling to adapt to new demands of the digital economy, such as cashless payments, e-commerce integration, and logistics services, which are increasingly shaping the competitiveness of retail systems worldwide. Thus, while they remain indispensable, Nigerian markets are caught between tradition and modernity, resilience and vulnerability.

Within this national context, Benin City stands out as one of Nigeria’s most historic and culturally significant urban centers. Markets such as Oba Market, New Benin Market, and Uselu Market serve not only as commercial hubs but also as cultural landmarks that reflect the city’s heritage and communal life. Ojeifo and Ebohon (2017) highlight that these markets are essential to the city’s economy but face mounting challenges, including overcrowding, lack of modern

facilities, poor waste management, and weak governance structures. Furthermore, redevelopment policies often fail to account for the cultural embeddedness of these markets, resulting in displacements and tensions between traders and authorities (Robinson, Harrison, & Brownhill, 2022). Thus, in Benin City, traditional markets sit at the intersection of heritage preservation and modern urban pressures, making them critical case studies for rethinking urban marketplaces in Nigeria. The persistence of these challenges in Benin City reflects a broader research gap. While markets are often discussed in relation to urban informality, food systems, or governance, there is insufficient focus on how specific urban markets can transition into the modern economy while retaining their traditional essence. As Watson (2020) notes, African urban redevelopment is frequently dominated by “fantasy plans” that prioritize modernization at the expense of inclusivity and cultural continuity. By addressing this gap, studies on Benin City’s markets can offer grounded insights into balancing modernization with heritage, ensuring that markets remain sustainable, accessible, and relevant in a rapidly changing economy.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite their resilience, traditional markets in Nigeria face systemic challenges that limit their contribution to modern economic growth. Balogun (2015) highlights sanitation, congestion, and weak market governance as recurring problems, while Anifowose *et al.* (2018) point to the neglect of cultural dimensions in redevelopment frameworks. Similarly, Dobler (2022) emphasizes the politics of market redevelopment, noting that modernization often produces “winners and losers,” with informal vendors disproportionately displaced.

In Nigeria, these challenges manifest in particularly severe ways. Research has consistently highlighted the problems of poor spatial organization, sanitation deficits, and lack of infrastructural facilities in major markets such as Oja’ba and Oje in Ibadan (Balogun, 2015), Balogun and Idumota in Lagos, and Oba Market in Benin City. Congestion is a recurring theme, with narrow circulation routes impeding movement for both buyers and sellers, and creating conditions ripe for fire outbreaks, which have devastated several Nigerian markets in the past decade (Oni, 2019). Informal waste disposal practices contribute to flooding and environmental hazards, while insufficient provision for parking and loading further undermines efficiency. At the governance level, conflicts between local authorities and traders frequently delay or obstruct

redevelopment projects, with informal vendors often bearing the brunt of evictions and relocations (Watson, 2020). Moreover, there is a widening digital divide, as many traditional markets struggle to integrate mobile money, e-commerce, and other innovations that are reshaping retail systems globally (Robinson *et al.*, 2020). These persistent problems underscore the vulnerability of traditional markets in Nigeria, despite their resilience and cultural value.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Urban Market Revitalization:** Defined as the transformation of existing market environments to improve infrastructure, hygiene, safety, and economic efficiency (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018). It involves elements such as spatial reorganization, provision of drainage and sanitation, security enhancement, and modernization of facilities.
- **Cultural Sustainability:** Defined as the ability of a society to preserve its cultural identity, heritage, and traditions while adapting to modern socio-economic changes (Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021). In market contexts, it involves preserving communal governance, local spatial patterns, indigenous business practices, and social relationships.
- **Governance and Policy Frameworks:** The degree of governmental involvement, regulation, and policy inclusivity that shape redevelopment efforts (Harvey, 2018; Ojo & Okon, 2021).
- **Socio-Economic Dynamics:** The income levels, occupational patterns, and market organization that affect how traders and buyers engage in market systems.
- **Spatial Organization:** The physical layout, accessibility, and design of market spaces, which determine circulation, safety, and spatial identity (Watson, 2020).
- **Infrastructure and Services:** The provision of sanitation, waste management, electricity, drainage, and security facilities that affect efficiency and resilience.
- **Community Participation and Social Capital:** The extent to which traders and users are involved in planning and maintenance (Putnam, 2000; Oyesiku, 2019).
- **Cultural Attachment and Identity:** The degree of emotional and symbolic connection that communities have to traditional markets (Low & Altman, 1992).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the current socio-economic, cultural, and spatial characteristics of selected urban markets in Benin City, Edo State?
2. What infrastructural, organizational gaps limit the efficiency and resilience of urban market?
3. How can cultural sustainability be preserved while upgrading traditional markets?
4. What challenges do market users face in adapting to upgrades in market systems such as sanitation, Security and drainage?

1.5 AIM & OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to identify and examine the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for strengthening the functionality, inclusivity, and sustainability of urban markets, with selected markets as a case study. To accomplish the research aim, the following specific objectives have been established:

1. identify the current socio-economic, cultural, and spatial organization of the market.
2. evaluate infrastructural, organizational gaps that limit the efficiency and resilience of the market.
3. investigate how cultural sustainability can be preserved during market modernization
4. identify the key challenges faced by traders and users in adapting to emerging market systems.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to a deeper understanding of how traditional Nigerian markets can remain relevant in the face of modern economic, technological, and urban transitions. Traditional markets such as Ekosodin Market in Ugbowo, Uselu Market in Ugbowo, Orgie-Ode Market in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, remain the lifeblood of local economies, sustaining thousands of households by providing accessible food, affordable goods, and employment opportunities. Yet, despite this importance, they have long been marginalized within mainstream urban planning and research. Many government policies prioritize the development of formal shopping complexes and supermarkets, often at the expense of informal or semi-formal markets that continue to serve the majority of urban residents. This creates a pressing need for research that foregrounds the resilience, adaptability, and challenges of traditional markets in order to guide more inclusive and sustainable policy-making.

Furthermore, the study is significant because it highlights the intersection of cultural preservation and modernization. Markets are not only spaces of exchange but also living repositories of tradition, identity, and social interaction. Understanding how these cultural elements can be preserved while simultaneously addressing infrastructural and organizational challenges offers a balanced pathway for development that does not alienate the very communities markets are meant to serve. The insights generated by this study could therefore guide local authorities, urban planners, and community stakeholders in crafting strategies that avoid the pitfalls of exclusionary redevelopment.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the Ekosodin Market in Ugbowo, Uselu Market in Ugbowo, Orgie-Ode Market in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The market was chosen because of its location near the University of Benin, which makes it a central hub for students, staff, and residents of the surrounding community. The research focuses on the socio-economic, cultural, and spatial dynamics of the market, as well as the infrastructural and organizational challenges that affect its daily operation. The scope covers issues such as market layout, circulation, sanitation, governance, and the experiences of both traders and users. It also considers how modernization pressures—such as digital payments, food logistics, and participatory planning- interact with traditional trading practices. However, the study does not involve architectural design or physical redevelopment proposals. Instead, it is restricted to research-based analysis and recommendations aimed at improving the functionality and inclusivity of urban markets, within selected markets serving as the case study.

1.8 STUDY AREA

The study area is **Benin City**, the capital of Edo State in Southern Nigeria, one of the oldest and most culturally significant urban centers in West Africa. Benin City's market system represents a fusion of indigenous urban culture, commerce, and architecture. Its markets -such as **Oba Market, Uselu Market, Orgie Market, and Ekosodin Market** -play a central role in the daily lives of residents and the regional economy. stems of trade, social exchange, and urban livelihood (Ojo & Okon, 2021). Geographically, Benin City lies between latitudes **6°19'N and**

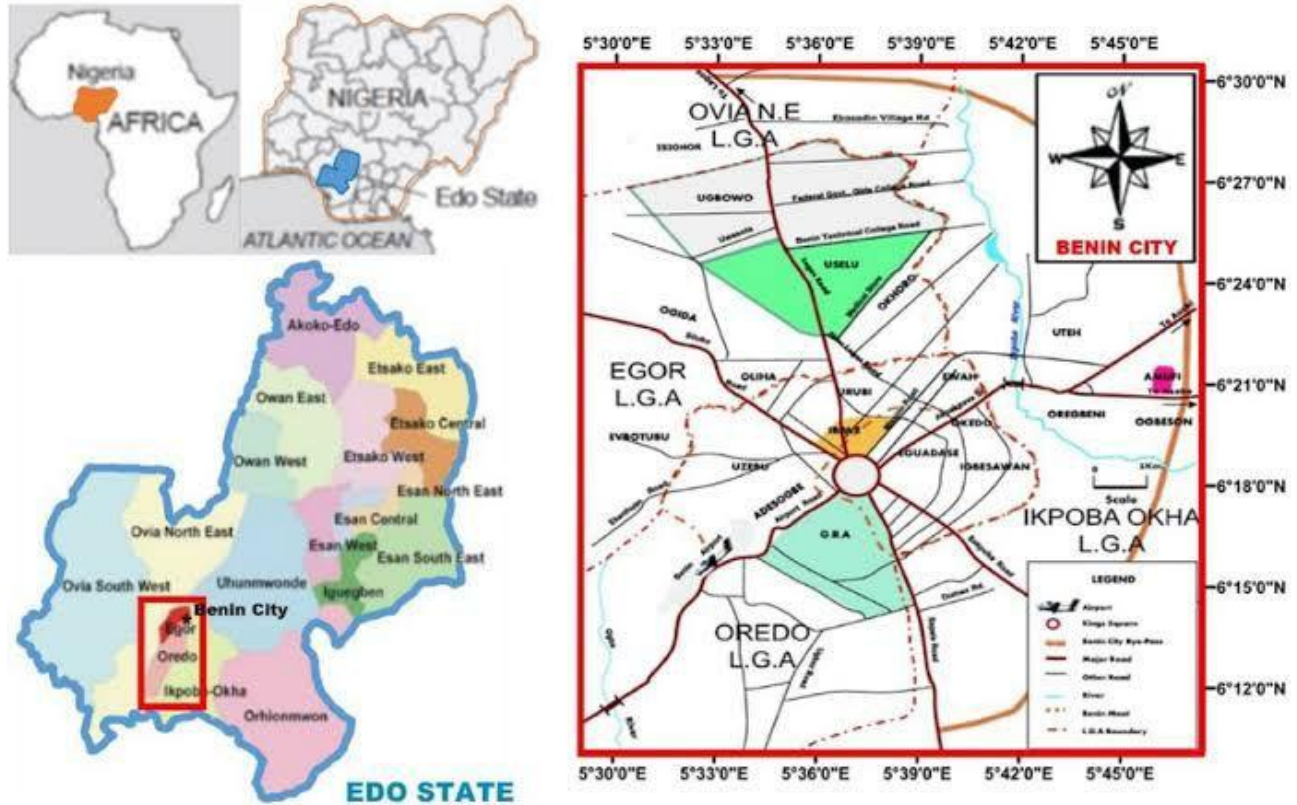


Figure 1.1: Map of Benin City, Edo State.
Source: Wikipedia.

6°21'N and longitudes **5°35'E** and **5°41'E**, within the humid tropical rainforest belt. The city experiences heavy rainfall between April and October, affecting drainage and sanitation systems in open markets. With an estimated population of over 1.7 million people (National Population Commission, 2022), Benin serves as the economic and administrative hub of Edo State.

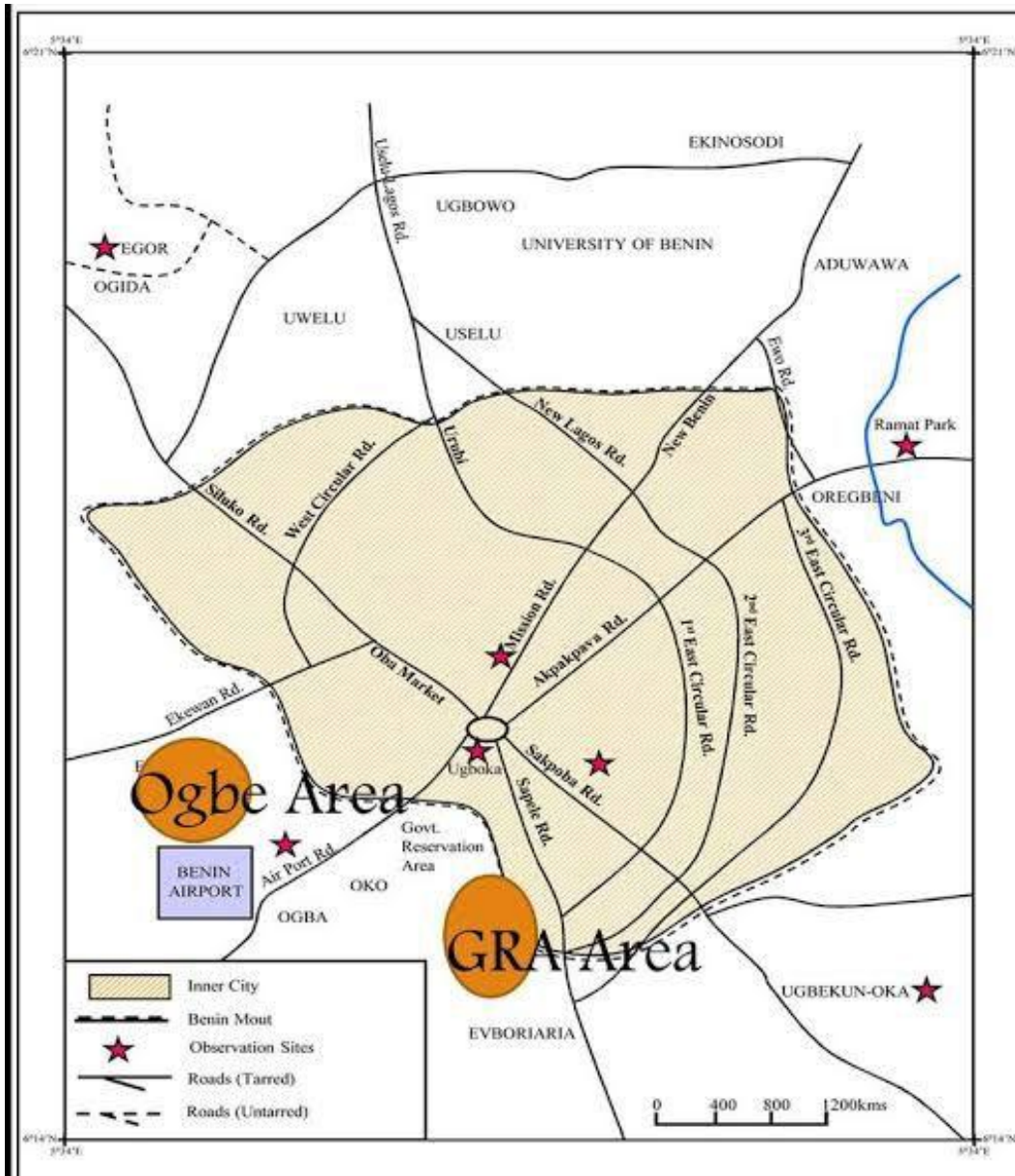


Figure 1.2: Map of Benin City showing specific study areas: Uselu, Ekosodin and Oba Markets
 Source: Wikipedia.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORKS

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provides the intellectual foundation for this study, offering lenses through which the processes of market revitalization and cultural sustainability can be critically examined. It brings together theories from urban studies, anthropology, sociology, and environmental design to explain how traditional markets function, adapt, and transform under the pressures of modernization. In the context of Benin City, where markets represent not only economic spaces but cultural and historical landmarks, this framework guides the research in understanding the relationships between **urban governance, spatial transformation, community resilience, and cultural continuity**. Markets are socio-spatial organisms — living institutions that respond to forces of policy, economy, and culture (Watson, 2020). Therefore, revitalizing them involves understanding these forces and the theories that explain their dynamics.

This study adopts and synthesizes four principal theoretical perspectives:

- **Urban Political Economy Theory**
- **Cultural Ecology Theory**
- **Social Capital Theory**
- **Place Attachment Theory**

Together, they provide a comprehensive base for analyzing the multi-layered interactions between modernization and cultural preservation in selected markets in Benin City.

2.1.1 Urban Political Economy Theory

The Urban Political Economy Theory is central to understanding how market spaces evolve within broader socio-political and economic structures. This theory posits that urban spaces, including markets, are not passive outcomes of development but are actively produced and reproduced through political and economic power (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2018). Cities, in this sense, are arenas where various interests—state, capital, and community—compete and negotiate control over resources and land use. Harvey (2018) asserts that urbanization is driven by the dynamics of capital accumulation and the pursuit of profit maximization, often leading to spatial

inequalities and exclusionary redevelopment. Lefebvre’s notion of “the production of space” further argues that the physical and social organization of cities mirrors the interests of dominant economic forces. Markets, being economically strategic spaces, often become targets for state-led renewal or privatization under the guise of modernization. In Nigerian cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, and Benin City, similar patterns emerge: traditional markets are redeveloped to align with urban aesthetics and economic objectives, frequently at the cost of displacing informal traders (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018; Ojo & Okon, 2021). These transformations not only reshape physical structures but also the livelihoods and cultural fabric of communities that depend on them. The theory enables this study to interrogate the political rationale behind market renewal programs and the economic consequences of such interventions. By applying the urban political economy lens, the research explores how governance structures, policy decisions, and private investments shape the development of markets in Benin City. It also raises questions about whether these efforts genuinely enhance urban resilience and equity or simply reproduce patterns of exclusion under the guise of modernization. Therefore, this theory contributes to understanding market revitalization as a political and socio-economic process—a contested terrain where modernization must be balanced with inclusivity, fairness, and cultural preservation.

2.1.2 Cultural Ecology Theory

The Cultural Ecology Theory, pioneered by Julian Steward (1955), provides another dimension to this study by linking culture, environment, and human adaptation. It examines how societies organize their economic and spatial practices in response to environmental and social contexts. In the case of traditional markets, this theory emphasizes how physical layouts, trading systems, and spatial relationships have evolved over a long history of adaptation to local conditions, including climate, social organization, and trade culture. According to Rappaport (1968) and later scholars like Okeke and Eze (2020), traditional markets in Africa often embody adaptive strategies that optimize space, manage resources, and sustain cultural cohesion. For instance, the arrangement of stalls, pedestrian routes, and open courtyards in many Nigerian markets reflects responses to climatic conditions - promoting airflow, drainage, and visibility. Similarly, market rules and taboos reflect cultural mechanisms for maintaining order, hygiene, and environmental balance. In Benin City, these adaptive strategies are evident in the structure and operation of its markets, which have evolved alongside local social hierarchies and traditions. Market

associations, community cleaning days, and spatial zoning according to goods or clans are examples of ecological and cultural synchronization. However, modernization projects that impose rigid building layouts, artificial materials, or centralized management often disrupt these indigenous systems. Cultural Ecology Theory, therefore, provides an analytical tool to evaluate how modern revitalization can respect and build upon traditional ecological and cultural systems, instead of erasing them. It supports a vision of development that is context-sensitive, integrating sustainability principles while maintaining the organic character that defines local markets.

2.1.3 Social Capital Theory

The **Social Capital Theory** focuses on the role of relationships, trust, and community networks in facilitating collective action and resilience (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). In the context of market systems, social capital refers to the informal networks and associations that sustain trade operations, resolve conflicts, and ensure cooperation among market participants. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the “features of social organization—such as networks, norms, and trust—that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.” Markets, particularly in African contexts, are fertile grounds for such networks. Trader unions, credit rotations (*esusu*), and informal dispute-resolution mechanisms are forms of social capital that enable markets to function efficiently even in the absence of strong formal institutions (Oyesiku, 2019; Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021).

In Benin City, markets such as Uselu Market and New Benin Market rely heavily on social relationships. Traders’ associations regulate sanitation, contribute to security, and act as intermediaries between government officials and local communities. These networks embody resilience, helping markets recover from shocks such as fires or redevelopment. However, rapid urban reforms often threaten these networks by relocating traders or introducing bureaucratic systems that undermine existing social hierarchies. By applying Social Capital Theory, this study seeks to understand how modernization can *strengthen* rather than *disrupt* social cohesion. It argues that social networks are vital for maintaining cultural sustainability, managing environmental systems, and promoting collective participation in market governance.

2.1.4 Place Attachment Theory

The Place Attachment Theory explains the emotional, symbolic, and cultural bonds individuals form with specific environments (Low & Altman, 1992). Markets are not only commercial venues; they are deeply rooted in collective memory and cultural identity. They embody heritage, rituals, and traditions that connect people to their community and ancestry (Carr & Hodge, 2018; Watson, 2020). Classical scholars such as Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) argue that people develop profound meanings and identity ties with places through lived experience, cultural symbolism, and everyday practices. Low and Altman (1992) describe place attachment as a process shaped by personal experiences, social interactions, and symbolic meanings. Scannell and Gifford (2010) further conceptualize place attachment as having person, psychological, and place dimensions, illustrating how emotional bonds are influenced by cultural background, identity, and social relationships. Lewicka (2011) also emphasizes that places with historical significance tend to command stronger emotional ties, which explains why traditional markets often function as anchors of collective memory. When applied to traditional markets, place attachment helps explain why communities resist relocation or redevelopment plans that threaten their sense of belonging. Traditional markets represent social networks, identity continuity, and cultural symbolism (Mehta, 2014; Zukin, 2010). In Benin City, for instance, markets such as Oba Market are integral to the city's cultural and social identity. Their names, spatial arrangements, and activities are tied to the Benin royal institution, making them not just economic centers but heritage landmarks (Omoigui, 2016; Aisien, 2021). When revitalization disregards this attachment by imposing modern structures or relocating traders, the outcome is often community resentment, cultural loss, and social alienation (Ujang, 2012; Hernández, Hidalgo & Ruiz, 2007). Thus, Place Attachment Theory underscores the need for culturally sensitive urban design and policy interventions that preserve both emotional and symbolic continuity. This theory adds a humanistic dimension to the study, highlighting that revitalization efforts must consider not only physical infrastructure and economic logic but also cultural sentiment, identity expression, and collective memory.

2.1.5 Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives

The integration of these four theories—Urban Political Economy, Cultural Ecology, Social Capital, and Place Attachment—creates a holistic framework for analyzing urban market revitalization and cultural sustainability in Benin City. Each theory complements the other:

- Urban Political Economy explains **power dynamics and governance** in market redevelopment.
- Cultural Ecology highlights **environmental adaptation and local cultural practices**.
- Social Capital emphasizes **community networks and social resilience**.
- Place Attachment focuses on **emotional identity and cultural heritage**.

Together, they allow this research to approach market revitalization not merely as a design or policy problem but as a **multidimensional socio-cultural process**. The framework provides a comprehensive lens to evaluate how modernization can be aligned with cultural preservation, community participation, and sustainable urban development.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework serves as a blueprint that organizes and illustrates the key concepts, variables, and interrelationships that define the study of urban market revitalization and cultural sustainability within selected Benin City's traditional market system. It translates the theoretical ideas discussed earlier into a research structure that guides data collection, interpretation, and analysis. This framework recognizes that urban markets are complex socio-spatial ecosystems; their evolution and sustainability depend on multiple, interlinked factors, including governance, culture, economy, and infrastructure. Thus, revitalization cannot be understood merely as physical redevelopment; it is a process involving institutional change, community participation, and environmental adaptation (Watson, 2020; Okeke & Eze, 2020). In this study, market revitalization is conceptualized as a set of deliberate efforts to enhance the functionality, safety, and efficiency of markets while maintaining their cultural identity and social inclusiveness. Meanwhile, cultural sustainability is conceptualized as the ability of modernization processes to preserve and reinforce the intangible values, traditions, and social systems that define market life (Carr & Hodge, 2018; Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

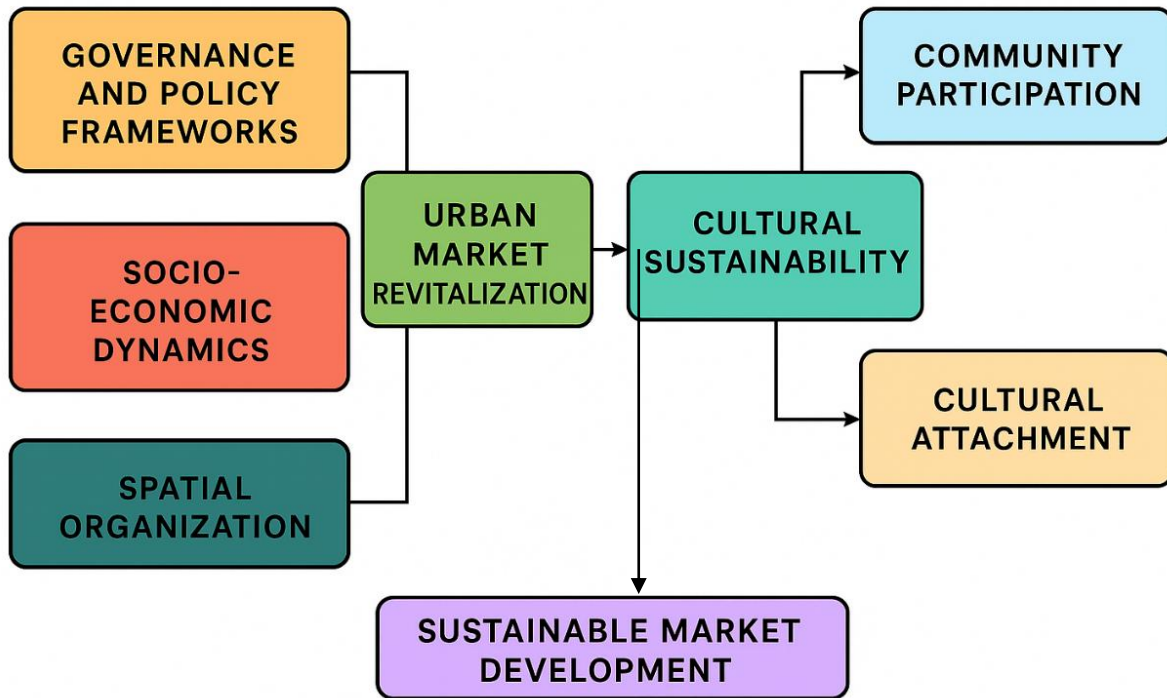


Figure 2: A chart showing conceptual framework
 Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

The conceptual framework for this study is informed by established literature on urban market revitalization, cultural sustainability, and socio-spatial development. It presents urban markets as complex socio-economic and cultural systems whose sustainability depends on the interaction of governance, socio-economic dynamics, spatial organization, and community-based cultural values. Scholars argue that traditional markets cannot be understood merely as economic infrastructures but as living urban institutions shaped by policy decisions, social relations, and cultural practices (Watson, 2020; Montgomery, 2019). Thus, revitalization cannot be understood merely as physical redevelopment; it is a process involving institutional change, community participation, and environmental adaptation (Watson, 2020; Okeke & Eze, 2020). In this study, market revitalization is conceptualized as a set of deliberate efforts to enhance the functionality, safety, and efficiency of markets while maintaining their cultural identity and social inclusiveness. Meanwhile, cultural sustainability is conceptualized as the ability of modernization processes to preserve and reinforce the intangible values, traditions, and social systems that define market life (Carr & Hodge, 2018; Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021).

At the core of the framework is urban market revitalization, conceptualized as an integrative process rather than a purely physical intervention. Literature emphasizes that successful market revitalization requires coordinated governance and policy frameworks that provide regulatory clarity, maintenance structures, and long-term planning (Ogunyemi, 2018; Okeke & Eze, 2020). Weak governance has been repeatedly linked to infrastructural decay, poor sanitation, and informal spatial expansion in Nigerian markets, underscoring the importance of institutional capacity in shaping market outcomes. The framework also incorporates socio-economic dynamics as a key influencing variable. Traditional markets play a vital role in sustaining informal economies, supporting livelihoods, and providing affordable goods to urban populations (Popoola & Olorunfemi, 2018). It also suggests that revitalization efforts that fail to account for traders' income structures, trading patterns, and affordability concerns often result in displacement or reduced economic resilience. Thus, socio-economic considerations directly shape how revitalization policies are received and sustained. Spatial organization forms another foundational component of the framework. Studies in urban planning highlight that spatial layout, circulation patterns, stall arrangement, and accessibility significantly influence market efficiency, safety, and user experience (Obasohan, 2021; Montgomery, 2019). Poorly organized market spaces often lead to congestion, health risks, and security challenges. Consequently, spatial reorganization is a critical mechanism through which revitalization efforts can improve functionality without undermining traditional spatial logic. These three factors—governance, socio-economic dynamics, and spatial organization—collectively influence the outcomes of urban market revitalization. However, the framework emphasizes that revitalization alone does not guarantee sustainability. It must be mediated through cultural sustainability, which literature defines as the ability of development processes to preserve and reinforce cultural meanings, social practices, and collective identities (Carr & Hodge, 2018; Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021). Within the framework, cultural sustainability is strengthened through community participation and cultural attachment. Community participation is widely recognized as a critical success factor in urban regeneration projects, particularly in culturally sensitive environments such as traditional markets (Watson, 2020). Participatory processes ensure that traders, market leaders, and users contribute to decision-making, thereby enhancing legitimacy, ownership, and long-term compliance. Similarly, cultural attachment reflects the emotional and symbolic bonds that traders and users form with market spaces. Place Attachment Theory suggests that these bonds influence

how communities respond to change, especially redevelopment initiatives (Low & Altman, 1992; Carr & Hodge, 2018). It also indicates that ignoring cultural attachment often leads to resistance, social alienation, and the erosion of heritage values. Therefore, recognizing cultural attachment within revitalization frameworks helps ensure continuity of identity and social cohesion.

The ultimate outcome of these interactions, as shown in the framework, is sustainable market development. Sustainable market development extends beyond physical improvements to include economic resilience, cultural continuity, social inclusion, and environmental balance. Scholars argue that markets that integrate infrastructure upgrades with cultural preservation and participatory governance are more likely to remain functional, inclusive, and resilient over time (Montgomery, 2019; Watson, 2020). In the context of Benin City, this conceptual framework is particularly relevant. Existing literature highlights that Benin's markets are deeply embedded in the city's historical, cultural, and royal heritage (Ojo & Okon, 2021). As such, revitalization strategies must balance modernization with the preservation of cultural systems, traditional authority structures, and social trust networks. The framework therefore provides a holistic lens for examining how revitalization processes can enhance market performance while safeguarding cultural sustainability in Benin City's traditional markets.

This conceptual framework is highly relevant to the context of Benin City because it captures both the **material and cultural dimensions** of market development. Benin's markets are not just economic spaces but also cultural landscapes embedded in the city's identity and royal heritage (Ojo & Okon, 2021). Therefore, any revitalization effort must integrate physical improvement with the preservation of cultural systems, social trust, and environmental balance.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1 Socio-Economic and Cultural Structure of Traditional Markets

Markets have long served as the backbone of urban and regional economies, acting as central nodes of trade, employment, and cultural expression. In most developing economies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, traditional markets still dominate the retail landscape, supporting over 70% of informal economic activities (Ackah & Medvedev, 2019). These markets are not merely places of exchange but vibrant socio-cultural ecosystems where values, beliefs, and identities are performed and reinforced daily. According to Watson (2020), markets represent "retailsapes"

that fuse economic functions with cultural symbolism, maintaining social cohesion through interpersonal interactions and communal trust networks. Traditional markets often mirror the cultural fabric of their communities. For instance, in Nigerian cities such as Benin City, markets like Oba Market and New Benin Market operate as both economic and cultural landmarks, reflecting local customs, kinship networks, and the hierarchical structures of trade associations. As Okeke and Eze (2020) observe, the organization of these markets frequently follows ethnic or guild-based lines, where traders group according to commodity type or origin, reinforcing socio-cultural ties and economic solidarity. This organization ensures that even in the absence of formal regulation, there remains a form of self-governance that maintains stability and fairness in transactions. Modern market systems, however, have introduced new dynamics into this traditional order. With increasing urbanization, population growth, and the globalization of consumer behavior, there has been a gradual transformation from open-air traditional markets to semi-formal and enclosed modern retail complexes (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018). These new market structures emphasize hygiene, security, and infrastructural convenience but often at the cost of the cultural vibrancy and communal nature of older markets. The tension between modernization and cultural preservation has therefore become a critical issue in contemporary market redevelopment (Watson & Studdert, 2020).

The socio-economic role of markets in urban resilience and poverty alleviation is also significant. As Oyesiku (2019) points out, traditional markets provide livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups—particularly women, youth, and rural migrants—while contributing substantially to household incomes and local government revenue. Moreover, markets act as informal social safety nets, where communal ties and cultural values support reciprocal relationships and collective security (Mabogunje, 2018). Thus, markets remain indispensable to sustainable urban development, serving both economic and cultural purposes in cities like Benin.

2.3.2 Spatial Organization of Markets

The spatial organization of markets determines not only their efficiency but also their cultural expressiveness and social inclusivity. Historically, the layout of markets evolved organically, shaped by topography, accessibility, and socio-political hierarchies rather than by formal planning principles (Carr & Hodge, 2018). Traditional markets in West Africa often develop around key transportation routes or central civic nodes—such as palaces, religious centers, or crossroads reflecting the intertwining of trade, culture, and governance (Adegbile & Alabi, 2020). In Benin City, for example, the proximity of markets to traditional palaces historically symbolized royal endorsement and control of commerce, reinforcing the link between trade and authority (Eweka, 2019). Spatially, market organizations vary between open-air, covered sheds, and hybrid forms. Open-air markets remain predominant in Nigeria due to climatic adaptability and cost-effectiveness. However, these spaces are often constrained by poor infrastructure, congestion, and limited sanitation facilities (Adeleye & Ogunleye, 2020). Modern enclosed markets, by contrast, adopt modular layouts, standardized stalls, and organized circulation patterns to improve accessibility and hygiene. Despite these improvements, they sometimes fail to accommodate informal traders or local cultural practices, creating spatial exclusion (Watson & Studdert, 2020). A recent study emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive design that integrates traditional spatial logic with modern efficiency (Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021). This involves providing flexible stall configurations, communal courtyards, and shared spaces that encourage social interaction while supporting economic activities. The concept of “market hybridity,” where modern infrastructure coexists with traditional practices, is increasingly being promoted in urban planning discourse as a means of achieving both sustainability and cultural continuity (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018).

In summary, the spatial organization of markets serves as a mirror of their socio-economic and cultural dynamics. To understand the evolution of urban markets like those in Benin City, one must consider how physical layouts, infrastructural provisions, and cultural functions intersect. This understanding provides a foundation for sustainable market redevelopment strategies that respect local identity while enhancing efficiency.

2.3.3 Infrastructural Deficiencies and Physical Challenges in Traditional Market Systems

Infrastructure is one of the defining indicators of a market’s functionality, resilience, and sustainability. In most Nigerian cities, traditional markets serve as vital economic arteries, yet

they continue to suffer from chronic infrastructural neglect. This neglect manifests in poor sanitation, inadequate drainage, limited access roads, unreliable power supply, and insufficient waste management facilities (Adeleye & Ogunleye, 2020). The absence of these essential infrastructural components not only undermines public health but also disrupts the efficiency of market operations, particularly during peak trading periods and rainy seasons when flooding and congestion are common. According to Akinmoladun and Adejumo (2018), infrastructural deficiencies in traditional markets reflect broader urban governance challenges—such as weak institutional frameworks, underfunded local governments, and a lack of maintenance culture that inhibit sustainable urban growth.

Markets like Oba Market in Benin City exemplify this problem. Following the fire disaster in 2020, traders lost billions of naira worth of goods due to inadequate fire-fighting infrastructure, lack of emergency access, and poor stall organization (Ojo & Okon, 2021). These infrastructural limitations expose how traditional markets have not been adequately adapted to modern urban risks such as fire hazards, overcrowding, and environmental degradation. In many cases, temporary measures such as makeshift roofing and ad-hoc drainage repairs only provide short-term relief. As Mabogunje (2018) notes, infrastructural underinvestment in public markets perpetuates inefficiency and economic vulnerability, especially for informal traders who rely on daily transactions for subsistence. Another dimension of infrastructural inadequacy is the spatial inefficiency caused by unplanned expansion. Over time, population growth and commercial diversification have led to the encroachment of trading activities into roadways and pedestrian zones (Adegbile & Alabi, 2020). This unregulated activity often worsens traffic congestion and increases the risk of accidents. Moreover, infrastructural improvements such as paved walkways, proper stall demarcation, and waste collection points are frequently absent or poorly maintained. In the context of Benin City, local authorities' efforts at market renovation have been hindered by funding constraints and a lack of participatory planning with stakeholders, resulting in half-completed or abandoned projects (Eweka, 2019). Beyond physical infrastructure, markets also face infrastructural inequality—where modernized sections benefit from government interventions, while older or informal extensions remain marginalized. This disparity fosters tension between different trader groups and exacerbates inefficiency. Oyesiku (2019) emphasizes that inclusive infrastructural development is essential for market resilience, especially in multi-functional urban markets where formal and informal activities coexist. Therefore, addressing

infrastructural deficits requires not only physical upgrades but also institutional mechanisms to ensure sustainability, maintenance, and equitable access.

2.3.4 Organizational Inefficiencies and Institutional Gaps in Market Governance

While infrastructure forms the tangible aspect of market operation, organization and governance constitute its structural backbone. Effective management determines how efficiently markets function and how resilient they are in the face of socio-economic shocks. However, most markets in Nigeria suffer from institutional fragmentation and weak administrative structures that compromise their operational efficiency (Okeke & Eze, 2020). In traditional market settings, management is often divided among multiple authorities—local government councils, traditional institutions, and traders’ associations, each with overlapping jurisdictions and conflicting interests (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018). This fragmentation leads to inconsistent policy implementation, inadequate maintenance, and poor enforcement of regulations. For instance, in Benin City, many major markets such as New Benin Market, Oba Market are jointly supervised by the Benin Traditional Council and the Oredo Local Government. While this dual control has cultural legitimacy, it often creates administrative ambiguity regarding responsibilities such as sanitation, stall allocation, and revenue collection (Eweka, 2019). Traders are frequently caught between traditional levies and government taxes, leading to disputes and inefficiency in revenue management. According to Watson and Studdert (2020), governance fragmentation not only undermines market efficiency but also weakens traders’ trust in management systems, resulting in reduced compliance and poor collective coordination. Another aspect of organizational weakness lies in the absence of data-driven management systems.

Many markets still operate on paper-based stall records and manual fee collection methods, making it difficult to track performance or plan upgrades effectively (Carr & Hodge, 2018). The lack of reliable data also limits the ability of authorities to forecast growth trends, allocate resources efficiently, or respond to emergencies. Furthermore, leadership turnover within traders’ associations sometimes leads to inconsistency in rules and corruption in stall allocations (Adeleye & Ogunleye, 2020). Such governance failures reinforce inefficiency and discourage private-sector participation in market development. Institutional resilience is also hampered by inadequate policy frameworks. As noted by Nnaemeka and Eze (2021), existing urban development plans in Nigeria rarely integrate market redevelopment as a key component of city

planning. Instead, markets are treated as temporary or informal entities, often excluded from infrastructure investment programs. This neglect results in weak adaptation to modern retail trends such as e-commerce integration, logistics optimization, and disaster risk management. A more integrated approach—where traditional governance structures collaborate with formal institutions—could strengthen accountability, foster community participation, and enhance market sustainability (Oyesiku, 2019).

Overall, the organizational inefficiencies in market governance reflect deeper structural issues in urban management. Without institutional reform, infrastructural improvements alone will remain unsustainable. A coordinated governance framework that merges traditional legitimacy with modern administrative accountability is crucial for creating markets that are efficient, resilient, and culturally grounded.

2.3.5 Cultural Identity and Market Modernization: The Paradox of Progress

The modernisation of traditional markets represents a complex paradox—while it promises improved efficiency, safety, and aesthetics, it also risks eroding the cultural identity and heritage that give these spaces their unique social and symbolic value. In most African contexts, and particularly in Nigeria, markets are not merely centres of exchange but “cultural theatres” where everyday interactions reflect the values, traditions, and social hierarchies of the community (Adeleye & Ogunleye, 2020). They embody indigenous spatial logics—such as the organization of stalls by trade type, the positioning of shrines or sacred spaces within the market precinct, and the gendered division of trading activities -that connect modern commerce to deep-rooted cultural patterns (Eweka, 2019). However, rapid modernization driven by urban redevelopment policies, real-estate pressures, and global retail trends often displaces these intangible cultural dimensions. According to Watson and Studdert (2020), the global shift toward “sanitised” market spaces—characterised by standardised stalls, fixed layouts, and controlled access—has frequently stripped markets of their communal essence. The replacement of informal, organic structures with rigid commercial complexes tends to marginalise traditional traders, weaken social cohesion, and diminish local identities. In Benin City, for instance, the post-fire reconstruction proposals for Uselu Market included plans for a multi-storey shopping plaza with uniform design aesthetics, which many traders argued would erase the cultural spirit and indigenous order that historically defined the market (Ojo & Okon, 2021).

Preserving cultural sustainability, therefore, requires balancing modernisation with cultural continuity. As Nnaemeka and Eze (2021) argue, “urban design for African markets must transcend aesthetics to engage memory, ritual, and belonging.” Cultural sustainability emphasises maintaining living traditions while enabling economic progress. This can be achieved through participatory planning models that include traditional authorities, trade unions, and community elders in redevelopment processes. In Benin, the involvement of the Benin Traditional Council in market reconstruction efforts has proven vital in maintaining spiritual order and traditional spatial hierarchy (Eweka, 2019). Moreover, studies by Oyesiku (2019) show that culturally grounded markets tend to be more socially resilient and adaptable to crises, because they rely on long-standing norms of cooperation, mutual trust, and collective identity. Globally, there is increasing recognition that modernisation need not equate to cultural erasure. Research from

Southeast Asia and Latin America reveals that integrating vernacular aesthetics, indigenous materials, and symbolic patterns into market design can sustain cultural relevance while achieving modern standards of hygiene and functionality (Carr & Hodge, 2018; Verlinden, 2008). Such culturally sensitive modernisation aligns with UNESCO’s 2019 framework for “Culture and Sustainable Urban Development,” which advocates for the inclusion of cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable urban transformation. Therefore, in the context of Nigerian cities, rethinking the traditional market must move beyond physical design to embrace intangible heritage, everyday social practice, and the preservation of collective memory.

2.3.6 Cultural Sustainability in Policy, Participation, and Design Practice

Cultural sustainability in market modernization depends not only on design intentions but also on policy frameworks, stakeholder participation, and institutional sensitivity to local identity. In many Nigerian cities, modernization projects have been driven by top-down planning without adequate consultation with those most affected—namely, the traders and communities whose livelihoods and traditions are embedded in these spaces (Okeke & Eze, 2020). This exclusion often results in redevelopment outcomes that, while visually impressive, fail to reflect the cultural logic of the local context. The result is a form of “architectural displacement,” where traders are relocated into unfamiliar, alienating spaces that disrupt their social networks and economic routines (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018). Participatory urban governance provides an alternative approach. According to Adeleye & Ogunleye (2020), participatory design fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders, enhances accountability, and ensures that market spaces reflect the community’s values. In Benin City, successful community-driven initiatives—such as the restoration of smaller neighborhood markets under the supervision of local chiefs—demonstrate how cultural institutions can collaborate with urban authorities to achieve culturally appropriate

modernization (Eweka, 2019). This collaborative approach allows traditional governance systems to coexist with formal planning agencies, leading to outcomes that are both efficient and culturally grounded.

From a policy standpoint, cultural sustainability also involves embedding cultural considerations into planning and building regulations. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act (2004, revised 2018) emphasizes economic and environmental sustainability but provides limited

guidance on cultural parameters (Mabogunje, 2018). Integrating cultural indicators—such as spatial symbolism, community rituals, and traditional market governance—into formal planning codes could ensure that modernization initiatives respect local heritage. Nnaemeka and Eze (2021) advocate for “cultural impact assessments” as part of redevelopment planning, similar to environmental impact assessments, to evaluate potential threats to intangible cultural assets before project implementation. Another strategy for sustaining culture amid modernization is the adaptive reuse of historical market sites. Rather than demolishing traditional structures, cities can retrofit them with modern infrastructure—such as fire-resistant materials, improved drainage, and digital payment systems—while preserving the spatial configuration and cultural landmarks (Carr & Hodge, 2018). This hybrid approach maintains continuity between past and present, promoting identity retention even as the market evolves.

Finally, education and documentation play critical roles in sustaining cultural values. Cultural mapping initiatives, oral history projects, and community archives can preserve the stories, rituals, and spatial knowledge of traditional markets for future generations (Watson, 2020). Such documentation not only enriches academic understanding but also provides a foundation for culturally informed policy. As the global economy continues to evolve, the challenge for Benin City—and similar urban centers—is not whether to modernize, but how to do so without losing the essence that makes its markets distinctive cultural institutions.

2.3.7 Challenges of Market Users in Adapting to Emerging Systems

Markets, as socio-economic microcosms, thrive on interaction between various user groups—traders, customers, local authorities, and support workers—whose activities collectively determine efficiency and adaptability. However, in the context of revitalisation, these users often face multiple challenges linked to digital transition, spatial restructuring, and governance reforms. As Watson (2020) emphasizes, modernization initiatives tend to privilege physical redevelopment and economic formalization while neglecting the human adaptability dimension. This imbalance leaves traders and market users struggling to adjust to new operational frameworks that alter their routines, relationships, and livelihood systems. In Nigeria, where the informal sector contributes significantly to urban employment, the majority of market traders are self-employed women with limited access to capital, digital tools, and business literacy (Oyesiku, 2019). The introduction of cashless payment systems, digital stall allocation, or e-taxation has

therefore been met with resistance and confusion among market users (Adeleye & Ogunleye, 2020). A study by Okeke and Eze (2020) found that traders in Benin City expressed distrust toward government-led modernisation projects due to inadequate communication, lack of technical training, and previous experiences of exclusion. These sentiments often result in non-compliance with new systems, perpetuating informal practices and limiting policy impact. Moreover, modernization efforts frequently lead to spatial dislocation. During redevelopment, many traders are temporarily or permanently displaced, losing established customer bases and social networks that are critical to their survival (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018). This phenomenon, known as “market displacement,” has been widely documented in Benin City’s Oba Market, Uselu Market (Ojo & Okon, 2021). The human cost of modernisation—loss of community ties, identity, and autonomy—often outweighs its infrastructural gains, especially when resettlement strategies are poorly planned. From the user perspective, markets also function as social spaces for community interaction, information exchange, and cultural participation. When modernisation imposes rigid spatial hierarchies or commercial zoning, it often disrupts these informal social networks (Carr & Hodge, 2018). Traders who once relied on proximity for mutual support and collective bargaining find themselves isolated in standardised stalls, weakening cooperation and increasing competition. Thus, while modernization aims to improve market efficiency, its social consequences reveal deep human adaptation challenges.

To foster smoother transitions, scholars advocate for *inclusive modernisation*—a participatory process that integrates user feedback into the planning, design, and implementation stages (Nnaemeka & Eze, 2021). This includes training programs on new market technologies, flexible rent systems during redevelopment phases, and social safety nets for vulnerable traders. Without these measures, the modernisation process risks creating alienation rather than empowerment among the people who sustain market life.

2.3.8 Challenges of Market Systems: Sanitation, Drainage, and Security

Emerging market systems—such as sanitation management, drainage infrastructure, and security surveillance—are critical components of urban revitalisation. Yet, their introduction often exposes long-standing systemic deficiencies in traditional markets. Effective sanitation and waste management remain some of the most persistent challenges in Nigerian markets. According to Adeleye and Ogunleye (2020), poor sanitation in open markets not only affects aesthetics but also undermines public health, leading to outbreaks of cholera and other waterborne diseases. The lack of organized waste collection systems, limited access to functional toilets, and poor enforcement of hygiene regulations further compound these problems. Drainage inefficiency is another structural challenge that limits market functionality. In Benin City, recurring flooding in markets such as Oba, Uselu, and New Benin is exacerbated by blocked drains, poor grading, and haphazard stall extensions over natural waterways (Eweka, 2019). During rainy seasons, traders are forced to elevate goods on makeshift platforms, while customers wade through pools of stagnant water. This not only discourages patronage but also accelerates infrastructural decay. As Ojo and Okon (2021) highlight, market flooding in Benin City illustrates how the absence of sustainable drainage design and maintenance undermines both economic resilience and public safety. Security, another critical dimension of modern market systems, poses increasing challenges in an era of urban complexity. Theft, fire outbreaks, and social unrest are frequent in dense market environments where surveillance and emergency access are limited. In many Nigerian markets, the absence of organized security structures—such as CCTV monitoring, trained security personnel, and fire emergency systems—has resulted in recurrent losses (Akinmoladun & Adejumo, 2018). The 2020 Oba Market fire, which destroyed hundreds of shops, underscored the need for integrated fire and security systems in market redevelopment (Ojo & Okon, 2021). Yet, most modernisation projects still focus on physical reconstruction rather than system-based resilience. Another systemic issue lies in the maintenance and enforcement of market regulations. While sanitation, waste, and security guidelines are often codified in municipal bylaws, weak institutional enforcement limits their impact (Okeke & Eze, 2020). In some cases, overlapping jurisdictions between local councils and traders' associations result in inconsistent monitoring. Furthermore, market users' limited environmental awareness contributes to the misuse of drainage systems and poor compliance with sanitation schedules (Mabogunje, 2018).

To address these challenges, several scholars propose integrated management frameworks that combine infrastructure with behavioural reform. For instance, Oyesiku (2019) recommends public-private partnerships in market waste management, while Nnaemeka and Eze (2021) advocate community-based sanitation committees to ensure local accountability. Similarly, technological innovations—such as solar-powered security lighting, digital surveillance systems, and smart waste sensors—could enhance safety and hygiene without compromising affordability (Carr & Hodge, 2018). Ultimately, market systems such as sanitation, drainage, and security represent the backbone of a sustainable urban economy. Without addressing their inefficiencies, modernisation remains superficial. As Watson and Studdert (2020) argue, “the modernisation of markets is not merely an architectural challenge but a systemic transformation of how cities manage collective life.” Therefore, for Benin City’s markets to evolve into resilient, inclusive, and efficient spaces, modernisation must be accompanied by systemic reform rooted in local realities and cultural practices.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology serves as the backbone of every academic inquiry, providing the structured pathway through which the research objectives are systematically achieved. This chapter outlines the methodological approach used in examining **urban market revitalization and cultural sustainability of selected markets in Benin City, Edo State**. The study's central focus lies in understanding how modernization processes within urban markets can be harmonized with the preservation of cultural identity, socio-economic inclusiveness, and spatial functionality. The methodology adopted here is guided by both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed in Chapter Two. It blends empirical investigation with contextual interpretation to ensure that both measurable variables (such as infrastructure and spatial organization) and qualitative aspects (like cultural perception and user experiences) are thoroughly examined. The chapter discusses in detail the **research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, methods of analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations** that underpin this study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN/DATA TYPES AND SOURCES

The study employs a mixed-method research design, integrating both descriptive and qualitative approaches. This methodological orientation is chosen because the phenomenon under study—urban market revitalization and cultural sustainability—is inherently multi-dimensional. It involves not only tangible elements such as infrastructure and planning systems but also intangible components such as cultural identity, user behavior, and community participation. The quantitative component captures measurable aspects like demographic profiles, user satisfaction levels, market facilities, and frequency of use. The qualitative component, on the other hand, provides depth by exploring how people perceive, interact with, and interpret their market environments (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The research adopts a descriptive-exploratory design, which includes:

- The *descriptive aspect* provides detailed documentation of the physical and socio-economic characteristics of the markets studied.

- The *exploratory aspect* investigates emerging trends, underlying problems, and cultural patterns influencing modernization efforts.

This design allows for a holistic analysis of how market systems operate within an evolving urban context such as Benin City, where traditional and modern systems coexist. The data sources the markets—such as Oba Market, Uselu Market, Orgie Market, and Ekosodin Market—play a central role in the daily lives of residents and the regional economy. Historically, Benin’s markets were designed as community-oriented spaces tied to the palace economy of the ancient Benin Kingdom (Aisien, 2017). Each market had symbolic and administrative significance, often named after local deities or historical figures. Over time, rapid urbanization, population growth, and informal expansion have transformed these markets into complex ecosystems of trade, social exchange, and urban livelihood (Ojo & Okon, 2021).

The selected markets reflect diverse characteristics:

- Oba Market: The most traditional and central, located near the royal palace; it serves as a cultural and economic symbol.
- Uselu Market: A large semi-formal market with modernized sections, experiencing rapid expansion.
- Ekosodin Market: A smaller but significant neighborhood market noted for its diversity and informal trade network.
- Orgie-Ode Market: A smaller but significant village market noted for its diversity in the trading network.

The choice of these markets provides a comparative perspective between traditional and semi-modernized markets, offering a balanced view of revitalization and cultural sustainability.

3.2.1 Primary Data Sources

Collected through field surveys, interviews, and direct observation within the markets. These sources provide first-hand insights into existing problems and opportunities for revitalization.

3.2.2 Secondary Data Sources

Drawn from academic journals, government reports, previous market redevelopment projects, and archival records. Major sources include:

- Edo State Ministry of Urban and Regional Planning reports (2018–2023)
- UN-Habitat publications on sustainable cities
- Academic literature such as Watson (2020), Harvey (2018), and Okeke & Eze (2020).

These sources ensure that the analysis is grounded in both empirical and theoretical evidence.

3.3 RESEARCH POPULATION

The study population includes all **traders, customers, market officials, transport operators, and maintenance staff** within the selected markets in Benin City. Each of these groups plays a vital role in shaping market operations, user experience, and sustainability. According to data from the **Edo State Market Development Authority (2022)**, the combined population of traders across the three markets is estimated at over **7,000 individuals**, while daily market users (customers and vendors) exceed **15,000**. Traders are further categorized into permanent stall owners, temporary vendors, and itinerant traders, each contributing uniquely to the spatial and economic organization of the market. The study also recognizes the role of **market associations**, such as the Traders’ Union, which manages internal governance and acts as a link between traders and local authorities. These social networks are essential for understanding cultural sustainability within market systems (Oyesiku, 2019).

3.4 RESEARCH SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Due to the large population, the sample size is calculated using **Yamane’s formula (1967)**:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size

N = Total population

e = Margin of error (0.10 for 95% confidence level)

Given a population of 7,000 traders,

$$n = \frac{7000}{1 + 7000(0.10)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{7000}{1 + 7000(0.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{7000}{71}$$

$$n = 98.6$$

= ~100 respondents.

Thus, a sample size of **380 respondents** will be used.

The study employs a **stratified random sampling technique**. The markets are stratified according to their level of modernization:

- Traditional (Oba Market)
- Traditional (Urelu Market)
- Informal (Orgie Ode Market)
- Informal (Ekosodin Market)

Within each stratum, respondents are selected randomly to ensure representativeness. Market officials and policy experts will be chosen through **purposive sampling**, as their insights are critical to understanding planning and management processes (Patton, 2015).

3.5 RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION METHOD

For this study, to ensure triangulation, three main instruments will be used:

- **Structured Questionnaire**

Designed to collect quantitative data on respondents' demographics, perceptions of market organization, satisfaction with infrastructure, and cultural practices. It will use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." It will be conducted through in-person distribution across different market zones to ensure inclusivity of traders, buyers, and other users. Market officials will assist in coordinating respondents.

- **Observation Checklist**

A preliminary visit to understand the market layout, meet with market associations, and identify key entry points for fieldwork. This will be used to assess the physical and environmental conditions of the markets—layout, stall arrangements, sanitation, drainage, lighting, and security.

- **Photographic Documentation**

Photographs will supplement observations to provide visual evidence for analysis and validation. Each instrument will be pre-tested and refined to improve clarity and consistency.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

A. Descriptive and Exploratory Interpretation

The study adopts a descriptive orientation by presenting the findings in a detailed, narrative form that captures the everyday realities of market environments. The exploratory nature of the analysis allows the researcher to uncover previously under examined issues such as informal cultural practices, indigenous trading norms, and the subtle tensions between modernization and cultural preservation. This process does not aim to test hypotheses but rather to *discover*, *interpret*, and *contextualize* the complex socio-cultural and spatial relationships that define market life in Benin City.

B. Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview transcripts will undergo **thematic analysis** following Braun & Clarke (2019). Responses will be coded into categories (e.g., governance, spatial layout, sanitation, cultural preservation), then grouped into overarching themes. Observational data and photographs will support and validate these themes. This dual analytical approach ensures **data triangulation**, strengthening the study's credibility and providing both numerical and narrative depth. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a robust understanding of both material and cultural aspects of market systems. By combining descriptive and exploratory research approaches, the study ensures that findings will contribute to urban policy, design, and cultural planning within Nigerian cities.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents, analyzes, and discusses the data collected from a field survey conducted among traders, buyers, market officials, market association leaders, artisans, and supporting service providers across the selected markets in Benin City, namely Oba Market, Uselu Market, Ekosodin Market, and Ogie-Ode Market. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered, supplemented with direct observations and informal qualitative interviews. Following this, the chapter is structured into thematic sections capturing socio-demographic characteristics, current physical conditions, cultural elements, user perceptions, challenges facing the markets, and discussions in line with the conceptual framework of Market Revitalization and Cultural Sustainability. The goal is to connect data with the study objectives and provide evidence-based insights necessary for proposing a revitalization model. Ultimately, the analysis provides a foundation for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the final chapter.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

This section takes a closer look at the people who took part in the survey, exploring details like their gender, age, occupation, years of experience in the market, and the distribution of respondents in the market. Understanding who these respondents are helps us make better sense of their responses. After all, the way people view urban market revitalization & its cultural sustainability can vary widely depending on their background. By considering these differences, we gain a richer and more meaningful understanding of how various groups within the city relate

to its market revitalization and overall urban sustainability. The survey attracted a diverse group of participants, representing a wide range of ages, genders, occupations, and educational backgrounds.

A. Gender

Out of 103 respondents, 57.3% were female, 41.7% were male, and a small fraction preferred not to disclose their gender. This reflects the gendered nature of market participation in Benin City, where women traditionally dominate trading activities. The data supports the need for gender-inclusive revitalization strategies that prioritize female traders’ safety, access, and empowerment. Respondents were distributed across age groups as follows: 32% were aged 18–25, 15.5% were

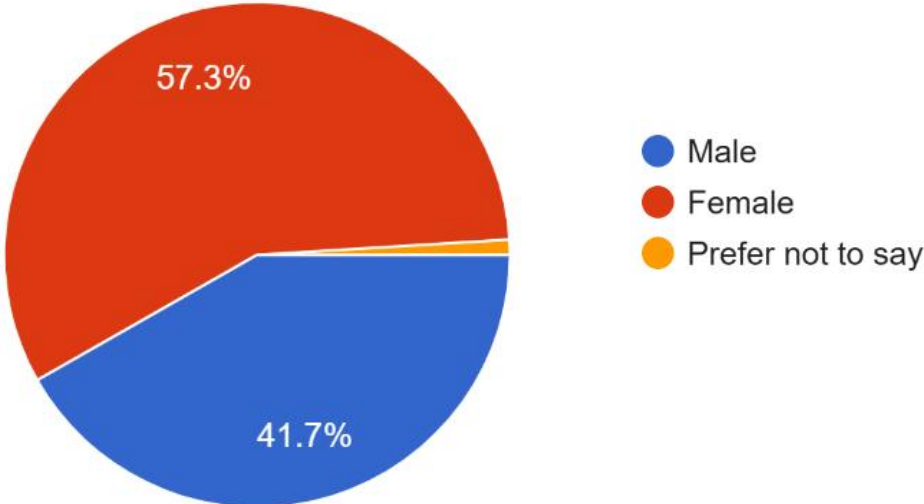


Figure 4.1: Pie Chart showing gender distribution of respondents
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

B. Age

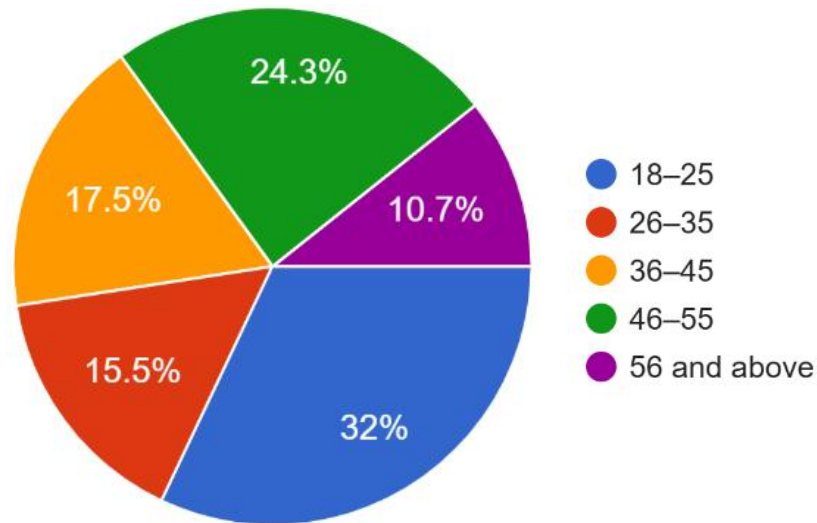


Figure 4.2: Pie Chart showing age distribution of respondents
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

26–35, 17.5% were 36–45, 24.3% were 46–55, and 10.7% were 56 and above. This shows that market users span multiple generations, with a strong presence of both youth and older adults. Revitalization efforts must therefore consider accessibility, generational needs, and intergenerational cultural continuity. The largest group of respondents was traders (46.6%), followed by customers/buyers (24.3%), market officials (7.8%), and others, including students, fashion designers, bankers, and graphic designers. This occupational diversity reflects the multifunctional role of markets as both economic and social spaces. Revitalization must support informal livelihoods while accommodating the needs of buyers and service providers. Respondents reported the following experience levels: 44.7% had 1–5 years, 20.4% had less than 1 year, 20.4%

C. Occupation

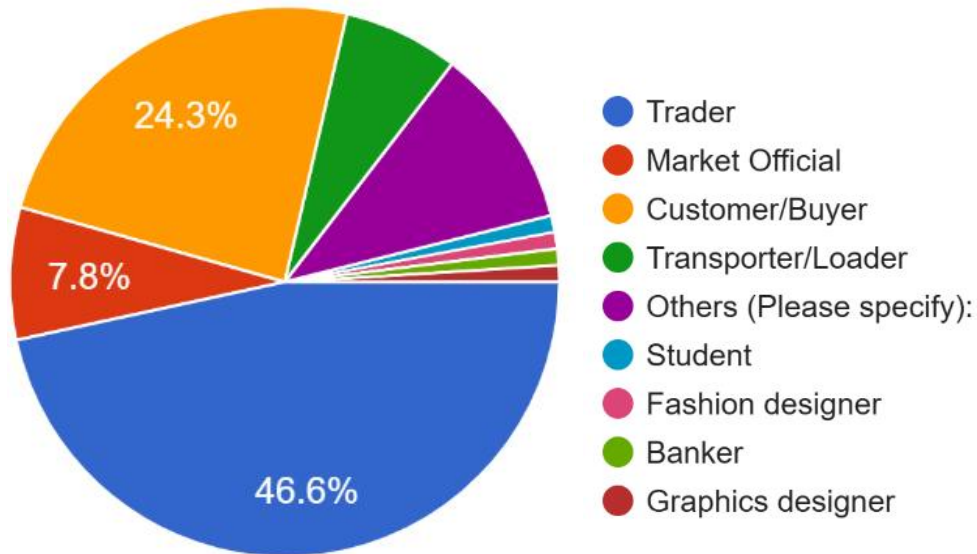


Figure 4.3: Pie Chart showing occupational status of respondents
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

D. Experience

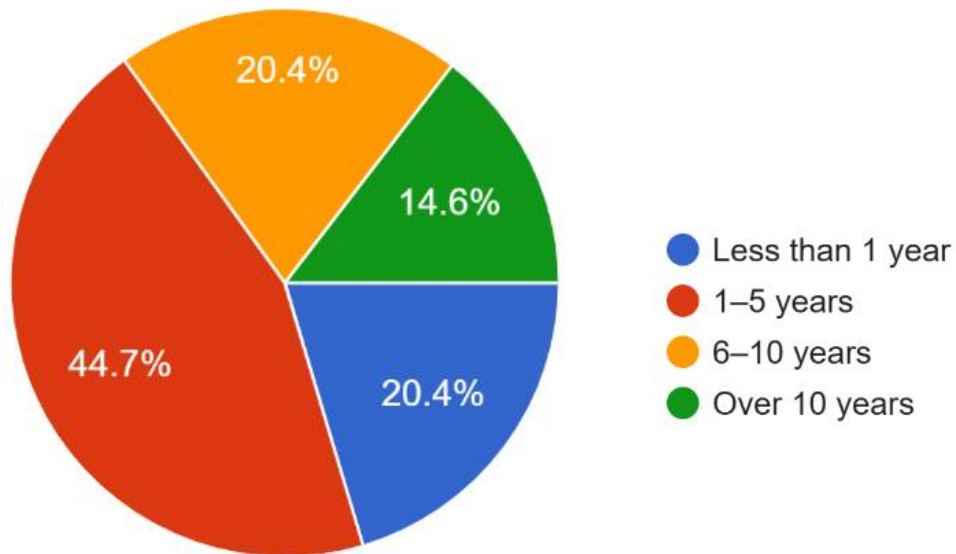


Figure 4.4: Pie Chart showing years of market experience
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

had 6–10 years, and 14.6% had over 10 years. This indicates that most users are relatively new or mid-term participants, with a smaller group of long-term stakeholders. Revitalization should engage both experienced traders and newer entrants to ensure inclusive planning. Respondents were drawn from multiple markets: Uselu Market had the highest representation (35%), followed by Oba Market, Ekosodin Market, and Orgie-Ode Market. This distribution confirms the relevance of these markets as key commercial hubs in Benin City. Their inclusion in the study provides a representative view of urban market dynamics across different neighborhoods.

E. Market Distribution

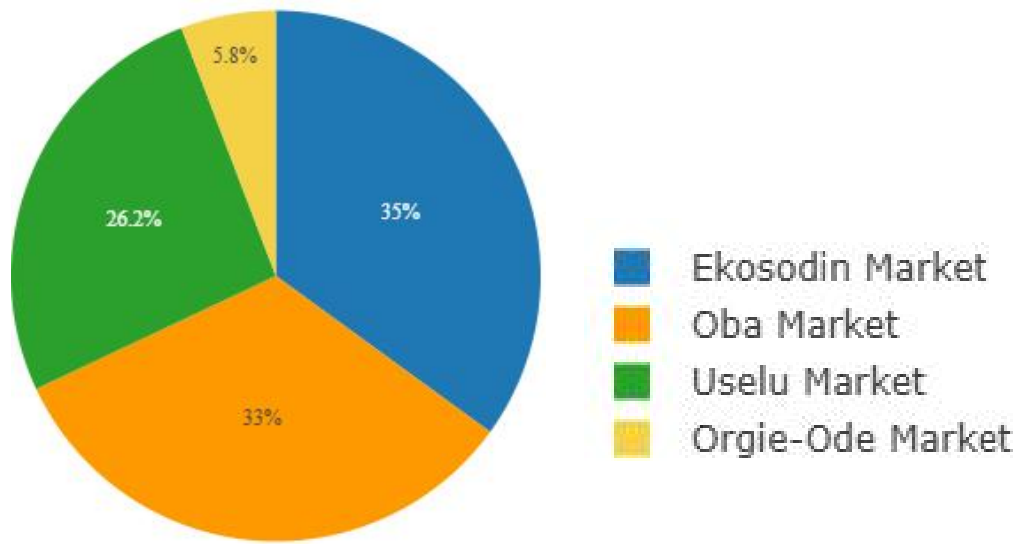


Figure 4.5: Pie Chart showing market distribution of respondents
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF OPINION-BASED SURVEY RESPONSES

This section offers a comprehensive interpretation of the 20 opinion-based questions, organized according to the study's research questions and objectives.

4.3.1 Research Question One: What are the Socio-Economic, Cultural, and Spatial Organization of the Market?

A. Type of Goods

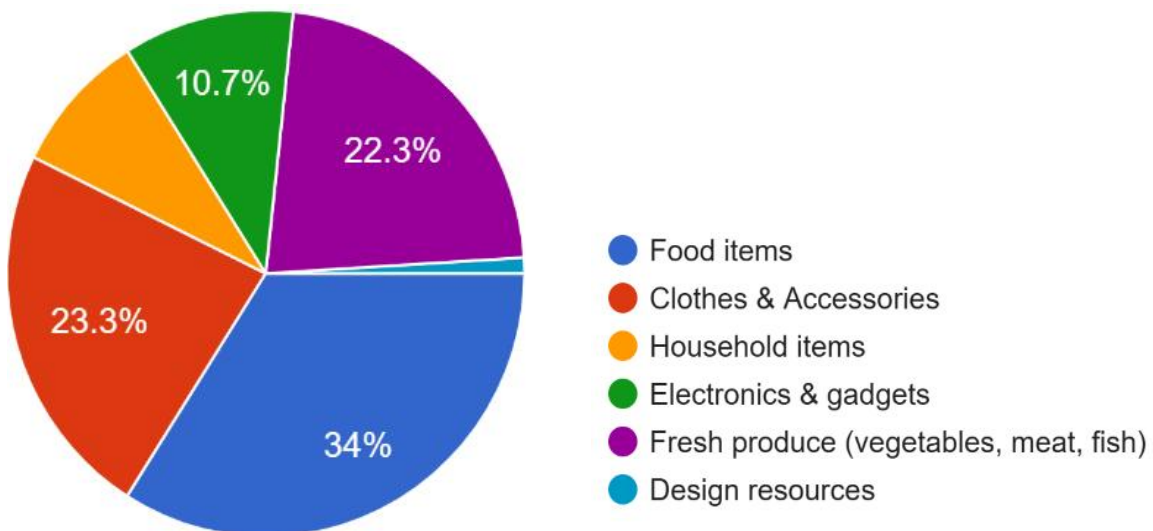


Figure 4.6: Pie Chart showing types of goods traded in the market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Food items were the most commonly traded goods (34%), followed by clothes and accessories (23.3%), Fresh produce and design resources (22.3%), and electronics/gadgets (10.7%). Household items accounted for smaller percentages. This distribution reflects the multifunctional nature of urban markets in Benin City, serving as hubs for both daily essentials and specialized goods. Revitalization efforts must accommodate this diversity by ensuring adequate zoning, storage, and hygiene infrastructure. The majority of respondents (38.8%) reported selling or buying goods priced above ₦10,000, followed by 24.3% in the ₦5,000–₦10,000 range and 32% in the ₦1,000–₦5,000 range. Very few respondents dealt in goods below ₦1,000. This indicates that markets cater to mid- and high-value transactions, suggesting the need for secure facilities, digital payment options, and structured pricing zones to support economic efficiency. When asked about their perception of affordability, respondents were divided in 28.2% saying goods were moderately affordable, 28.2% saying expensive, 27.2% saying very expensive, and only 16.5% found goods very affordable. This distribution suggests that while some users find prices manageable, a significant portion experience economic strain. These findings highlight the need for revitalization strategies that support affordability and protect low-income users.

B. Average Price Range

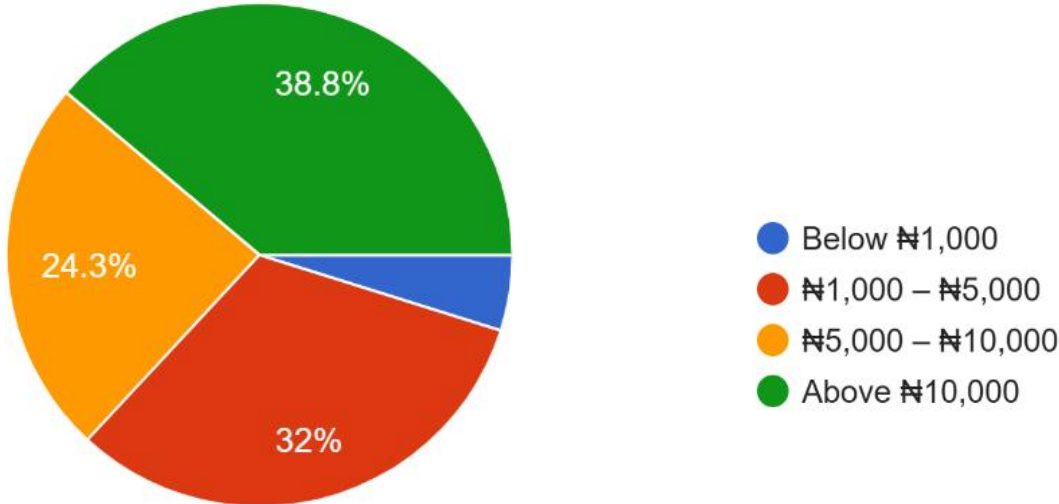


Figure 4.7: Pie Chart showing price range of goods traded
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

The most common cultural feature was market days or weekly cultural schedules (45.6%), followed by shrines or cultural symbols (15.5%), traditional festivals or rituals (10.7%), and indigenous trading practices (18.4%). However, 9.7% of respondents reported no cultural associations. This indicates that while cultural identity remains strong in many markets, some are

losing traditional elements, reinforcing the importance of cultural sustainability in revitalization efforts. When asked about market spacing and arrangement, only 11.7% of respondents described the market as well-organized, while 28.2% said moderately organized. A larger share - 37.9% -

C. Affordability of Goods

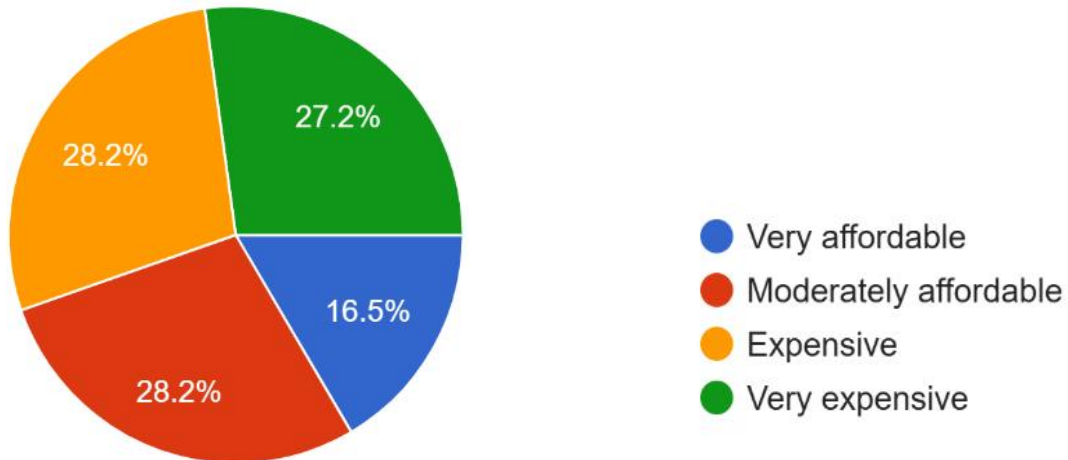


Figure 4.8: Pie Chart showing affordability of goods in the market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

D. Cultural Activities

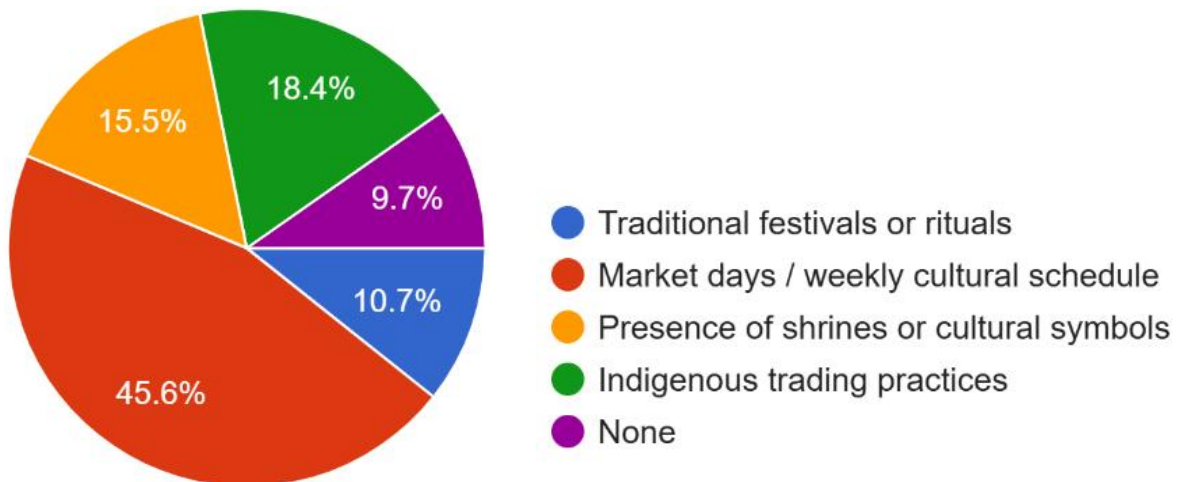


Figure 4.9: Pie Chart showing cultural activities and traditions in the market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

E. Spacing and Arrangement

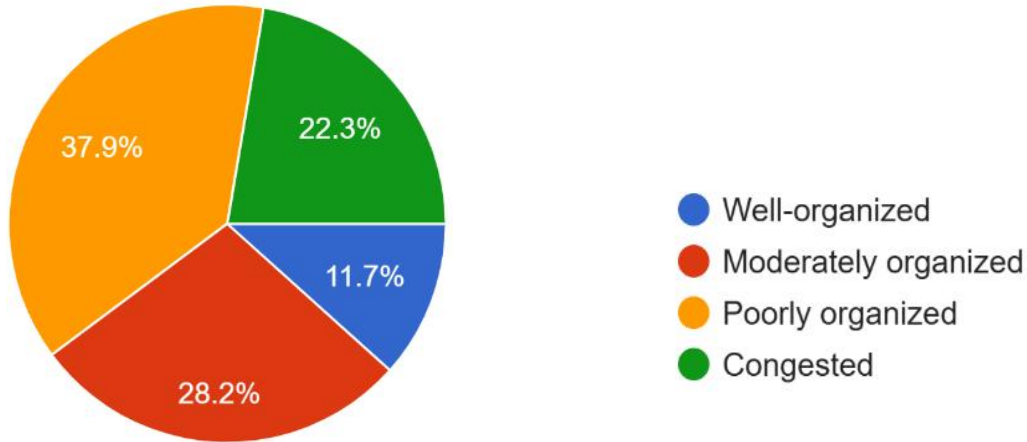


Figure 4.10: Pie Chart showing stall arrangement and spatial organization
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Rated it poorly organized, and 22.3% said it was congested. These results reveal serious spatial planning issues that affect circulation, safety, and user experience. Revitalization must prioritize spatial reorganization to improve accessibility and reduce congestion.

4.3.2 Research Question Two: What are the Infrastructural and Organizational Gaps Limiting Efficiency and Resilience?

A. Physical Infrastructure

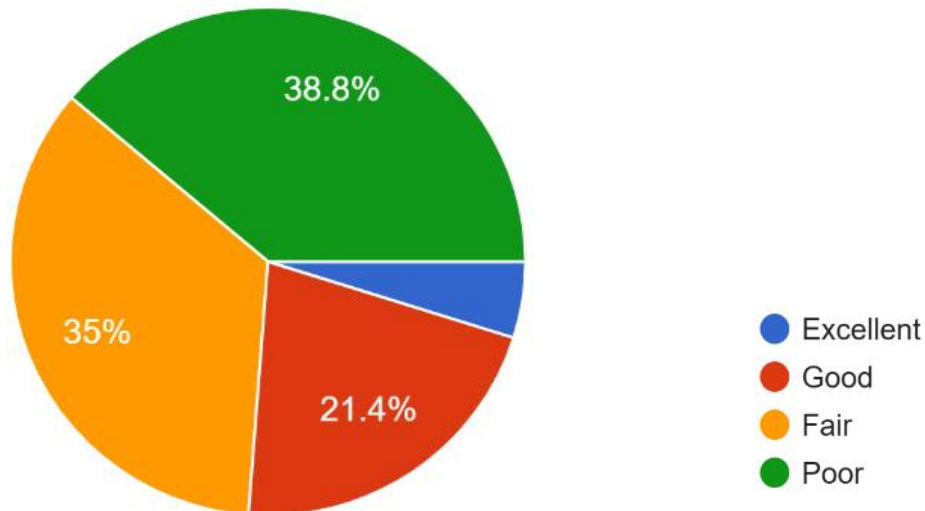


Figure 4.11: Pie Chart showing rating of physical infrastructure
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Respondents rated the market’s physical infrastructure as follows: 38.8% said it was poor, 30.1% said fair, 21.4% said good, and only 9.7% rated it excellent. This indicates that the majority of users experience infrastructural deficiencies, particularly in drainage, roofing, and water supply. These findings reinforce the need for targeted upgrades to improve market resilience and user

experience. The most cited issue was poor sanitation 29.1%), followed by traffic congestion (28.2%), inadequate waste management (17.5%), lack of parking spaces (10.7%), and poor security (14.6%). These results show that environmental and spatial challenges are key barriers to efficient market operations, with sanitation and parking emerging as priority areas for intervention. Only 14.6% of respondents said the system was very effective, while 22.3% said it was partially effective. A larger share—48.5% said it was not effective, and 14.6% reported that no system exists at all. This highlights a critical infrastructural gap that contributes to flooding, poor hygiene, and environmental degradation in the market.

Only 9.7% of respondents described the market management as very organized, while 30.1% said it was somewhat organized. A larger proportion—38.8% rated it poorly organized, and 21.4% said

B. Market Efficiency

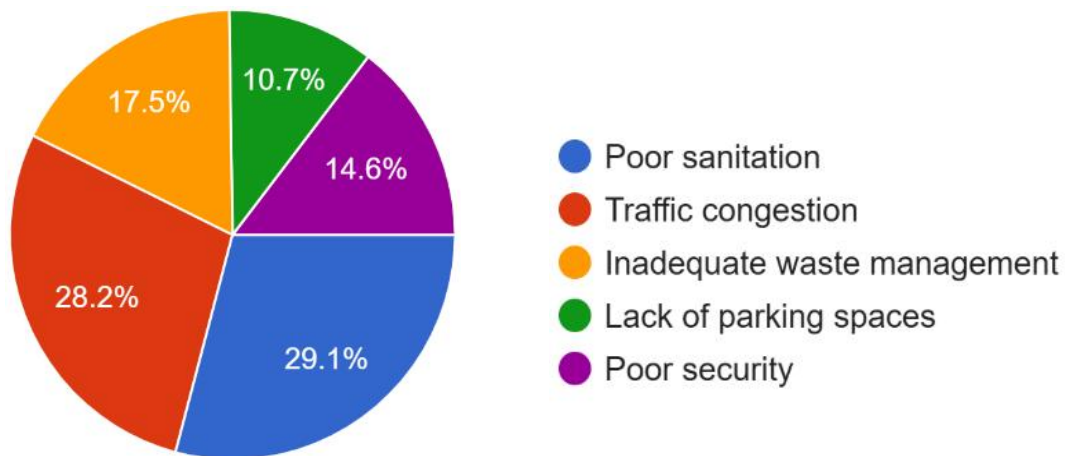


Figure 4.12: Pie Chart showing issues affecting market efficiency
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

C. Waste Disposal

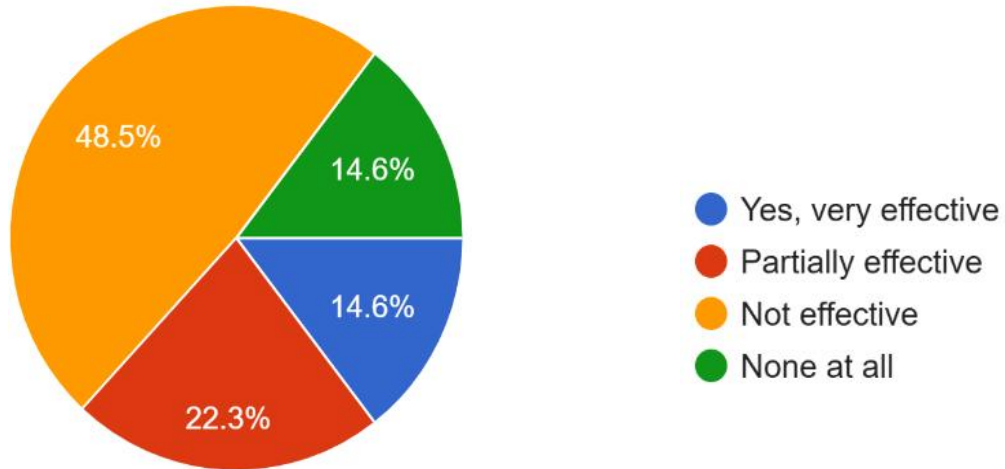


Figure 4.13: Pie Chart showing effectiveness of waste disposal and drainage systems
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

D. Management System

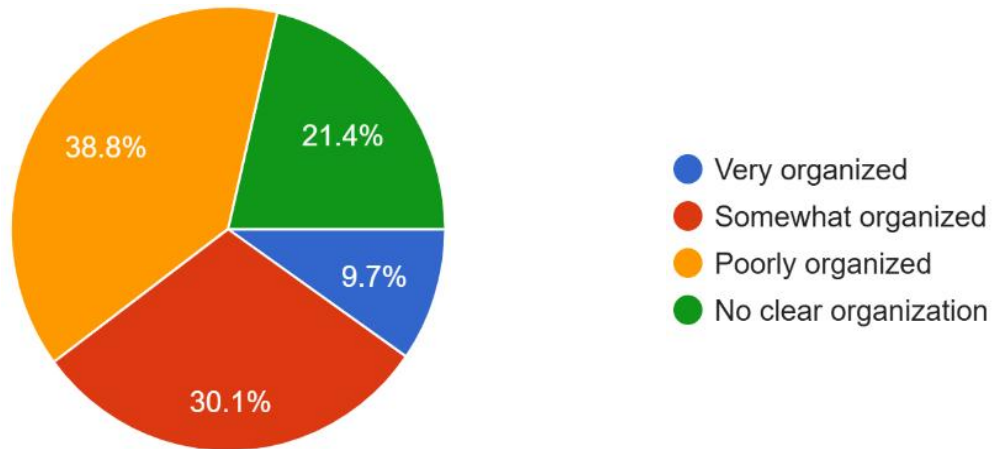


Figure 4.14: Pie Chart showing organization of market management
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

there was no clear organization. This suggests that weak governance structures hinder effective coordination and planning, making revitalization efforts difficult to implement.

E. Improvements

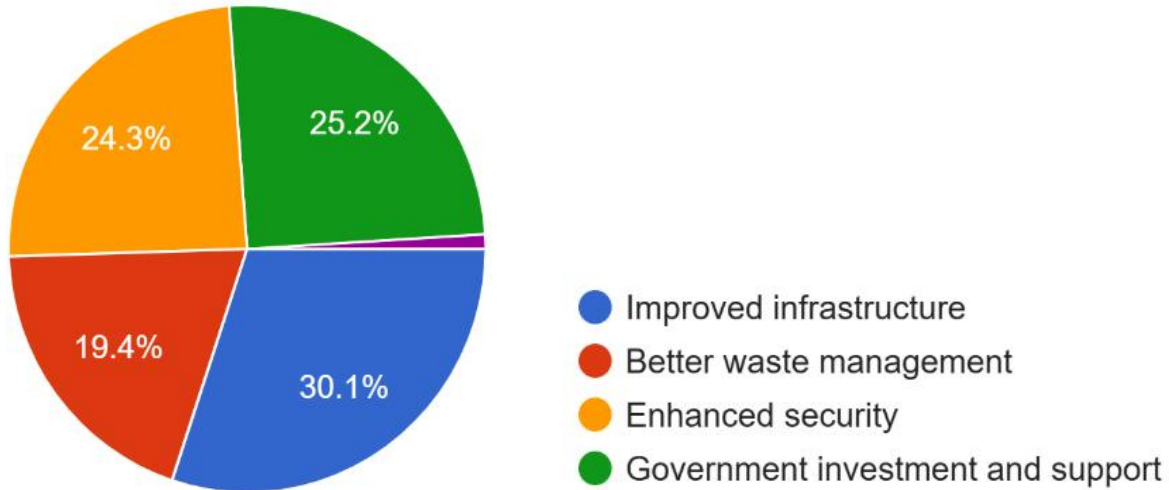


Figure 4.15: Pie Chart showing recommended improvements for resilience and efficiency
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Respondents prioritized improved infrastructure (30.1%) and government investment/support (25.2%), then better waste management (19.4%) and enhanced security (24.3%). Only 1% offered other suggestions. These preferences reflect a strong demand for physical upgrades and institutional support to strengthen market functionality and sustainability.

4.3.3 Research Question Three: What are the Cultural Sustainability and Market Modernization?

A. Modernization

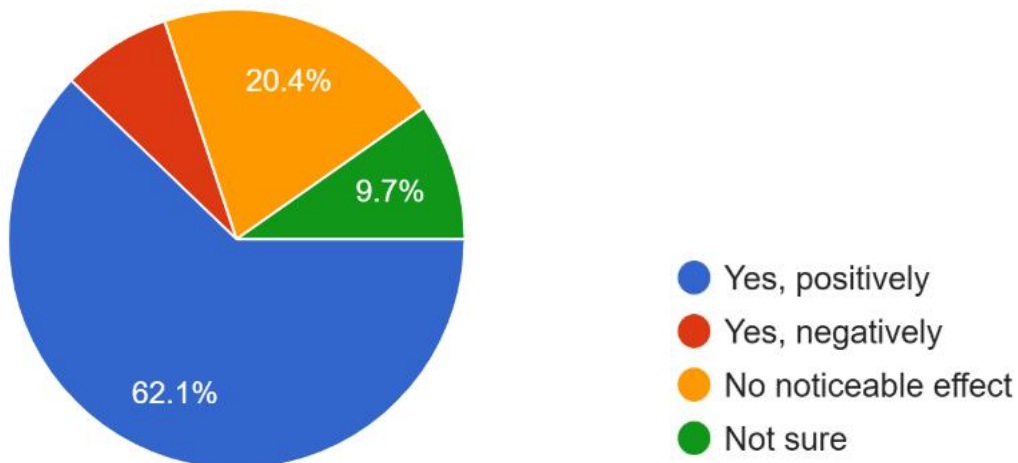


Figure 4.16: Pie Chart showing perception of modernization's impact on cultural identity
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

A majority of respondents (62.1%) believe modernization positively affects cultural identity, while

20.4% see no noticeable effect, and negatively impacts tradition. Another 7.8% believe it negatively impacts tradition, and 9.7% are unsure. This suggests that most market users welcome modernization when it enhances infrastructure without erasing cultural values, reinforcing the need for heritage-sensitive design in revitalization efforts.

B. Revitalization Projects

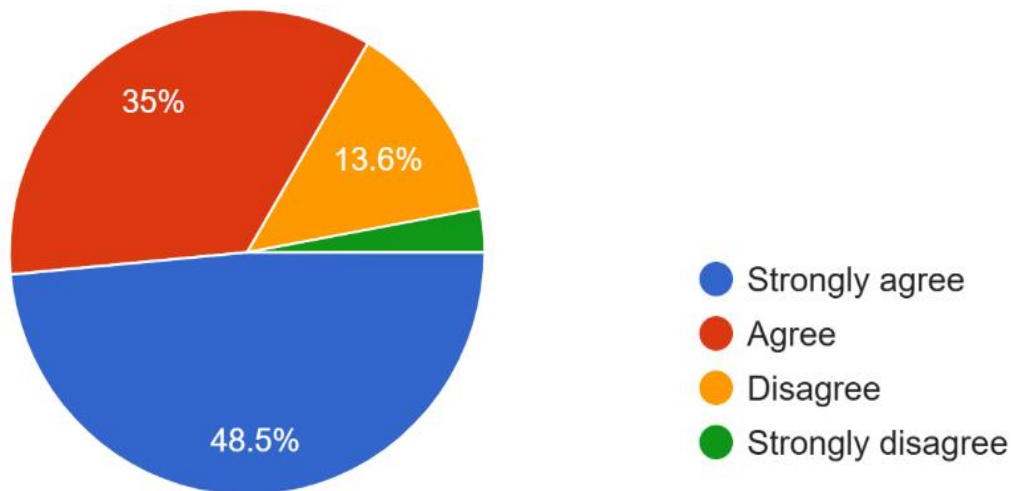


Figure 4.17: Pie Chart showing opinions on integrating cultural patterns in revitalization
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

A strong majority (48.5%) strongly agree, and 35% agree that cultural patterns should be included in revitalization projects. Only 13.6% disagree, and 2.9% strongly disagree. These results highlight widespread support for preserving cultural identity through design elements, naming conventions, and traditional scheduling, making cultural integration a key priority in planning. Over half of respondents (56.3%) believe modern buildings will improve business, while 11.7% fear it will destroy the cultural feel. 30.1% are neutral, and 1.9% are unsure. This reflects a tension between economic aspirations and cultural preservation, suggesting that modernization must be carefully balanced to avoid alienating traditional users. Respondents favored improved hygiene and drainage (39.8%) and renovation of old stalls (31.1%) as the most beneficial upgrades. Improved security (21.4%) and regular cultural events (7.8%) were less prioritized. This indicates that traders value functional improvements that respect existing structures and practices, rather than radical transformations.

An overwhelming 83% of respondents believe government and communities should promote and safeguard cultural heritage as custodians of diversity. 14.9% were unsure, and only 2.1% felt the

focus should be on individual needs. This consensus underscores the importance of collaborative governance in preserving market traditions and identity.

C. Replacements

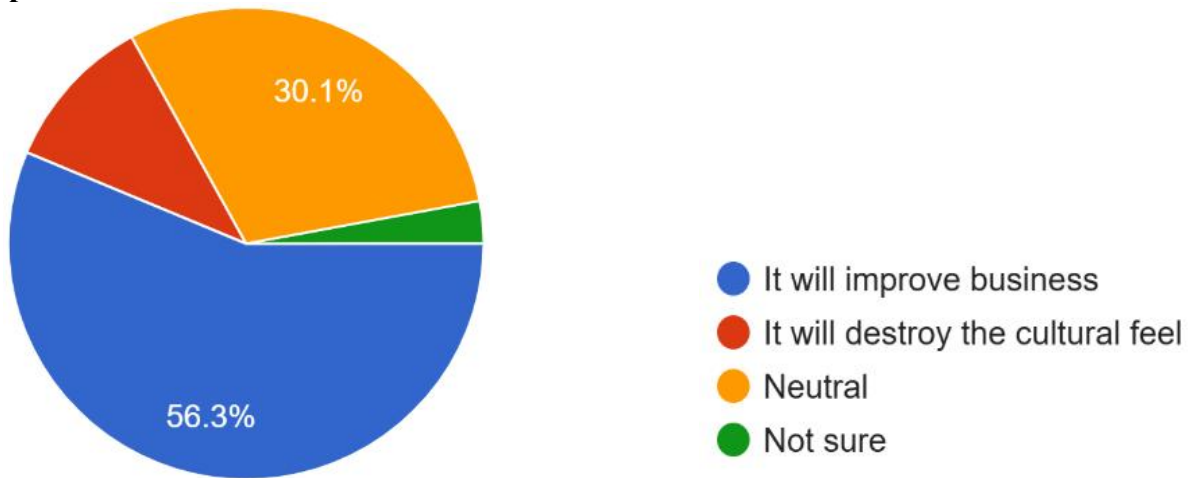


Figure 4.18: Pie Chart showing attitudes toward replacing traditional stalls
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

D. Upgrades

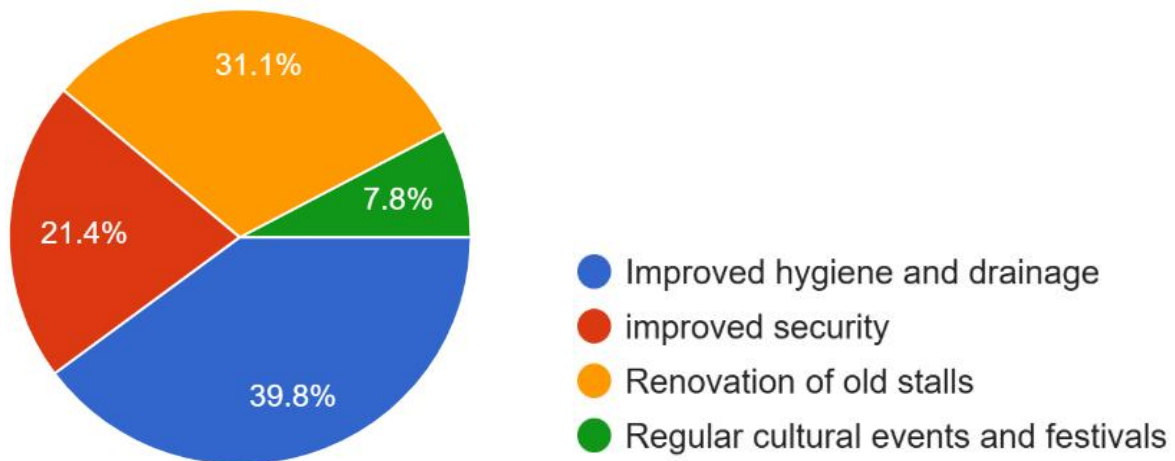


Figure 4.19: Pie Chart showing preferred upgrades for traders
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

E. Government Roles

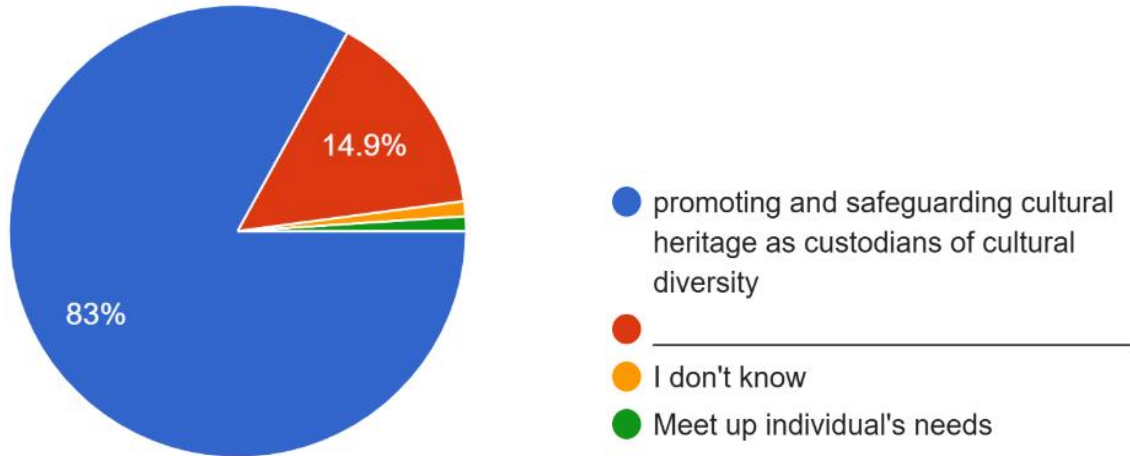


Figure 4.20: Pie Chart showing views on government and community roles in cultural sustainability
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

4.3.4 Research Question Four: What are the Challenges Faced by Traders and Users in Adapting to Emerging Market Systems?

A. Major Challenges

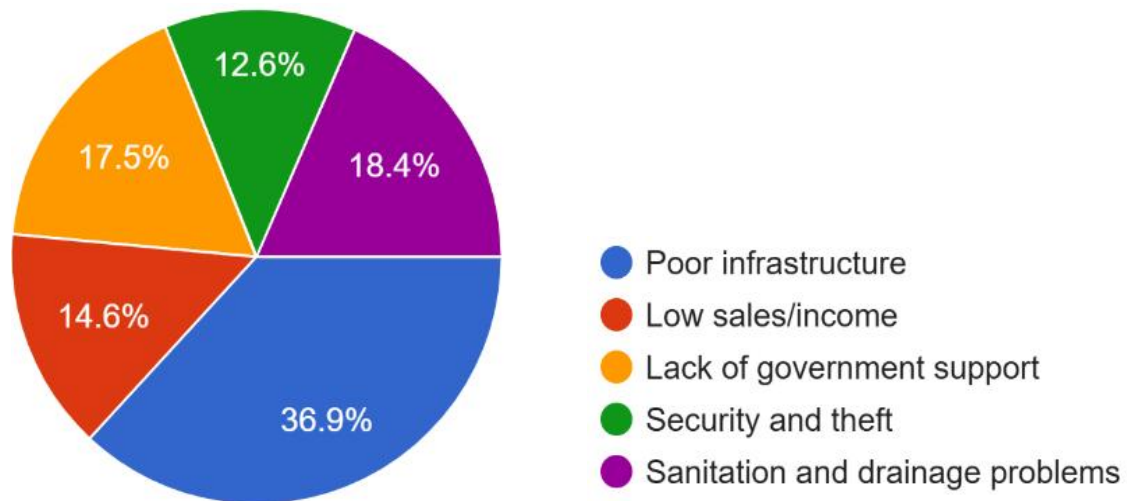


Figure 4.21: Pie Chart showing major challenges faced by traders and users
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Respondents identified poor infrastructure (36.9%) as the most pressing challenge, followed by sanitation and drainage problems (18.4%), lack of government support (17.5%), low sales/income (14.6%), and security/theft (12.6%). These findings highlight those infrastructural deficits and weak institutional supports are the dominant barriers to market efficiency and resilience. Nearly half of 47.6%) rated drainage as very poor, while 31.1% said poor. Only 12.6% rated it good and 8.7% very good. This overwhelming negative perception underscores

drainage as a critical infrastructural gap, contributing to flooding, poor sanitation, and reduced market functionality.

B. Ratings of Market Drainage

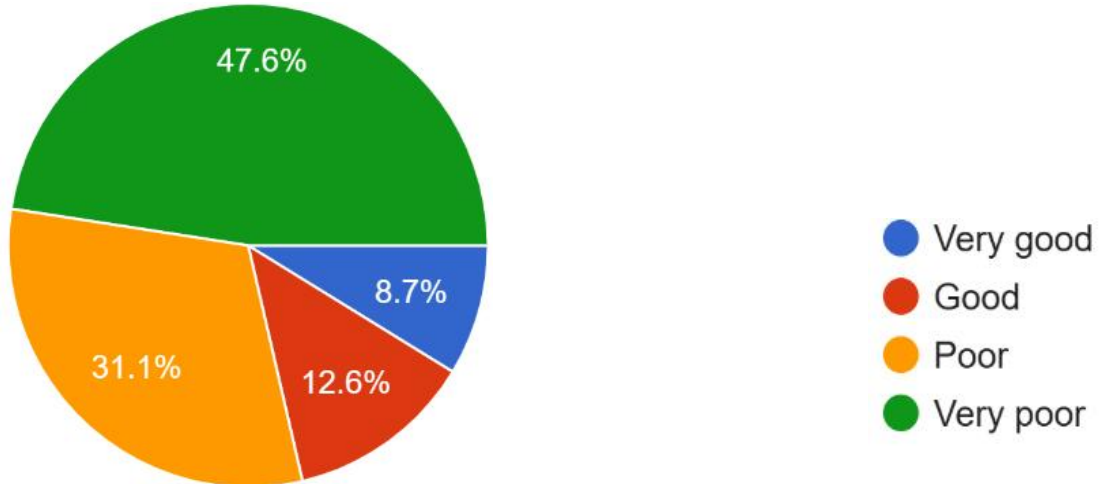


Figure 4.22: Pie Chart showing condition of market drainage
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

C. Support or Training

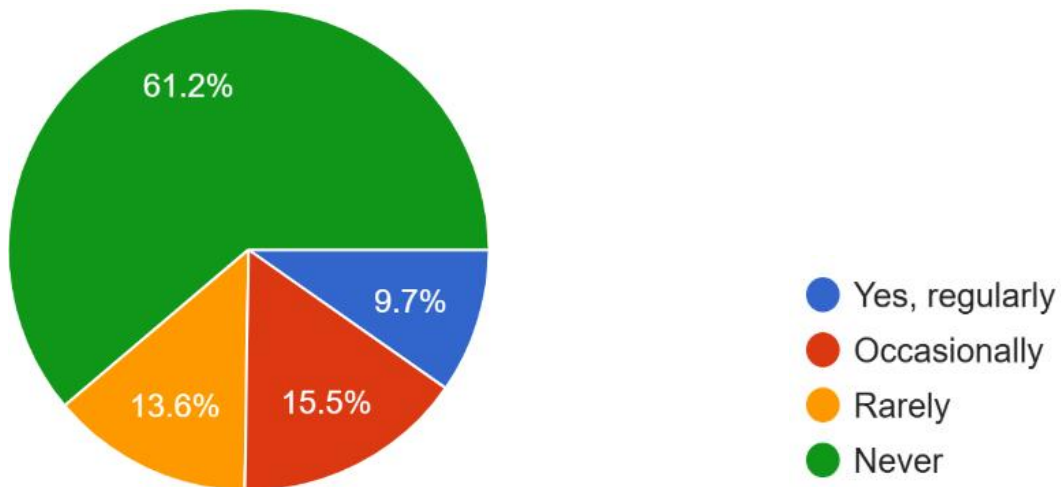


Figure 4.23: Pie Chart showing level of support or training received
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

A majority (61.2%) reported never receiving support or training, while 13.6% said rarely, 15.5% occasionally, and only 9.7% regularly. This demonstrates a significant gap in institutional capacity building, suggesting that revitalization must include structured training and financial support for traders.

D. Market Restructuring or Upgrade

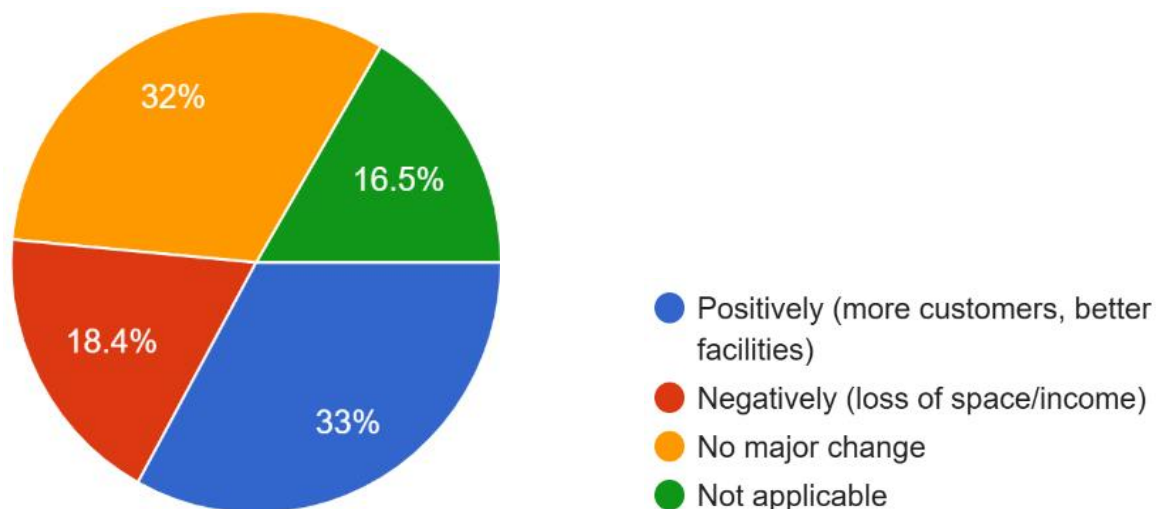


Figure 4.24: Pie Chart showing impact of market restructuring on business operations
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Respondents reported mixed experiences: 33% said restructuring had a positive impact (more customers, better facilities), 32% said no major change, 18.4% reported negative impacts (loss of space/income), and 16.5% said not applicable. This indicates that while upgrades can improve business, they also risk displacing traders if not inclusively planned. Government financial assistance was the most recommended change (53.9%), followed by better communication and planning (20.6%), capacity training for traders (15.7%) and technology awareness programs (9.8%). These preferences emphasize the importance of financial support and participatory planning in ensuring smooth adaptation to modernization.

E. Adaptation to New Market

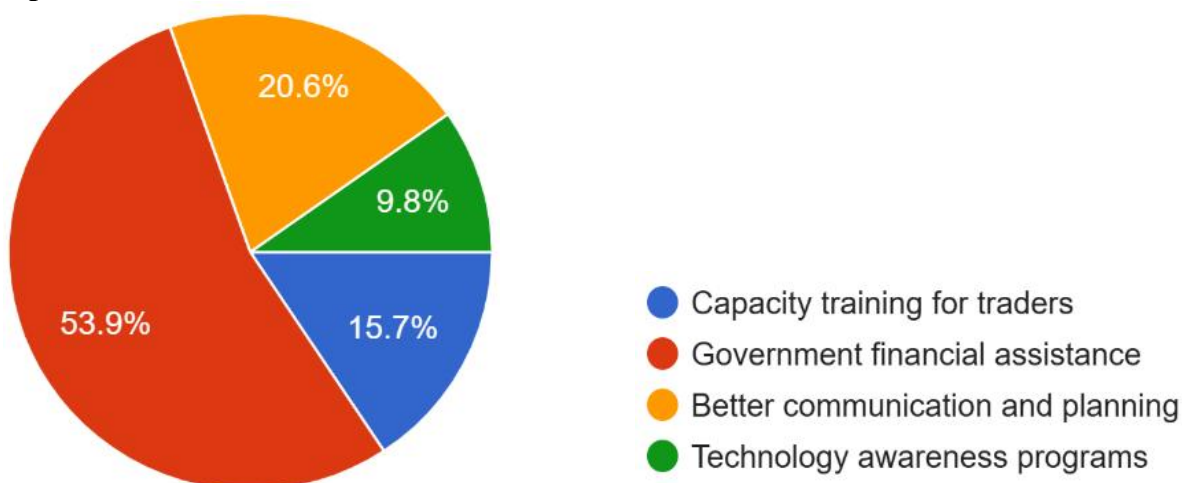


Figure 4.25: Pie Chart showing recommended changes for adaptation
 Source: Researcher field work, 2025

4.4 CASE STUDIES (Merits And Demerits Of Selected Markets In Benin City)

A. Oba Market

➤ Merits

Oba Market stands out as one of the most historically significant markets in Benin City, deeply rooted in the city's cultural and royal heritage. Its long-standing existence has fostered strong cultural attachment among traders and users, making it a major hub for traditional goods, indigenous trading practices, and social interaction. The market plays a vital socio-economic role by supporting a wide range of livelihoods and serving a large urban population. Its central location enhances accessibility and reinforces its relevance within the city's commercial network. Additionally, informal governance structures and traditional leadership play a role in maintaining order and continuity within the market.

➤ Demerits

Despite its cultural importance, Oba Market faces significant infrastructural challenges. Poor drainage systems, inadequate sanitation facilities, and overcrowded spatial layouts contribute to environmental and public health concerns. The market's organic growth over time has resulted in congestion and inefficient circulation, limiting resilience and safety. Weak integration of formal governance policies has also hindered systematic maintenance and modernization efforts, leading to persistent infrastructural decay.

B. Uselu Market

➤ Merits

Uselu Market serves as an important neighborhood market that supports daily economic activities for the surrounding residential areas. Its location along a major urban corridor enhances accessibility for both traders and customers. The market provides affordable goods and contributes to food security, particularly for low- and middle-income households. Social interactions within the market strengthen community ties, and its scale allows for relatively easier management compared to larger central markets.

➤ Demerits

The market suffers from inadequate infrastructure, particularly in terms of waste management, drainage, and organized stall arrangements. Spatial disorder and encroachment into circulation paths reduce efficiency and increase safety risks. Limited community participation in planning

and weak enforcement of regulations have constrained improvements. These challenges reduce the market's capacity to adapt to emerging urban pressures and modern market systems.

C. Orgie Ode Market

➤ **Merits**

Orgie Ode Market plays a significant role as a traditional and community-based market serving a small population. It reflects strong cultural continuity, with trading practices, goods, and social relations rooted in local traditions. The market supports informal economic activities and provides a platform for small-scale traders, particularly women. Its cultural relevance fosters a strong sense of belonging and identity among users.

➤ **Demerits**

The market's traditional nature has also limited infrastructural development. Facilities such as sanitation, drainage, and security are often inadequate or absent. Spatial organization is largely informal, leading to congestion and inefficient use of space. The absence of structured governance frameworks and limited integration with urban planning policies reduces the market's resilience and long-term sustainability.

D. Ekosodin Market

➤ **Merits**

Ekosodin Market functions as a vibrant local market that supports the daily needs of residents, including students and households in its vicinity. Its proximity to educational institutions and residential neighborhoods enhances patronage and economic activity. The market provides affordable goods and employment opportunities for small-scale traders. Social interactions within the market strengthen community networks and local economic resilience.

➤ **Demerits**

Ekosodin Market faces challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, including poor sanitation, drainage issues, and insufficient waste disposal systems. Spatial organization is often informal, resulting in congestion and reduced accessibility. Limited formal governance and weak community participation in decision-making processes hinder systematic improvement efforts. These constraints affect the market's efficiency and ability to adapt to modernization pressures.

Across all four markets, a common pattern emerges: strong socio-economic relevance and cultural significance coexist with infrastructural deficiencies and governance challenges. While Oba Market demonstrates high cultural attachment and historical importance, smaller markets like Uselu, Orgie Ode, and Ekosodin play critical roles in neighborhood-level economic resilience. However, inadequate infrastructure, weak policy integration, and limited participatory planning remain major barriers to sustainable market development.

4.4 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS/ SURVEY RESULT DISCUSSION

The survey conducted among traders, buyers, and other market users across the selected markets in Benin City revealed important insights into the socio-economic, infrastructural, and cultural conditions of the markets. The responses show that a majority of the participants acknowledge the central role traditional markets play in supporting daily economic activities, promoting local entrepreneurship, and sustaining cultural heritage. Many respondents described markets as accessible, affordable, and deeply connected to the livelihoods of households within the city. However, despite their socio-economic relevance, the survey results highlight persistent infrastructural challenges. Participants reported inadequacies in drainage systems, sanitation, security, lighting, and spatial organization. A substantial proportion of respondents indicated that market walkways are congested, stalls are poorly arranged, and waste disposal systems are insufficient. These weaknesses contribute to flooding during rainy seasons, unsanitary trading environments, and safety concerns, thereby reducing overall user satisfaction and market efficiency.

The survey also reveals strong cultural attachment among users. Many respondents noted that the markets are associated with traditional practices, ancestral connections, and unique identities passed down through generations. They emphasized that modernization should not erase the cultural structure or the established social systems that define trading relationships. Instead, they prefer revitalization strategies that enhance infrastructure while respecting traditional layouts and cultural norms. Overall, the survey findings suggest that **improved infrastructure, clearer organization, and stronger management systems** are critical to revitalization. At the same time, **cultural elements must remain protected** to retain users' trust and community identity.



Figure 4.26a: Image showing case study from Benin Market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025



Figure 4.26b: Image showing case study from Benin Market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025



Figure 4.26c: Image showing case study from Benin Market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025



Figure 4.26d: Image showing case study from Benin Market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025



Figure 4.26e: Image showing case study from Benin Market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025



Figure 4.26f: Image showing case study from Benin Market
Source: Researcher field work, 2025

Using thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2019), the qualitative data from interviews, field observations, and narrative responses were grouped into major themes: **infrastructure, cultural identity, governance, spatial organization, and market sustainability.**

- **Infrastructural Decay**

Observations and narratives consistently revealed inadequate drainage, blocked gutters, poor sanitation systems, and dilapidated stall structures. Photographs taken on site further confirmed the physical decline. These issues contribute to poor hygiene, flooding, and limited mobility, reducing the functional efficiency of the markets.

- **Cultural Identity and Place Attachment**

Respondents demonstrated a deep emotional connection to the markets. Cultural practices—such as ancestral stall inheritance, traditional trade clusters, and periodic rituals—were cited as essential components of market life. These findings align with Place Attachment Theory, which argues that emotional bonds shape how people perceive and use spaces.

- **Weak Market Governance**

Qualitative data highlighted the lack of coordinated administrative systems. Traders reported overlapping roles between government agencies and market unions. This lack of a clear governance structure leads to inconsistent enforcement of rules, improper waste management, and minimal long-term planning.

- **Spatial Disorganization**

Field observations showed unplanned layout patterns, narrow passageways, and unregulated street trading. This contributes to congestion, limits emergency access, and undermines customer experience. Respondents emphasized the need for reorganized stall arrangements, improved walkways, and better zoning of market activities.

- **Need for Culturally Sensitive Revitalization**

Almost all respondents agreed that market upgrading is necessary, but they insisted that changes must preserve traditional spaces, cultural symbols, and local trading patterns. Participants prefer modernization that enhances, rather than replaces, their cultural practices.

The combined survey, interview, and qualitative analyses show a strong demand for modern infrastructural improvements, stronger governance frameworks, cleaner environments, and safer trading conditions. At the same time, there is a strong desire to preserve the cultural heritage and identity embedded in the markets. These findings support the overall study argument that **sustainable market revitalization in Benin City must integrate both modernization and cultural continuity.**

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research investigated urban market revitalization and cultural sustainability in selected markets within Benin City—Oba Market, Uselu Market, and Ekosodin Market, and Orgie-Ode Market. The study aimed to identify the current socio-economic, cultural, and spatial organization of these markets, evaluate infrastructural and organizational gaps, investigate the preservation of cultural values during modernization, and examine the challenges faced by traders and users in adapting to emerging market systems. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 100 respondents who included traders, market users, market officials, and community members. The quantitative data provided measurable insights into the condition and functioning of the markets, while qualitative data illuminated the cultural sentiments, collective memory, and attachments embedded within market operations. Findings revealed that market users maintain strong socio-economic and cultural ties to the markets despite evident infrastructural decay and organizational challenges. Respondents highlighted issues such as inadequate drainage, poor sanitation, disorganized spatial layout, weak security, and lack of clear governance structures. Nevertheless, markets continue to serve as hubs for cultural identity, community bonding, traditional trade practices, and intergenerational apprenticeship systems.

The study also found that residents strongly support revitalization, provided it prioritizes cultural continuity, trader inclusion, affordability, community participation, and respect for indigenous trading patterns. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks, particularly place attachment theory and urban revitalization theory, helped explain why modernization must balance infrastructural upgrading with cultural preservation.

➤ Implications of the Study

The findings of this research have several important implications for policymakers, urban planners, market authorities, community groups, and researchers. First, the study demonstrates

that traditional markets in Benin City are not merely commercial environments but culturally embedded spaces where identity, memory, and social relations are produced and sustained. Consequently, any revitalization effort that overlooks cultural values risks disrupting these long-standing social and economic networks. This implies that modernization policies must adopt a culturally inclusive planning framework that recognizes the symbolic and emotional significance of market spaces to traders and users. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for a shift in urban governance approaches. The persistent infrastructural decay and management challenges observed imply that current institutional arrangements for market administration are insufficient. Strengthening governance structures, clarifying responsibilities among agencies, and integrating community participation into planning processes are essential for achieving sustainable revitalization outcomes. The implications extend to resource allocation as well; revitalization must be supported by long-term maintenance budgets and monitoring mechanisms to prevent future deterioration.

From a socio-economic standpoint, the findings suggest that enhancing market infrastructure, such as drainage, sanitation, lighting, and stall organization, would significantly improve safety, user satisfaction, and economic efficiency. This has implications for urban economic development, as functional markets contribute to local productivity, support informal sector livelihoods, and strengthen the city's commercial resilience. Culturally, the study implies that preserving traditional knowledge systems, trade rituals, and spatial arrangements can foster community identity and continuity. Policymakers must therefore consider cultural heritage as an asset within urban development, not an obstacle to modernization. Integrating cultural practices into market redevelopment can enhance social cohesion and community acceptance of revitalization projects. Finally, the study carries methodological implications for future research. The mixed-methods approach proved valuable in capturing both quantitative trends and qualitative cultural insights. This suggests that future studies on market systems, informal economies, and cultural spaces in Nigeria would benefit from similarly integrated methodologies to generate a holistic and culturally grounded understanding.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that traditional markets in Benin City continue to be central to the City's economic, cultural, and social landscape. Although plagued by infrastructural deterioration and organizational shortcomings, these markets retain deep cultural significance and function as spaces of belonging, identity, and collective memory. Revitalization is urgently needed; however, if approached solely from a modern infrastructural standpoint, it risks erasing cultural heritage and disrupting longstanding socio-economic systems. Sustainable market revitalization must therefore adopt a culturally responsive model that integrates improved physical infrastructure with community-driven planning, preservation of cultural practices, and enhanced governance structures. Ultimately, effective revitalization requires recognizing that markets are not merely commercial spaces but cultural ecosystems. Preserving this dual identity is critical for ensuring continuity, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Infrastructure Upgrade with Cultural Sensitivity

- Improve drainage, sanitation facilities, walkway paving, stall organization, and waste management systems.
- Ensure that upgrading does not alter the traditional spatial logic of the market or displace traders abruptly.

2. Strengthening Governance and Market Management

- Establish clear governance structures that involve market associations, traditional institutions, and relevant government agencies.
- Implement enforceable maintenance schedules, sanitation rules, and stall management guidelines.

3. Promote Cultural Sustainability in Revitalization Plans

- Document existing cultural practices, trading rituals, layout traditions, festivals, and apprenticeship systems before redevelopment begins.
- Incorporate cultural elements such as signage, traditional motifs, public art, and designated cultural activity zones into the new market design.

4. Enhance Security, Safety, and Traffic Flow

- Provide adequate lighting, security posts, CCTV monitoring, and controlled entry points.
- Redesign adjoining road networks with loading bays, parking areas, and pedestrian walkways to reduce congestion.

5. Community Participation in Planning and Implementation

- Ensure that traders, community leaders, and market unions are fully represented in all stages of revitalization projects.
- Adopt a participatory planning model that integrates community needs, cultural sentiment, and affordability.

6. Strengthen Environmental Sustainability

- Introduce waste-to-resource programs (e.g., composting for organic waste).
- Promote eco-friendly stall materials and energy-efficient lighting where feasible.

7. Capacity Building for Traders and Market Associations

- Provide training in modern business practices, hygiene standards, waste sorting, and emergency response.
- Support digital literacy to help traders adapt to evolving market systems.

➤ Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research may explore:

1. Comparative analysis of market revitalization in other Nigerian cities to develop a national model for culturally sustainable markets.
2. The socio-psychological impact of market relocation or redevelopment on trader livelihoods.
3. The role of digital technology in enhancing market efficiency while preserving cultural identity.
4. Long-term sustainability outcomes of revitalized markets based on post-occupancy evaluation.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Topic: URBAN MARKET REVITALIZATION & CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SELECTED MARKETS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

By **Ekhator Eghosa**

Mat No: **ENV2103339**

Submitted to the Department of Architecture,
Faculty of Environmental Science,
University of Benin Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural conditions of selected markets in Benin City, as well as your experiences, challenges, and opinions regarding market revitalization and cultural sustainability. The aim of this research is to better understand how traditional markets function, the cultural values they uphold, and the improvements needed to enhance both their efficiency and heritage significance.

Your responses will help identify key issues affecting market users and provide insights that can guide the development of sustainable, culturally sensitive market revitalization strategies in Benin City. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic research purposes. No personal identities will be recorded or disclosed.

Your participation is voluntary, and your honest input is highly valuable to the success of this study. Thank you for taking the time to assist in improving the future of our markets and preserving their cultural identity.

Yours faithfully,
EKHATOR EGHOSA
Researcher

Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE COLLECT DATA FROM RESIDENTS ON URBAN MARKET REVITALIZATION & CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SELECTED MARKETS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

Part One: Demographic Information: Respondent Profile

Please tick (✓) the appropriate response.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. Age Range

- 18–25
- 26–35
- 36–45
- 46–55

56 and above

3. Occupation

- Trader
- Market Official
- Customer/Buyer
- Transporter/Loader
- Others (Please specify): _____

4. Years of Experience in the Market

- Less than 1 year
- 1–5 years
- 6–10 years
- Over 10 years

5. Market Name and Location

Part Two: Research Questions

A. Socio-Economic, Cultural, and Spatial Organization of the Market

1. What type of goods do you mostly buy or sell in this market?

- Food items
- Clothes & Accessories
- Household items
- Electronics & gadgets
- Fresh produce (vegetables, meat, fish)
- Others (please specify): _____

2. What is the average price range of the goods you buy or sell?

- Below ₦1,000
- ₦1,000 – ₦5,000
- ₦5,000 – ₦10,000
- Above ₦10,000

3. How would you describe the affordability of goods in this market?

- Very affordable
- Moderately affordable
- Expensive
- Very expensive

4. What cultural activities or traditions are associated with this market?

- Traditional festivals or rituals
- Market days / weekly cultural schedule
- Presence of shrines or cultural symbols
- Indigenous trading practices
- None

5. How is the spacing and arrangement of stalls in the market?

- Well-organized
- Moderately organized
- Poorly organized
- Congested

B. Infrastructural and Organizational Gaps Limiting Efficiency and Resilience

1. How would you rate the physical infrastructure in this market (roads, roofing, drainage, water supply)?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

2. Which of the following issues affect market efficiency the most?

- Poor sanitation
- Traffic congestion
- Inadequate waste management
- Lack of parking spaces
- Poor security

3. Does the market have an effective waste disposal and drainage system?

- Yes, very effective
- Partially effective
- Not effective
- None at all

4. How organized is the market management system (e.g., union leaders, local government oversight)?

- Very organized
- Somewhat organized
- Poorly organized
- No clear organization

5. What improvements would make this market more resilient and efficient?

- Improved infrastructure
- Better waste management
- Enhanced security
- Government investment and support
- Other suggestions: _____

C. Cultural Sustainability and Market Modernization

1. Do you think modernization (e.g., new structures; drainage, security) affects the market's cultural identity?

- Yes, positively
- Yes, negatively

- No noticeable effect
- Not sure

2. Should market revitalization projects include traditional cultural patterns (e.g., naming, market days, design patterns)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. How do you feel about replacing traditional market stalls with more modern buildings?

- It will improve business
- It will destroy the cultural feel
- Neutral
- Not sure

4. Which form of upgrade would benefit traders most without harming culture?

- Improved hygiene and drainage
- Digital payment systems
- Renovation of old stalls
- Regular cultural events and festivals

5. What role should government and local communities play in sustaining the market's cultural heritage?

- Promoting and safeguarding cultural heritage as custodians of cultural diversity
- Meet up individual's needs
- I don't know
- Others _____

D. Challenges Faced by Traders and Users in Adapting to Emerging Market Systems

1. What are the major challenges you face in your daily market activities?

- Poor infrastructure
- Low sales/income
- Lack of government support
- Security and theft
- Sanitation and drainage problems

2. How would you rate the condition of market drainage?

- Very good
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor

3. Do you receive any form of support or training from the government or market associations?

- Yes, regularly
- Occasionally

- Rarely
- Never

4. How has market restructuring or upgrade affected your business operations?

- Positively (more customers, better facilities)
- Negatively (loss of space/income)
- No major change
- Not applicable

5. What specific changes would you recommend to help traders and customers adapt to new market patterns?

- Capacity training for traders
- Government financial assistance
- Better communication and planning
- Technology awareness programs