

**INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE ON FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING IN EDO STATE:
A STUDY OF THE EDO STATE COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE (ESCAC)**

BY

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY.**

APRIL, 2026.

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER DEGREE
IN THEATRE ARTS**

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DECLARATION

I, Omagbon Osarenoma Festus of the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, hereby declare that this research is entirely my own and was carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ndifreke E. Akwaowo.

All findings in this study are products of my research, and all sources consulted have been appropriately acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research titled: “Institutional Influence on Festival Programming in Edo State: A Study of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC)” was carried out by Omagbon, Osarenoma Festus, PG/ART0901212 in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Masters of Arts.

DR. NDIFRIKE E. AKWAOWO

Project Supervisor

DATE

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Head of Department

DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty and to my family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my sincere gratitude to God Almighty for His grace, wisdom, and strength in completing this study.

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Ndifreke E. Akwaowo for his guidance, patience, and constructive criticism throughout the course of this research. His insights and support were invaluable to the success of this work. I also appreciate the efforts of the lecturers in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin, whose academic contributions have shaped my academic development and progress.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the institutional influence of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) on contemporary festival programming in Edo State, Nigeria. The research focuses on how administrative structures, funding systems, and decision-making processes shape the organization, content, and presentation of cultural festivals. The study adopts a qualitative research design, combining ethnography and case study approaches. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and document analysis. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with relevant experience in festival organization and cultural administration. Findings reveal that festival programming within ESCAC is characterized by centralized decision-making, with limited participation from community stakeholders and traditional authorities. Funding allocation is uneven and often prioritizes festivals with higher visibility and economic potential, particularly in urban areas. Corporate sponsorship plays a significant role in shaping festival content, introducing commercial elements that influence performance structure, costume design, and overall presentation. The study also identifies significant transformations in cultural expression, including the modification of traditional performances and the reduction of ritual elements. While institutional involvement enhances organization, funding, and visibility, it also raises concerns about cultural authenticity and community ownership. The findings further highlight challenges related to youth engagement, infrastructure, and audience participation. The study concludes that institutional intervention has both positive and negative implications for festival sustainability. It recommends a more inclusive and transparent framework that integrates community participation, protects cultural integrity, and balances economic objectives with cultural preservation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by setting out the background, context, and then the reason why festival programming and cultural governance in Edo State, Nigeria are worth looking at in the first place. It lays down the main issue driving the work, especially how festivals get shaped through the back and forth between traditional authority, institutional arrangements, and cultural policy. The chapter also moves through the aims and objectives of the study, the specific research questions that guide what is actually being asked, and why the research matters in the larger conversations around cultural studies and festival scholarship.

The chapter also defines the scope and limitations of the study, clarifying the geographical extent and thematic boundaries within which the research is situated. Key concepts relevant to the topic are introduced as well, providing a foundation for the terms and ideas addressed in subsequent chapters. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis, outlining its progression from the theoretical framework to the empirical work and the subsequent interpretation of findings.

1.2 Background to the Study

Cultural festivals have always been valuable instruments for preserving, transmitting, and celebrating collective identities across many African societies. In Nigeria, festivals do not merely commemorate historical events; they also strengthen community cohesion, moral norms, and everyday social engagement. They form part of the living theatre of the people, spaces where dance, drama, music, and ritual converge to convey meanings that are widely recognized. Edo State, long associated with a rich artistic heritage and sophisticated

traditional institutions, remains one of the cultural nerve centers of Nigeria. The state's festivals, such as the Igue Festival, Ewere Festival, and various community-based events, reflect a synthesis of traditional artistry and evolving modern aesthetics.

However, the management and organization of these festivals have increasingly become institutionalized over time. What was once a purely communal and hereditary practice now often involves government agencies, cultural councils, non-governmental organizations, and corporate sponsors. This institutional involvement has reshaped the design, purpose, and even the presentation of many festivals. The rise of bodies such as the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) reflects this shift from spontaneous cultural expression toward more controlled and structured cultural administration.

ESCAC, founded in the early years of Edo State's creation, was established to promote, preserve, and modernize the arts and culture of the Edo people. Its mandate covers organizing festivals, supporting artists, running cultural centers, and liaising with national and international agencies. Through this institutional role, ESCAC helps connect tradition with modernity, acting as both curator and regulator of the state's artistic scene. Nevertheless, its influence is not without controversy. The council's policies, budget allocations, and leadership choices frequently shape the nature and scale of cultural festivals in the state.

In the global context, the institutionalization of cultural festivals is broadly seen as a double edged process. Institutions can bring structure, funding, and visibility for cultural happenings, but they can also bring bureaucratic limits and ideological control over what artists can actually express (Bennett 42). In Nigeria, where public institutions are closely tied to political authority, cultural programming frequently mirrors the priorities of government officials and sponsors rather than those of artists and cultural custodians. This phenomenon

raises important questions about autonomy, authenticity, and accountability within the cultural sector.

Festival programming is central to cultural production, even though it is sometimes regarded merely as “the lineup.” It determines which events are staged, which artistic genres receive attention, and how stories and meanings are conveyed or carried forward. However, when institutional influence becomes too strong, programming choices can drift from protecting culture toward something closer to political publicity. In Edo State, ESCAC’s role in festival organization, sponsorship coordination, and the selection of performances demonstrates how administrative structures can steer creative decisions. Such control can bring smoother coordination and greater public visibility, yet it can also dilute the indigenous character of festivals or marginalize grassroots practitioners who lack the relevant institutional ties.

To understand how institutions affect modern festival programming in Edo State, it is necessary to examine both the administrative mechanisms and the cultural outcomes they produce. It becomes important to examine how ESCAC’s policies, funding arrangements, and leadership preferences shape not only the logistics of festivals, but also their symbolic weight and communal value.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In Edo State, the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, ESCAC, acts as the main institutional authority that coordinates festival activities across multiple ethnic communities. ESCAC is the one that decides which festivals receive organizational backing, which performances become part of the official program, and how traditional events have to adjust to modern presentation expectations.

Nevertheless, the precise character and extent of ESCAC's reach, particularly regarding festival programming as a systematic process of choosing, arranging, and shaping cultural performances, remains unclear. Even though ESCAC's administrative power appears broad, it is not evident how programming decisions are actually made, what criteria are used to select performances, or how institutional goals are weighed against cultural authenticity. A more careful, systematic investigation is therefore needed.

For that reason, this study looks at ESCAC's particular influence on contemporary festival programming in Edo State, in order to make clearer how institutional authority affects the content, the arrangement, and the public presentation of cultural performances.

Therefore, this study investigates ESCAC's specific influence on modern festival programming in Edo State to clarify how institutional authority shapes the content, structure, and presentation of cultural performances.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine institutional influence on modern festival programming in Edo State, using the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) as the case study. The specific objectives are

1. to examine the administrative and policy environment that governs ESCAC's festival programming.
2. to analyze the connection that exists between government funding, corporate sponsorship, and how festivals are actually organized in Edo State.
3. to investigate the extent to which institutional bureaucracy and political considerations shape decision-making within ESCAC.

4. to evaluate the influence of ESCAC on cultural genuineness, the level of community participation, and also the sustainability of festivals.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What policies and administrative structures guide ESCAC's method of festival programming?
2. How does institutional funding and sponsorship affect the planning and execution of festivals in Edo State?
3. In what ways do political and bureaucratic factors influence ESCAC's decision-making processes?
4. How does institutional influence affect the authenticity and sustainability of festivals organized in Edo State?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is significant on several fronts.

Academic Significance:

The study contributes to scholarly discourse on cultural administration and policy analysis in Nigeria, while also offering a theoretical perspective on how institutional power dynamics shape cultural production, particularly in performance and festival management. By situating ESCAC within the framework of institutional and cultural policy theories, the research extends existing literature on African cultural governance.

Cultural Significance:

Edo State's festivals serve as repositories of indigenous wisdom, art, and identity. Understanding how institutions influence their programming can help ensure that these cultural assets are better preserved from excessive commercialization or political

manipulation. The outcomes of this study could be useful for traditional rulers, cultural custodians, and community organizers seeking to safeguard the integrity of their festivals.

Administrative Significance:

For policymakers and cultural administrators, this study identifies both the strengths and the weaknesses of institutional involvement in festival management. It also offers practical recommendations for improving transparency, promoting participatory decision-making, and ensuring that funding is distributed more equitably.

Social and Economic Significance:

Festivals support tourism, generate jobs, and strengthen local economies. With a better grasp of institutional influence, strategies can be designed to maximize the socio economic benefits of festivals, while still keeping inclusivity, and respecting the culture, too.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to Edo State, with primary attention given to the activities of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC). It examines how ESCAC's internal administrative structure, policies, and working relationships shape modern festival planning across the state. While the study draws on examples from other cultural bodies and makes comparisons with developments in other Nigerian states and international contexts, its main focus remains on the institutional realities of Edo State.

This study focuses primarily on major festivals organized or supported by ESCAC between 2010 and 2025, so that the analysis remains aligned with contemporary institutional patterns. It does not aim to catalogue every festival occurring in Edo State; rather, it concentrates on festivals that have a direct connection to ESCAC's programming.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study may be constrained by limited access to official institutional records, as well as the possibility of bias in self-reported information from ESCAC officials. There are also logistical challenges associated with observing all festivals taking place across the state. Additionally, financial and time constraints may limit the breadth of the fieldwork. Nevertheless, these limitations will be mitigated through careful triangulation, using multiple data sources such as interviews, archival review, and content examination.

1.9 Operational Definition as Applicable in the Study

Institutional Influence: The power and authority exercised by governmental or organizational bodies to determine or regulate cultural activities through policy, funding, and administrative control.

Festival Programming: The systematic planning and selection of events, performances, and cultural activities that constitute a festival.

Cultural Policy: The official framework that guides how governments and institutions manage, support, and promote arts and culture.

ESCAC (Edo State Council for Arts and Culture): A government-established institution mandated to develop, promote, and manage cultural affairs in Edo State.

Cultural Administration: The process of managing, coordinating, and implementing policies and programs that affect the arts and cultural sector.

Institutionalization: The process through which cultural practices become formalized and regulated by organizations or state systems.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the existing literature that constitutes the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical foundation of this study. To develop a thorough understanding of the topic, scholarly works on festivals, on how festival programming is structured, and on the role institutions play in cultural production were reviewed. The aim was to position this research within the broader academic conversation.

The review begins by clarifying the key concepts that form the basis of the study, then proceeds to the theoretical perspectives that help explain how festivals operate socially and culturally. It then turns to empirical studies on festival programming, particularly the ways in which institutions shape what is arranged and how. Finally, it draws together the recurring themes and patterns that emerge across the literature, while identifying areas where the existing scholarship remains limited.

In doing so, the chapter builds a workable framework for understanding how institutional structures shape festival programming, particularly within Edo State. It also identifies the boundaries of earlier work and establishes why this specific research remains significant and what it contributes to existing knowledge.

2.2 Conceptual Clarifications

In most academic writing, clarifying key ideas early on is essential. It establishes a stable foundation for the analysis and ensures that the terms used retain consistent meaning throughout the work. This becomes even more important in interdisciplinary research such as this, because the same concept can be interpreted differently depending on the theoretical perspective or the cultural context being applied.

This section examines and clarifies three concepts central to the study: festival, institution, and programming. At first glance these terms may appear straightforward, but their meanings are in fact unstable. They shift depending on the scholarly tradition applied, as well as the socio-cultural setting in which they occur.

What is offered here is not merely a dictionary-style explanation. It engages further with the assumptions and contextual details that give each concept analytical weight, so that the discussion throughout this study remains grounded in a coherent and well-reasoned framework.

2.2.1 Festival

The question of how to define the festival remains one of the most enduring and complex issues within cultural scholarship. Even though the term is familiar in everyday conversation, there is a noticeable lack of consensus when it comes to academic conceptualization. One of the difficulties in defining festivals comes from their multifaceted nature; they are not fixed or uniform events. They encompass a range of ritual, social, economic, political, and performative activities, which often occur simultaneously, layered or overlapping. Consequently, it is difficult to arrive at a single definition that adequately captures the full range of festival experiences. Discussions of festivals must therefore balance the need for conceptual clarity with respect for the varied contexts in which festivals occur and are carried out.

Early scholarly efforts to define festivals often leaned on descriptive and functional approaches, concentrating on observable features like periodicity, shared participation, and a

celebratory purpose. Within this, the work of Alessandro Falassi is still especially influential. Falassi frames the festival as “a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, all members of a community participate directly or indirectly” (Falassi 2). That phrasing has been adopted often, partly because it is inclusive and flexible, and because it keeps the key structural elements in view, without drawing too tight a set of boundaries.

Central to Falassi’s idea is periodicity, which situates festivals within the temporal rhythms of cultural life. Festivals are not random occurrences; they are built into calendars that organize communal time, and they often mark transitions between seasons, agricultural cycles, or spiritual phases. This time-based layer matters because it ties festivals to wider systems of meaning, framing them as moments of rupture and renewal within ordinary routines. Because they recur at regular intervals, festivals help maintain continuity while also allowing for incremental adjustments, functioning as a means through which cultural traditions can persist while still evolving over time.

Equally crucial is the emphasis on collective participation, which distinguishes festivals from other cultural expressions. Festivals are, in practice, social events that involve the community at varying levels of engagement. People can participate in numerous ways, ranging from active involvement in rituals and performances to more passive observation, and this broad inclusiveness appears to support the integrative role of festivals, fostering a shared sense of belonging and common identity. However, the assumption of universal

participation has been challenged by scholars, who note that festival spaces are often governed by power structures that can produce exclusion.

A major limitation of earlier definitional approaches is that they typically describe festivals as inherently unified and welcoming. Such views often overlook how festivals can also reproduce social hierarchies and reinforce existing inequities. Participation is rarely neutral; it is shaped by factors such as gender, age, class, lineage, and institutional ties. In many cultural settings, particular festival roles are reserved for certain groups, while others may be excluded altogether. This raises important questions about the extent to which festivals can be understood as genuinely collective phenomena, as opposed to structured arenas of controlled participation.

The descriptive orientation of Falassi's definition has also been critiqued for not fully engaging with the symbolic and interpretive dimensions of festivals. While it effectively identifies external, visible features, it does not adequately address the processes through which meaning is made and shared. Festivals are not merely crowds gathered in one place; they are also spaces where symbolic work occurs, where cultural values, beliefs, and identities are enacted, sometimes contested, and sometimes reshaped. This recognition has prompted a notable shift toward interpretive frameworks that seek to reveal the deeper significance of festival practices.

In this interpretive turn, scholars have begun to emphasize that festivals operate as performative events. Drawing on performance theory, festivals can be understood as staged reenactments of cultural narratives, where meaning is generated through embodied action,

visual display, and broader symbolic communication. This perspective draws attention to the fact that participants are not merely passive attendees; they actively construct the festival experience. Festivals are thus better understood not as fixed, static definitions but as dynamic interactions and ongoing acts of interpretation.

At the same time, festival studies have expanded in a way that pulls in ideas from event management and cultural economics. Those areas tend to frame festivals as organized events inside wider systems of production and consumption. Getz, for instance, defines festivals as planned events meant to reach specific goals, economic development, tourism promotion, or community engagement (Getz 31). This way of looking brings in a more instrumental understanding of festivals, foregrounding the strategic role they play in contemporary society, not just the expressive dimensions.

While the event-based perspective offers useful insight into the organizational dimensions of festivals, it has also been critiqued for leaning too heavily toward managerial concerns rather than cultural meaning. When festivals are framed primarily as planning exercises with measurable outcomes, there is a risk of reducing them to instruments of economic policy, which obscures their deeper social and symbolic significance. This tension between cultural and instrumental readings forms part of a wider debate in festival studies about the appropriate balance between meaning and utility, and about who determines that balance.

The definitional complexity of festivals is further intensified when historical transformations are considered, particularly those tied to colonialism and globalization. In colonial encounters, indigenous festival practices were often suppressed or reworked as colonial authorities sought to impose new cultural norms alongside administrative structures.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's concept of cultural domination illustrates how such interventions disrupted older systems of meaning, leading to festivals being reinterpreted through imposed frameworks (Ngugi 78). In many instances, festivals were marginalized or adapted to align with colonial agendas, producing hybrid forms that carried both rooted local influences and external pressures simultaneously.

In the postcolonial period, festivals continued to change as they became incorporated into state-led cultural policies and global cultural networks. Governments and cultural institutions increasingly regard festivals as valuable resources, not only for celebration but for promoting national identity, attracting tourism, and generating revenue. As a result, festivals have become more institutionalized, with their organization and presentation shaped by formal structures and regulatory frameworks. Contemporary festivals therefore often embody a complex interplay between tradition and modernity, authenticity and adaptation.

Globalization has introduced new dynamics into how festivals are defined. As cultural forms travel more rapidly across borders, transnational festival cultures emerge in which elements from different traditions are combined, reinterpreted, and reread. This movement complicates the assumption that festivals are purely local phenomena. Instead, festivals increasingly appear to belong within wider global systems of cultural exchange. At the same time, there is concern that cultural practices could become more homogeneous over time, as festivals are sometimes adjusted to meet the expectations of international audiences.

In light of this, scholars have proposed a definitional approach that is more context-sensitive and reflexive. Rather than pursuing a single, universal definition, it may be more productive to recognize that festivals are shaped by the specific historical conditions, cultural settings, and institutional structures within which they occur. This approach allows festival

practices to be treated not as a single category but as a varied and diverse phenomenon, while also enabling a more critical examination of the forces driving their development.

In African contexts, this need is even more apparent. Many Western definitions fail to fully capture the holistic character of African festivals, where the boundaries between ritual, governance, and everyday social life are often less sharply defined. Many African festivals are interwoven with systems of belief and authority, functioning as sustaining elements of communal life rather than as isolated occurrences. Olupona argues that African festivals are “living institutions” that sustain relationships between human life and the spiritual realm (Olupona 67). This perspective challenges definitions that reduce festivals by detaching them from their broader cultural environments.

Furthermore, African festivals are often described as multifunctional, serving simultaneously as sites for ritual performance, political legitimation, social integration, and economic exchange. This layered complexity demonstrates the limitations of a single-dimensional definition and underscores the need for analytical frameworks capable of accommodating multiple layers of meaning rather than a single, flattened concept. It also highlights the importance of grounding theoretical discussion in observable realities, rather than imposing abstract categories that may not correspond to how people actually experience festivals in everyday life.

The definitional challenges associated with festivals can also shape research methodology. Without a clear conceptual framework, there is a risk of analytical inconsistency, where different phenomena are grouped under the same label without sufficient justification. To address this, researchers need a working definition that is flexible yet precise, capable of encompassing a range of practices while maintaining analytical rigor.

For this study, the festival is understood as a structured cultural process that has periodicity, collective involvement, symbolic representation, and institutional mediation. This conceptualization reflects the aim of integrating multiple dimensions of festival practice, while also foregrounding the role of institutions in discussions of modern festivals. By focusing on process rather than mere form, this approach makes it easier to examine how festivals are organized, lived through, and reshaped within particular contexts, whether social, political, or otherwise.

This conceptualization also aligns with the broader objectives of the study, which seeks to examine the influence of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture on festival programming. Viewing festivals as structured processes points to programming as an important site where culture is produced, where choices are made about content, structure, and representation. It also provides a basis for examining how institutional frameworks intersect with traditional practices, and together they shape how festivals evolve across Edo State.

In the end, the definitional grounding of the festival has to be understood as open-ended and still moving, because cultural life itself is dynamic. Instead of trying to force hard borders or fixed limits, this study uses a more flexible and integrative way, one that keeps acknowledging the unevenness and even the layered complexity of festival practices. That method not only adds more analytical depth but also keeps the study in sync with the specific nuances of its cultural setting.

2.2.2 Historical and Cultural Context of Festivals in Edo State

Edo State is widely regarded as having a rich cultural heritage, within which festivals hold a central and enduring place. These festivals are not merely celebratory events; they are tied to the historical development, spiritual outlook, and socio-political organization of the people. Rooted in precolonial traditions, festivals in Edo State serve to maintain cultural continuity, legitimize leadership, and strengthen communal identity. They function as a meeting point where ritual practice intersects with artistic expression and social interaction, reflecting the complex relationship between tradition and contemporary realities.

Historically, the origins of festivals in Edo State can be traced back to the Benin Kingdom, one of the most sophisticated precolonial political systems in West Africa. This kingdom was known for a tightly centralized system of governance, with the Oba holding both political and spiritual authority simultaneously. Within this structure, festivals were not merely entertainment; they helped maintain cosmic and social order, functioning as ritual moments through which the ties between the divine, the monarchy, and the people were reaffirmed. Egharevba notes that many Benin festivals were established as part of royal customs, created to commemorate significant events, honor deities, and support the prosperity of the kingdom (Egharevba 45). Among the most prominent festivals is the Igue Festival, which occupies a central place in the cultural and political life of the Benin people. The Igue Festival is historically tied to the Oba of Benin and is held annually as a ritual of renewal, purification, and blessing. Its origins date back several centuries, reflecting the continuity and longevity of Benin traditions. The festival functions as a symbolic renewal of royal authority, during which the Oba performs sacred rites believed to strengthen his spiritual influence and ensure the kingdom's safety and prosperity.

The arrangement of the Igue Festival is highly elaborate, unfolding through a sequence of ritual activities that extend across several days. These include ceremonial blessings, processions, performances, and communal feasting, all proceeding in sequence, though not always in the manner outsiders might assume. Every element is guided by longstanding customs, with specific duties assigned to different groups according to lineage, age, and social position. This careful organization reflects the hierarchical nature of Benin society, where cultural practices are closely intertwined with systems of authority and social organization.

At the same time, the Igue Festival creates what Turner describes as a liminal space, in which ordinary social distinctions are temporarily suspended, allowing participants to engage in shared experiences that transcend everyday hierarchies (Turner 94). During this period, the boundaries between the sacred and the secular become more fluid, enabling collective participation that strengthens social cohesion. The concept of *communitas*, as Turner frames it, is especially evident at the festival, as people come together in a shared expression of identity and belonging.

The participatory dimension of the Igue Festival is evident in the range of activities that take place during the event. Community members, men, women, and youth alike, take part in dances, masquerade displays, and ritual offerings. These activities are not purely for entertainment; they also function as a cultural relay through which knowledge, values, and practices are transmitted across generations. Omoruyi notes that this form of participation is essential for sustaining cultural identity, as it enables individuals to internalize and reproduce the norms and everyday performances of their society (Omoruyi 48).

Beyond the Igue Festival, other festivals in Edo State also show how varied and complicated cultural practices can be. The Ekaba Festival is a clear instance of ritual performance that blends sacred meaning with social life. Even though it is smaller in scope than Igue, the Ekaba Festival still features a strong level of symbolic complexity, with masquerades, processions, and ritual enactments that mirror the community's cosmological beliefs.

The ritual sequences of the Ekaba Festival are highly codified, with each performance carrying its own specific meaning and purpose, functioning much like a structured map. Throughout the festival, there are moments of intense symbolic interaction, where participants engage with both the spiritual and social dimensions of their culture simultaneously, often as a matter of course. As with the Igue Festival, the Ekaba Festival embodies elements of liminality, functioning as an in-between space that allows for communal reflection and renewal (Turner 98). Through these shared experiences, the festival tends to build unity and a collective identity that, in turn, strengthens the social ties sustaining the community.

Empirical observations suggest that festivals such as Ekaba contribute significantly to social cohesion, particularly in smaller communities where cultural practices remain closely tied to everyday life. Osayimwen notes that these festivals function as platforms for bringing community members together, promoting interaction and cooperation while reinforcing shared values and norms (Osayimwen 33). Festivals thus act as both cultural and social institutions, contributing to stability and continuity in community life.

In addition to the major festivals, Edo State also has many community-based festivals that reflect more localized forms of cultural expression. These include events such as the

Ososo Festival, which may be less formally recognized but remains deeply meaningful within its own community. Such festivals often include communal feasting, storytelling, music, and indigenous performances that demonstrate the creativity and diversity of local traditions, even as details vary from place to place.

These smaller festivals are especially useful for understanding the plurality of cultural practices within Edo State. Unlike state-recognized festivals, which may be shaped by broader institutional frameworks, community-based festivals are often organized at the grassroots level, reflecting the priorities and values of local populations. This autonomy allows for greater flexibility and innovation, enabling communities to adapt their cultural practices to changing circumstances while maintaining their core traditions.

At the same time, these festivals reflect the dynamic nature of culture, illustrating how traditions are continually contested and reinterpreted, even subtly. As societies evolve, festivals are often reshaped to reflect new realities, incorporating elements that respond to current social, economic, and cultural conditions. This pattern of adaptation demonstrates the resilience of cultural practices, which retain their meaning even as the surrounding context shifts.

Additionally, the growing involvement of state institutions and external influences has changed how festivals are organized in Edo State. In earlier periods, traditional festivals were guided primarily by indigenous systems of authority, local leadership, and customary rules. Today, many festivals involve partnerships with governmental bodies and cultural organizations. This shift affects both the form and significance of festivals, as institutional priorities increasingly influence programming, funding, and the manner in which events are presented to the public.

This intersection between tradition and institutional involvement raises important questions about whether cultural practices are preserved or transformed. Institutional backing can enhance visibility and support the continuation of festivals by providing additional resources and organizational capacity. At the same time, it may lead to adjustments in traditional practices to align with policy objectives or audience expectations, which do not always reflect the original intent.

In this context, festivals in Edo State can be understood as sites of cultural negotiation, where different forces, including traditional authority, community involvement, and institutional influence, interact to shape cultural representation. This perspective also makes clear that festivals should not be treated as fixed traditions but rather as dynamic, evolving processes that reflect wider social and cultural shifts, even when such shifts occur gradually.

In conclusion, the historical and cultural setting of festivals in Edo State presents a broad and intricate arrangement of cultural practices that remain rooted in tradition while continuing to evolve in response to changing conditions. Festivals such as the Igwe and Ekaba demonstrate how ritual, symbolic meaning, and community participation remain central to sustaining cultural identity. At the same time, smaller community-based festivals demonstrate the diversity of local traditions and their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Taken together, these festivals provide a strong foundation for understanding how programming occurs and how institutional influence continues to matter, which remains a central concern of the present study.

2.2.3 Festival Programming

Festival programming plays a central role in how festivals are organized and ultimately realized; it constitutes the structure through which cultural expressions are selected, arranged, and performed for audiences. In other words, it represents the point at which abstract cultural ideas are transformed into tangible, visible experiences. Festival programming therefore offers a useful lens for understanding festivals as both cultural events and social phenomena. For this study, festival programming is not treated merely as an administrative function or routine task; it is approached as a complex interpretive activity that also carries inherent values. Through it, questions of meaning, access, and overall impact are deliberately shaped rather than left to chance.

At its most fundamental level, festival programming concerns the planning, selection, and sequencing of activities and performances within a festival. In practice, it encompasses decisions about which events take place, the order in which they occur, the duration of each activity, and the spatial organization of performances. Getz conceptualizes programming as a core element of event design, emphasizing its role in structuring audience experience and meeting the objectives of the event (Getz 189). Within this framing, programming functions as a means of organizing content in a coherent and intentional manner, rather than as a random timetable.

This functional understanding alone is somewhat narrow, however, as it does not fully capture the wider implications programming can have in cultural contexts. Festival programming is inherently selective. It involves choices that determine which cultural elements are represented and which are excluded. These choices are not arbitrary; they are shaped by deeper systems of value, belief, and power, meaning that programming becomes a

site where culture is actively produced, rather than a neutral process of arranging what already exists. As Hall argues, representation is an active process that produces meaning, rather than simply reflecting reality (Hall 15). From this perspective, programming can be understood as a mechanism through which cultural meanings are constructed and communicated.

Also, because programming is interpretive, festival organizers work as cultural mediators. They translate complex cultural practices into forms that are accessible to varied audiences, even when those audiences are not part of the immediate cultural community. In doing so, there is often adaptation involved, plus simplification, and re-contextualization, sometimes with subtle (or not so subtle) shifts in emphasis. As a result, programming becomes a space in which tensions between authenticity and accessibility are negotiated.

One of the defining characteristics of festival programming is its role in shaping narratives about identity and belonging. Through the selection and arrangement of performances, festivals construct particular representations of culture, in the process foregrounding some traditions while marginalizing others. This aligns with Anderson's concept of imagined communities, in which shared cultural moments contribute to the formation of a collective identity (Anderson 6). Programming therefore does not merely reflect cultural identity passively; it actively participates in constructing it.

Beyond representation, programming also has a significant effect on how audiences experience the festival as a whole. The order of events, the pacing of activities, and the way different performance pieces are connected all shape the overall atmosphere and lasting

impact. Pine and Gilmore's concept of the experience economy is particularly relevant here, as it emphasizes designing events that engage participants emotionally and sensorially (Pine and Gilmore 98). Festival programming, therefore, concerns not only "what" is chosen but also "how" meaning and memory are produced.

The growing focus on audience engagement has encouraged festivals to incorporate more varied elements into their programming, such as music, dance, drama, exhibitions, and interactive activities. While this diversification can improve accessibility and broaden appeal, it also raises difficult questions about the integrity of traditional practices, particularly when cultural elements are adapted to suit contemporary tastes. MacCannell's concept of staged authenticity provides a useful framework for understanding this dynamic, highlighting how cultural performances may be altered to meet the expectations of external audiences (MacCannell 91).

From an African perspective, festival programming cannot be fully understood in isolation; it must be read alongside indigenous knowledge systems and everyday communal practices. Most traditional festivals are guided by established ritual sequences and cultural expectations, meaning that the order and significance of events are not arbitrary. This form of programming is embedded within cultural and spiritual frameworks, reinforcing the broader interconnectedness of community life. Mbiti underlines that ritual, community, and spirituality are closely tied together in African societies, and notes that cultural practices help preserve social order and identity (Mbiti 21).

When formal programming structures begin to emerge, usually linked to modernization and increased institutional involvement, a noticeable shift occurs. Formal programming places considerable emphasis on arrangement, time management, and coordination. It brings in fixed timetables, planned entertainments, and particular assigned roles. This can improve efficiency and make things easier for people to access but it can also disturb the older ritual sequence, and in the process, it can change how cultural practices are understood or what they mean.

This shift positions programming as a space where tradition and modernity continually intersect. Festivals are not static; they continue to adjust in response to social pressures, economic change, and cultural transformation. Programming serves as the mechanism through which these adjustments occur, reflecting both continuity and transformation over time.

Power also plays a significant role in festival programming. Decisions about what is included in the program are often shaped by individuals and institutions that hold authority over festival content, and in many cases, they influence what is heard, seen, and recognized. These actors determine what is included in the program, how it is presented, and which groups are given visibility. Foucault's conception of power as embedded within systems of knowledge is particularly relevant here, as it highlights how control over representation is a form of power (Foucault 27).

In institutional contexts, programming is often aligned with policy objectives and organizational priorities, regardless of how the process is publicly framed. Festivals might be

programmed to promote cultural heritage, attract tourism, or support economic development. These intentions then influence the selection and presentation of cultural content. Elements that align with institutional goals tend to receive greater attention, not necessarily because they are the only viable option, but because they fit the broader institutional agenda. This alignment underscores the importance of examining programming through the lens of institutional influence, as it reveals how cultural practices are shaped by wider systems of governance.

Programming, however, is not entirely controlled by institutions alone. It remains a process of negotiation involving cultural practitioners, community members, sponsors, and audiences. These interactions render programming dynamic and evolving, reflecting an ongoing balance between competing interests and differing viewpoints.

In Edo State, festival programming plays a significant role in how cultural events are staged, particularly festivals such as the Igue Festival. The organization of activities, the selection of performances, and the coordination of participants all influence how the festival is experienced by both local residents and visitors. When institutions such as the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture become involved, the situation becomes more complex, as programming decisions are influenced by administrative structures, cultural policies, and resource constraints, often in ways that are not immediately apparent.

This context underscores the need to understand festival programming as multidimensional and context-dependent, rather than as a purely technical function. Programming is the mechanism through which festivals are transformed from abstract

cultural ideas into lived experiences, and for this reason it remains a central focus of analysis in this study.

In conclusion, festival programming is a complex and dynamic process that encompasses the selection, arrangement, and representation of cultural practices. It operates at the intersection of culture, power, and institutional influence, shaping both how festivals are organized and how they are experienced. By determining what is included, how it is framed or displayed, and who is permitted to participate, programming plays a critical role in producing and transmitting cultural meaning. This understanding establishes a crucial foundation for examining how institutional actors influence festival programming in Edo State, which remains the central concern of this research.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The analysis carried out in this study is guided by a set of theoretical perspectives that frame festivals not merely as cultural events, but as socially constructed, institutionally mediated, and power-laden practices. Rather than employing theory as a descriptive backdrop, this study treats theoretical frameworks as analytical tools that allow the complexities surrounding festival programming to be examined systematically.

The study draws on several key theoretical streams within sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, particularly Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence, Turner's theory of liminality, institutional theory, and cultural policy theory. While these theories are commonly applied to the study of ritual, culture, and organization, their relevance here lies in their capacity to illuminate several distinct yet interconnected dimensions of festival practice. Durkheim and Turner offer valuable insights into the social and affective foundations of festivals, foregrounding questions of cohesion, transformation, and collective meaning. At

the same time, their emphasis on unity and shared experience necessitates further examination of how power and regulation manifest in contemporary festival settings.

It is precisely in this space that institutional and cultural policy approaches become particularly useful. Broadly, these frameworks shift attention away from festivals as spontaneous cultural expressions and instead treat them as organized, managed cultural outputs shaped by formal arrangements, policy aims, and institutional motives. They highlight governance, control over resources, and administrative routines in ways that affect not only how festivals are organized but also how “culture” is selected, narrated, and displayed.

Bringing these perspectives into conversation, the study adopts a multi-tiered analytical approach, moving from the experiential and symbolic dimensions toward the structural and institutional determinants. This integrative lens makes it possible to critically examine the tension between cultural meaning and institutional control, and to consider how programming functions as a site where these forces intersect.

Ultimately, the deployment of these theories serves not merely to explain festivals in general, but to provide a more rigorous conceptual lens for examining the specific case of institutional influence on festival programming in Edo State. In doing so, the study situates itself within a critical tradition that seeks to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which culture is not only expressed, but also managed, adjusted, and ultimately reshaped.

2.3.1 Turner’s Theory of Liminality

Victor Turner's theory of liminality remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding the cultural and symbolic dynamics found in festivals. Emerging from his broader work on ritual processes, the concept of liminality offers a way to read festivals as transformative social arenas, spaces that temporarily exist beyond the usual routines and rigid structures of daily life. Turner's formulation, which extends Arnold van Gennep's tripartite model of rites of passage, identifies the liminal stage as a key moment of transition, during which established identities and social arrangements are temporarily suspended (Turner 94).

From within this framework, ritual processes are commonly described as unfolding in three stages: separation, liminality, and reintegration. The liminal phase, which is especially significant for festival studies, suggests an atmosphere of ambiguity, where participants exist in an in-between condition between fixed social positions. It is during this stage that festivals appear to gain their recognizable character, functioning as threshold experiences that disrupt the normal order of social life, even if only temporarily. Participants are symbolically removed from their everyday responsibilities and placed in a setting that allows for reflection, transformation, and renewal.

A defining feature of liminality is its capacity to produce what Turner calls *communitas*, a social bond characterized by immediacy, equality, and collective unity. This contrasts with more structured social relations, which are typically organized around hierarchy and separation. In the liminal space of the festival, these ranked distinctions are temporarily muted, allowing participants to experience a shared sense of humanity that transcends social division. This is often accompanied by heightened emotion, which reinforces bonds between individuals and solidifies group identity. **Ultimately, Turner's**

theory of liminality provides a useful starting point for analyzing festivals, but it must be applied critically and within its appropriate context.

What makes Turner's ideas appealing in festival studies is that they capture the lived and affective dimensions of festival experience. Festivals are not only organized events; they are lived experiences that draw participants in through emotional, symbolic, and sensory channels. Liminality, as a concept, helps explain why festivals are often associated with liberation, creativity, and transformations that feel genuinely meaningful. By stepping outside the rules of everyday life, participants can explore alternative ways of being and possibilities that are less accessible within ordinary social settings.

Nevertheless, Turner's framework is not without significant criticism, particularly because it can idealize *communitas* excessively. Critics argue that the notion of temporarily suspending hierarchy can obscure how power relations continue to operate within festival contexts. Even in settings that appear liminal, participation remains commonly structured by existing social hierarchies, including those tied to gender, age, class, and cultural authority. As a result, the egalitarian vision of *communitas* may be more aspirational than actual, reflecting a theoretical abstraction rather than an empirical reality.

This critique is especially relevant when considering festivals in African contexts, where ritual practices are often governed by fairly strict systems of authority and cultural regulation. Access to certain ritual roles is frequently limited to specific groups, while others are excluded entirely. Priestly functions, masquerade performances, or royal rituals, for instance, are usually reserved for particular individuals or lineages, those considered to "belong" there. In such situations, the notion of a complete suspension of hierarchy becomes

difficult to sustain, because the festival may end up reinforcing existing power structures rather than dismantling them.

Furthermore, the emphasis on liminality as a moment of disorder or anti-structure has been challenged by scholars who argue that festivals tend to exhibit considerable organization and control. Rather than being a simple collapse of social order, festivals may show carefully managed processes that try to balance a sense of spontaneity with the underlying authority structures. Liminality here is not the absence of structure but a reconfiguration of structure, where norms are temporarily reworded, re-performed, or rearticulated rather than fully suspended.

Another limitation of Turner's theory is that it engages relatively little with the institutional dimensions of contemporary festivals. The liminality concept works fairly well for analyzing traditional ritual practices, but it becomes more complicated where festivals are shaped by formal organizations, state agencies, or cultural institutions. In such cases, the spontaneous and transformative qualities often associated with liminality may be constrained by administrative demands, funding conditions, and programming requirements, which substantially alter what "liminal" can look like.

The increasing involvement of institutions in festival organization introduces new dynamics that complicate how liminality is theorized. When festivals fall under institutional control, they often become subject to fixed schedules, standardized performances, and predefined objectives, which constrains improvisation and transformation. This raises questions about the extent to which contemporary festivals can still be characterized as liminal spaces, or whether they are increasingly becoming regulated cultural performances in

which order takes precedence over uncertainty, and the “in-between” quality is correspondingly diminished.

At the same time, it would be overly simplistic to dismiss liminality entirely from discussions of modern festivals. Even in highly structured environments, liminal elements can persist, particularly at the level of subjective participant experience. There is often a sense of departure from everyday routines, an emotional charge arising from collective involvement, and the symbolic enactment of cultural narratives. These elements continue to produce in-between experiences, even when the festival occurs within institutional boundaries.

In African contexts, applying Turner’s theory requires careful adaptation, given the significance of indigenous epistemologies and cultural practices. Many African festivals involve intricate connections between the material and spiritual worlds, with rituals functioning as points of connection between the living and the ancestral realm. These connections may not align neatly with liminality as a brief interruption of structure, since they are not merely “temporary”; rather, they are embedded within ongoing systems of belief and everyday practice.

Mbiti’s conception of African temporality, for instance, suggests that festivals function as moments of continuity rather than rupture, connecting the present with the ancestral past (Mbiti 21). From this perspective, the transformative aspect of festivals is less about suspending structure and more about reaffirming enduring relationships. This challenges the conventional emphasis on liminality as a break from normal life, offering instead a model in which festivals operate within a continuous cultural and spiritual framework.

Despite these limitations, Turner's theory remains a useful analytical lens for understanding the ongoing, processual nature of festivals. It foregrounds transition, transformation, and shared experience, providing a foundation for examining how festivals can function as sites of cultural renewal. Nevertheless, relying on it alone is insufficient, as it must be paired with other perspectives that attend to power, governance, and institutional influence.

For the present study, liminality is especially useful when examining how institutional involvement might alter the transformative potential of festivals. Choices made by organizations such as the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture can determine the extent to which festivals retain their liminal quality. By arranging performances, regulating participation, and defining what counts as cultural content, institutions may either create space for *communitas* to emerge or constrain it considerably.

This raises critical questions about the relationship between structure and transformation in contemporary festivals: to what extent can festivals continue to function as spaces of renewal when embedded within formal systems of control, and how does institutional programming influence the balance between spontaneity and regulation? These questions point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of liminality, one that accounts for the complexities of modern cultural practice rather than relying on an idealized version.

Ultimately, Turner's theory of liminality provides a useful starting point for analyzing festivals, but it must be applied critically and within its appropriate context. By acknowledging both its strengths and limitations, this study adopts a balanced approach. It incorporates liminality as a useful concept, while also addressing the wider institutional and cultural dynamics that shape festival programming in Edo State.

2.3.2 Durkheim's Theory of Collective Effervescence

Émile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence provides a robust sociological framework for understanding the social and emotional movement that happens around festivals. Durkheim put forward this concept in his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), showing how communal rituals produce heightened emotional energy that, in turn, reinforces social cohesion and shared identity. Unlike Turner, whose attention centers on transitional phases and the in between conditions, Durkheim leans on the energetic and unifying impact of shared experiences. In that sense festivals become places where social solidarity is not only enacted, but intensified.

According to Durkheim, collective effervescence occurs when people gather in a group and come to share the same emotions, generating a sense of unity that transcends what each individual thinks or feels separately. In his view, such gatherings produce heightened excitement and intense emotional energy, which he considered crucial for moral order and social cohesion. Festivals, as communal events, exemplify this phenomenon, drawing participants into synchronized activity, ritual performance, and shared celebration. The collective force generated during such occasions can produce a sense of transcendence, in which individuals feel connected to something larger than themselves, a social and spiritual whole.

A key feature of collective effervescence is its capacity to reaffirm social rules and cultural values. Through rituals, dances, music, and other symbolic gestures, festivals carry forward the community's shared ideas and moral codes. Participants come to feel aligned with these values, and this alignment strengthens social ties and sustains cultural traditions across generations. Durkheim's framework thus allows festivals to be understood not simply

as entertainment, but as instruments that help societies remain cohesive and transmit collective identity from one generation to the next.

Applying Durkheim's idea to African festivals is especially revealing. Many African festivals are tightly connected with religious and spiritual life, where collective presence calls up ancestral spirits, deities, or even cosmological powers. For instance, Yoruba Egungun festivals include masked processions that mix ritual performance with community involvement, and this combination creates emotional resonance and a shared sense of sacred presence. Similarly, the Osun-Osogbo festival in Nigeria mobilizes the collective participation of devotees through music, dance, and ritual offerings, producing an intense experience of communal vitality. In these contexts, collective effervescence helps explain how festivals reinforce both social and spiritual solidarity, linking the living community with transcendent forces.

However, Durkheim's framework is not without limitations and has been criticized for oversimplifying complex social realities. One limitation is its tendency to idealize collective unity, which might end up overlooking how festivals can reproduce social inequalities even during collective participation in festival activities. Power dynamics tied to age, gender, social class, or even lineage often shape who actually joins in. So not everyone experiences effervescence in the same way, because participation isn't evenly distributed. For instance, getting access to ritual leadership positions or sacred spaces can be blocked, and some marginalized groups may end up as observers, not full participants. So the idea of emotional energy that everyone shares might be more aspirational than descriptive, especially in stratified societies, where people are not really on equal footing.

The theory has also been criticized for paying relatively little attention to institutional and economic factors in modern festival settings. Many contemporary festivals are no longer purely local or spontaneous; they are increasingly mediated by government agencies, cultural organizations, and commercial interests. These actors can shape participation, manage access, and regulate the pacing of emotional experience. As a result, collective effervescence can begin to appear engineered or curated rather than spontaneous, raising questions about the authenticity of the shared emotional energy. For example, tourism-oriented festivals may emphasize spectacle over communal engagement, which shifts the dynamics of the collective experience in ways that Durkheim's original formulation does not fully anticipate.

Still, even with these critiques, Durkheim's concept stays relevant when paired with Turner's liminality. Turner helps explain the structural suspension and symbolic transformation that festivals trigger, while Durkheim highlights the affective and cohesive outcomes that come out of taking part together. Put side by side, the two theories create a broader, more complete lens: liminality accounts for the transformative potential of festivals, while collective effervescence explains their socially integrative power.

When examining Edo State festivals, the concept of collective effervescence helps illustrate how shared emotional intensity reinforces cultural identity and sustains social cohesion. The annual Igue Festival, for instance, is characterized by elaborate rites, processions, and communal feasting, and it accomplishes more than marking the renewal of the Oba's authority: it also generates shared feelings of belonging, reverence, and collective joy. Notably, structured ceremony (liminality) and communal excitement (effervescence) operate together, functioning as interdependent mechanisms that sustain cultural and social continuity even as the festival evolves incrementally over time.

Applying Durkheim's ideas to contemporary festival studies also makes it possible to trace how tradition and modernity interact. Even when an event is shaped by institutions or driven by commercial pressures, the possibility of collective effervescence can still emerge, often in local or participatory moments such as spontaneous audience responses, group dancing, or the rhythm of ritual chants. Attending to these moments allows scholars to capture the emotional texture of festivals, narrowing the gap between structural explanation and lived experience.

Overall, Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence provides a robust framework for understanding how festivals generate emotional bonding and unity, particularly in African settings where communal and spiritual participation are closely interwoven. Critiques concerning inequality and institutional mediation of festival life remain important; nevertheless, the concept continues to serve as a useful lens, as festivals can function as arenas for social integration, cultural affirmation, and collective energy.

Durkheim also outlines several mechanisms through which festivals generate collective effervescence, though how exactly those mechanisms play out can vary, depending on the setting and the way people join in. First, ritual synchrony, such as coordinated dance, music, chanting, or ceremonial gestures, produces a sense of unity and shared rhythm. Second, symbolic amplification, including sacred objects, masks, costumes, and ritual paraphernalia, serves to focus collective attention, heightening emotional intensity. Third, spatial and temporal separation from everyday life allows participants to experience a concentrated emotional field, free from the distractions and hierarchies of ordinary existence.

These mechanisms work together to produce intense affective moments, often described as feelings of transcendence beyond everyday life, including joy or a sense of

spiritual elevation. The strength of collective effervescence tends to vary with the scale of the gathering: the larger the assembly and the greater the level of participation, the more powerful the emotional intensity becomes. This illustrates how participatory African festivals are, as communal involvement is not optional but essential to how cultural meaning is transmitted and how social cohesion is sustained.

Durkheim's thinking is especially relevant here, because in African festivals communal and spiritual experience are almost always intertwined. Many African festivals include ritualized performances that combine music, dance, oral storytelling, and spiritual invocation. For example, the Yoruba Egungun festival features masked processions representing ancestral spirits, with participants joining through synchronized dancing and drumming. These performances generate intense emotional resonance and a shared sense of sacred presence that connects people across different ages and social ranks, even where divisions exist.

Similarly, the Osun-Osogbo festival in Nigeria brings together ritual offerings, pilgrimages, and ceremonial processions intended to honor the river goddess Osun. Devotees engage in communal dances, chants, and prayers, entering a heightened collective emotional state that supports both religious commitment and social unity. The Igue Festival in Edo State offers another example, where ritual feasting, music, and processions celebrate political authority while also generating communal excitement. This illustrates how emotional intensity and social hierarchy can coexist within festival settings, functioning not as opposites but as interrelated dimensions of the same cultural experience.

African festivals also demonstrate, through lived practice, how culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through this collective effervescence. The shared emotional

intensity experienced by both young and old helps sustain traditions and reinforces communal values, even as social conditions change. This reflects Durkheim's argument that rituals function as mechanisms for reproducing collective consciousness, through which cultural knowledge and moral norms are internalized by the community through deeply emotional experiences.

2.4 Empirical Framework

Understanding what occurs in practice with festival programming in Edo State requires close attention to empirical realities, situating this study between theory and practical concerns. While Turner's perspective on liminality highlights the symbolic and transformative dimensions of festival involvement, and Durkheim's collective effervescence accounts for the emotional bonding and social cohesion in communal events, additional considerations remain relevant. Institutional theory and cultural policy frameworks, for example, illustrate how festivals are organized, monitored, and mediated, rather than simply experienced. Festivals in Edo State serve as a useful case study for these overlaps, as they embody centuries of established practices, involve multiple community actors, and operate under evolving governance structures. These factors collectively shape how people experience and understand these cultural occasions (Omoruyi 45).

2.4.1 Gibson and Connell's (2012) Study on "Festivals and Cultural Management"

Gibson and Connell (2012), in their study *Festivals and Cultural Management*, offer a wide-ranging empirical and analytical examination of festivals as structured cultural occurrences situated within broader systems of cultural governance, economic development, and institutional planning. The study aims to examine how festivals are understood,

organized, and managed in contemporary cultural settings, and how programming decisions shape cultural representation, audience engagement, and institutional outcomes.

This work spans cultural policy, cultural geography, and event management, treating festivals as significant instruments through which cultural identity, economic value, and regional branding are constructed, tested, and negotiated. Rather than remaining at the descriptive level, Gibson and Connell examine the organizational and institutional “rules of the game” underlying festival growth and program selection, situating their analysis within current debates in cultural governance (Gibson and Connell 21).

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed qualitative and case study approach, drawing evidence from festivals in Australia and related international contexts. The material includes interviews with festival organizers, cultural administrators, policymakers, and creative practitioners, as well as observational work and documentary analysis. This design enables a more detailed view of how programming choices are formed through institutional negotiation, resource constraints, and cultural objectives (Gibson and Connell 24).

The findings of the study demonstrate that festival programming is a structured and strategic process shaped by the interaction of cultural, economic, and political forces. Rather than being a spontaneous reflection of cultural expression, programming is shown to be a deliberate act of selection and organization through which cultural meanings are constructed and communicated. Organizers actively curate performances, sequences, and themes in ways that align with institutional objectives and audience expectations (Gibson and Connell 27).

A key insight from Gibson and Connell’s study is that festival programming operates as a site of institutional negotiation. Competing priorities such as cultural authenticity, tourism appeal, funding requirements, and community expectations shape programming

decisions. This produces a balancing process in which cultural expressions are adapted, restructured, or reframed in order to satisfy multiple stakeholders simultaneously. The result is a negotiated cultural product that reflects both artistic intentions and institutional constraints (Gibson and Connell 30).

The study further reveals that festivals are increasingly embedded within cultural policy and economic development frameworks. Governments and cultural agencies utilize festivals as tools for place branding, tourism attraction, and regional development. As a result, programming decisions are often influenced by strategic considerations related to visibility, marketability, and economic impact. This reflects a broader shift in cultural governance where festivals function not only as cultural expressions but also as instruments of economic and policy driven objectives (Gibson and Connell 33).

Another important dimension of the study is the role of programming in shaping audience experience. The organization of festival events, including sequencing, thematic framing, and spatial arrangement, plays a central role in how audiences interpret and engage with cultural content. Programming therefore functions as a mediating structure that shapes cultural perception and constructs meaning within festival environments (Gibson and Connell 36).

The study also examines questions of inclusion and exclusion within festival programming, demonstrating that the process is never entirely neutral. Selecting which cultural performances are staged inevitably involves prioritizing certain elements over others, resulting in some cultural forms becoming more visible while others are marginalized. This selective process can be read as reflecting deeper institutional priorities, raising serious

concerns about representation, fairness, and cultural diversity within festival spaces (Gibson and Connell 38).

The study is primarily grounded in Western and more developed-country festival settings, which could make it harder to apply directly to postcolonial environments such as Nigeria and Edo State. In such contexts, festival organization is guided not only by institutional plans or economic pressures but also by older authority structures, ritual logics, and community-based forms of cultural governance.

Although the study provides a substantial analysis of institutional and economic influences, it does not sufficiently examine into indigenous cultural systems, or into how traditional custodians actually shape festival organization. Consequently, a significant gap remains in understanding the way hybrid governance structures work in non-Western festival environments.

Nonetheless, Gibson and Connell's work offers a valuable empirical foundation for understanding festival programming as structured, negotiated, and institutionally anchored. Their argument reinforces the view that festivals are not merely ordinary cultural occurrences, but carefully curated systems of representation shaped by multiple competing interests.

Regarding its relevance to the current research, the study is particularly significant because it explains programming as a process combining cultural selection with institutional negotiation. This provides a useful framework for understanding how choices are made and how power is expressed through what is staged, supporting an analysis of how festivals are organized and how cultural meanings are constructed through programming decisions.

This present study extends the analysis by focusing specifically on the role of formal and traditional institutions in Edo State, particularly the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture. While Gibson and Connell emphasize general institutional and economic dynamics, this research examines how local institutional actors shape programming directly through planning, coordination, and policy implementation.

In Edo State, festivals such as the Igue Festival demonstrate that programming decisions are not determined in a single location. Programming instead emerges through ongoing interaction between state institutions and traditional authorities. This dual structure adds complexity to the decision-making process, as cultural concerns, spiritual considerations, and administrative demands must be reconciled simultaneously.

By drawing from Gibson and Connell's framework, the present study places festival programming inside a wider institutional system. This system encompasses cultural governance, traditional authority, and economic strategy. In practice, this provides a more context-specific framework for understanding festival operations as both cultural expressions and as institutional constructs, even when they are primarily perceived as cultural expressions.

In conclusion, Gibson and Connell (2012) give a fairly strong empirical base for seeing festivals as managed cultural systems, shaped by institutional, economic, and cultural forces. Their findings also suggest that programming sits at the center of how festival meaning gets built, and how cultural representation is presented.

Their attention, however, is mostly directed toward Western festival settings, leaving room for further work in non-Western contexts. This study responds to that gap by examining festival programming in Edo State, thereby contributing to a broader and more

globally grounded understanding of cultural production and of how institutions influence it in practice.

2.4.2 Scott's (2014) Study on "Institutions and Organizations Ideas Interests and Identities"

There is a significant body of contemporary empirical research on cultural production that has been shaped by the institutional framework developed by Scott, particularly his expanded analysis of how institutions structure meaning, legitimacy, and organizational behavior within cultural fields. Scott's work also offers a refined empirical view of how classification systems operate through linked regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive mechanisms, which in turn influence how cultural practices are produced, judged, and sustained within institutional environments (Scott 59).

What makes Scott's empirical contribution significant is that it moves attention away from isolated organizational behavior toward the wider institutional fields where cultural production is embedded. His argument demonstrates that cultural classification is not a neutral administrative routine; rather, it constitutes a socially constructed process of meaning-making that determines how cultural forms are recognized, valued, and legitimized. Institutions such as cultural ministries, arts councils, and heritage agencies contribute to these fields by establishing frameworks that define what counts as legitimate cultural expression and how such expression should be presented to the public.

One key empirical insight in Scott's approach is that legitimacy acts like the central mechanism through which classification systems operate. Cultural institutions tend to gain legitimacy when they align their actions with established rules, shared norms, and those taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. At the same time, they also reinforce the system back, by reproducing similar classification patterns across different cultural domains. Scott argues

that there is a reciprocal relationship between institutions and accepted forms of cultural production, in which organizations both shape and are shaped by what counts as legitimate cultural practice (Scott 64).

Scott's empirical analysis further demonstrates that classification systems operate through layered institutional pressures that shape decision-making within cultural organizations. Regulatory pressures arise from formal policies, funding requirements, and governmental oversight structures that define the operational boundaries of cultural institutions. Normative pressures stem from professional standards and shared expectations within the cultural sector, particularly those developed by cultural administrators, curators, and heritage professionals. Cultural-cognitive pressures operate at a deeper level, shaping taken-for-granted assumptions about authenticity, tradition, and cultural value.

Empirical studies built on Scott's framework show that these institutional pressures strongly affect cultural programming decisions, particularly when it comes to festival organization. Cultural institutions often select and organize performances in ways that mirror dominant institutional expectations related to cultural representation, audience engagement, and alignment with policy. In that sense, festivals do not just operate as cultural events; they also work as institutional platforms for producing and reinforcing cultural legitimacy, one that requires continual renewal.

Scott's framework also brings attention to the way institutional fields help create convergence among cultural organizations. Evidence from studies suggests that organizations within the same field frequently adopt similar classification systems, programming arrangements and even evaluative criteria. This convergence, is not always because of efficiency considerations. Instead, it is driven by shared institutional pressures that push

organizations toward similarity, which then becomes a legitimacy signal. Over time, this can contribute to standardization in cultural production, where festivals and cultural events increasingly resemble one another in structure and presentation.

Another important empirical dimension of Scott's work is his emphasis on institutional complexity. Cultural organizations rarely operate within a single institutional logic; instead, they navigate multiple logics that can sometimes pull in different directions. These include state regulation, professional standards, community expectations, and market pressures. This complexity is evident in cultural festival programming, where decisions must reconcile traditional authority arrangements, governmental cultural policies, and economic or tourism-related concerns.

In this sense, Scott's empirical framework offers a useful perspective for understanding the layered governance structures shaping cultural production in Nigeria, and in Edo State specifically. Cultural institutions are not fully self-governing agents; they are embedded within wider institutional environments that simultaneously constrain and enable their actions. These environments shape how cultural festivals are framed, arranged, and presented, affecting both what is selected for the program and how audiences are engaged.

A further thing that Scott brings is his awareness of institutional change. The empirical record suggests classification systems are not frozen, they shift and adjust over time because political priorities change, cultural values tilt, and economic conditions rearrange. In today's cultural governance, this shows up in a growing incorporation of digital technologies, cultural tourism approaches, and global cultural norms into local festival planning. These

developments point to an adaptive character in institutional systems, but they also underline how central those systems remain for structuring cultural production.

Scott's framework is especially relevant to the current study for grasping how festival programming works in Edo State. The Edo State Council for Arts and Culture and other bodies do not operate in a simple environment at all. Instead they sit inside a complicated institutional field where regulatory needs, long cultural traditions, and economic goals all meet. Within this institutional field, classification processes matter because they influence which cultural expressions appear in festival programs, how those expressions are staged, and how they are communicated to both local and international audiences.

Scott's concept of institutional legitimacy further clarifies this pattern. Cultural forms that more closely align with dominant institutional expectations are more likely to attract support, gain visibility, and receive official endorsement. This mechanism directly affects cultural representation, as it determines which traditions are foregrounded and which are marginalized within formal festival settings.

There is more. Scott's framework also helps to interpret the rising standardization we see in contemporary festival organization. When institutions face similar regulatory rules and normative pressures, festival structures often start to look alike. They converge in format, in

scheduling systems, and in the criteria used to judge performances. This can improve organizational coherence, yet it simultaneously brings up serious doubts about cultural diversity, and about the survival of localized cultural practices that are less aligned with the “main” templates.

In conclusion, Scott’s empirical institutional framework offers a robust contemporary foundation for understanding classification in cultural production. It demonstrates that cultural value does not exist independently but is constructed through institutional processes that define legitimacy, guide organizational behavior, and shape cultural representation. In the context of festival programming in Edo State, this framework offers a powerful analytical tool for examining how institutional forces influence cultural selection, organization, and presentation within festival environments.

2.4.3 Adeboye’s (2012) Study on “Cultural Festivals and Social Change in Nigeria”

Adeboye (2012), in the work titled “Cultural Festivals and Social Change in Nigeria”, provides a detailed empirical examination of how traditional festivals have evolved over time, and why they remain significant within Nigeria’s wider social and cultural landscape. The study aimed to examine how cultural festivals adapt to new social pressures, shifting economic realities, and political conditions, while continuing to function as spaces for identity formation and cultural display rather than mere entertainment.

The study fits into a larger conversation about cultural persistence and reshaping, demonstrating that festivals are not static. They function as institutions that, on one hand, seek to preserve tradition and, on the other, respond to modern influences. Adeboye’s focus

on Nigeria makes the findings particularly useful, given that the present study also examines festival programming, specifically within Edo State, establishing a direct connection between the two.

In terms of method, the study uses a qualitative and historical design. Adeboye draws from archival materials, ethnographic observations, plus interviews with people who participate in the festivals, cultural practitioners, and community leaders. This layered strategy helps in understanding both how festivals developed historically and how they are arranged in current times. By mixing historical tracing with field-like observation, Adeboye is able to map out noticeable trends of change, and also reflect what people do today during the festivals (Adeboye 52).

The findings of the study reveal that Nigerian cultural festivals have undergone significant transformation, particularly in relation to their organization and programming structures. Traditional festivals, which were historically governed by ritual sequences and communal participation, have increasingly incorporated formalized programming elements, including scheduled performances, staged presentations, and organized entertainment segments. This shift reflects the influence of modernization and changing audience expectations (Adeboye 54).

A key insight from Adeboye's study is that festival programming serves as a mechanism for negotiating continuity and change. While core ritual elements are often preserved, additional components are introduced to enhance the appeal and accessibility of festivals. These may include musical performances, cultural displays, and other forms of entertainment that extend beyond traditional practices. This process demonstrates the

adaptability of festivals, as they respond to evolving social contexts while maintaining their cultural significance.

The study further highlights the role of programming in shaping participation and audience engagement. By structuring events in ways that are more accessible and organized, festivals are able to attract broader audiences, including younger generations and external visitors. This expansion of participation contributes to the continued relevance of festivals within contemporary society, reinforcing their role as sites of cultural interaction and exchange (Adeboye 56).

Another important dimension of the study concerns the effect of external pressures, such as globalization, tourism, and media exposure. These pressures are shown to influence how festivals are organized and presented to the public, encouraging the incorporation of elements that are more visually striking and accessible to diverse audiences. As a result, programming becomes increasingly oriented toward performance and spectacle, reflecting wider patterns in cultural production.

Although Adeboye acknowledges the influence of these external factors, the study devotes relatively little attention to formal institutions and how they shape festival programming. The analysis remains focused primarily on cultural and social pressures, with limited consideration of the specific mechanisms through which government agencies and cultural organizations influence festival organization.

This emphasis constitutes a notable shortcoming, particularly in contexts where institutions play an active role in coordinating and supporting cultural events. Because institutional actors are not examined in detail, an important gap remains in understanding

where programming choices originate when decisions are made within established organizational structures.

Furthermore, although the study is useful for understanding Nigerian festivals broadly, it does not focus on specific regional settings such as Edo State. Given that regions in Nigeria are culturally distinct, this broader approach risks overlooking key local dynamics that shape festival programming.

Even with those problems, Adeboye's work still makes a meaningful contribution to the empirical literature, mainly by showing that festival programming is not static. It is a dynamic, adaptive process, formed by shifting social conditions and cultural interactions. The study reinforces the idea that programming is central to the evolution of festivals, influencing how they are structured, experienced, and sustained over time.

The relevance of this study to the current research lies primarily in its emphasis on the shift in festival programming within the Nigerian setting. The findings offer a useful foundation for understanding how festivals in Edo State may have evolved, potentially due to comparable pressures such as modernization and increased public participation.

The current study extends beyond Adeboye's earlier work by focusing specifically on institutional influence, particularly the involvement of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture. While Adeboye largely addresses what change produced, this study examines how that change occurs and who shapes it.

Within Edo State, festivals such as the Igue Festival are not organized through a single, straightforward process. They are structured through a layered arrangement involving both traditional authorities and state institutions. The intersection of these groups adds further complexity to festival programming, affecting coordination, regulation, and the distribution

of resources. These institutional realities are not fully addressed in Adeboye's work, underscoring the need for a more focused analysis.

By drawing on Adeboye's findings, the present study situates festival programming within a wider framework that brings together cultural and institutional forces. This approach enables a fuller understanding of how festivals are formed, while also illuminating the ongoing relationship between tradition, modernization, and institutional influence.

Adeboye's focus on festival adaptability also provides a practical lens for examining programming choices, including why certain decisions change as priorities and circumstances shift. The present study draws on this perspective in examining ESCAC, considering how institutional routines shape the transformation of festival programming in Edo State.

In summary, Adeboye's (2012) work presents solid empirical findings regarding the evolution of cultural festivals in Nigeria. It demonstrates that programming functions as a crucial instrument for both adaptation and continuity. The study also establishes that festivals are not static; they can respond to new social conditions without entirely losing their cultural meaning.

Nevertheless, the same study points to notable gaps, particularly regarding formal institutions and the need for closer analysis of specific local settings. By addressing these gaps, the current research contributes to the empirical record by offering a more focused examination of how institutions affect festival programming in Edo State. In doing so, it supports a richer understanding of how culture, programming, and institutional arrangements interconnect within the Nigerian context.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used for the study, outlining the systematic procedures applied to investigate festival programming and cultural governance across Edo State, Nigeria. It also explains the research design and justifies why this methodological approach was chosen to examine how institutional frameworks, cultural policy, traditional authority, and festival practices interact. The chapter further provides an account of how the data for the study were generated, gathered, and analyzed, in order to ensure validity, reliability, and academic rigor.

Also, the chapter talks about the study area and the population, along with the sampling techniques that were employed to pick out the key participants and institutions connected with festival organization and cultural management. It further spells out the methods of data collection, which can include interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis, depending on what exactly the research emphasis looks like. Sometimes, the boundaries between these methods are not super sharp, but they still aligned with the overall intent of the study.

In addition, the chapter highlights the steps for data analysis, and it explains how qualitative data or mixed data will be interpreted alongside the theoretical framework that

steers the study. Ethical issues are included as well, so the research stays within academic and professional standards, especially regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity.

The chapter ends by acknowledging possible limitations of the methodology, yet it still emphasizes that the approach remains fit for purpose, and it can help achieve the study objectives while answering the research questions in a solid way.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative research design, primarily because it seeks to develop an in-depth, context-responsive understanding of how institutional structures and cultural practices intertwine. A qualitative approach is generally well-suited to research aimed at uncovering meanings, interpretations, and social processes as they are experienced in everyday life. Rather than relying on numerical measurement, it favors thick, descriptive evidence that preserves the subtleties of human interaction and the symbolic dimensions of social life (Creswell 4). As this research examines how the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture influences festival programming, this method is necessary to reveal the layered processes that shape cultural production in practice rather than merely in theory.

The choice of a qualitative design is also supported by the nature of the research problem. Institutional influence on festival programming is not a fixed or easily quantifiable issue. It is instead an ongoing, complex process involving administrative choices, cultural values, historical memory, and the actions of human actors. These elements are embedded within particular socio-cultural settings and often manifest through informal routines, quiet negotiations, and symbolic behaviors. Quantitative methods may help map broad patterns or trends, but they typically fall short of capturing the deeper dimensions of meaning and lived

experience that underlie them. A qualitative approach therefore provides the methodological space needed to engage with the interpretive and process-oriented dimensions of cultural governance, rather than focusing solely on surface-level outputs.

The study sits within the interpretivist research paradigm, meaning it assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge emerges through the subjective experiences and interactions of individuals. Interpretivism challenges positivist assumptions of objectivity and universality by emphasizing the importance of context, meaning, and perspective in the production of knowledge. As Schwandt argues, interpretive inquiry seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their social world and how these meanings are shaped by cultural and institutional frameworks (Schwandt 118). This paradigm is particularly appropriate for the study of festivals, which are inherently symbolic and culturally embedded phenomena, where meanings are negotiated through performance, ritual, and collective participation.

Within this interpretive framework, the study uses ethnography and a case study approach as complementary qualitative strategies rather than as separate tools. Combining them allows for a wider analysis that captures both the lived experiences of cultural actors and the often less visible structural dynamics that operate through institutional processes.

Ethnography, as a methodological approach, is an immersive way of examining people, practices, and cultural systems within their natural settings. It relies on sustained engagement, participant observation, and the careful interpretation of social actions in relation to their cultural context. Hammersley and Atkinson describe ethnography as a research strategy oriented toward the “insider’s perspective,” offering insight into how cultural meanings are made, rehearsed, and sustained through everyday routines (Hammersley and Atkinson 3). In festival studies, ethnography proves especially useful because it allows the researcher to

observe performances, rituals, and interactions as they unfold, ensuring that the embodied and sensory dimensions of cultural expression are documented more faithfully. Through participant observation and direct involvement in festival life, this study records not only what occurs during festivals, but also how participants understand, negotiate, and respond to institutional interventions.

Alongside this, the case study method shifts attention to an intensive examination of a bounded system, still in its real-life environment. Yin defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that studies a contemporary phenomenon within its context, especially in cases where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly outlined (Yin 13). Here, the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture serves as the central case, providing a focused lens through which institutional influence on festival programming can be systematically analyzed. The case study approach allows for detailed exploration of organizational structures, policy frameworks, and decision-making processes, thereby offering insight into how institutional dynamics shape cultural outcomes.

Combining ethnography and case study methods is important both methodologically and analytically. Ethnography provides depth by centering on lived experience and cultural practice, while the case study approach contributes structural clarity by situating these practices within a particular institutional setting. This dual strategy moves beyond mere description, developing a more nuanced understanding of how festival programming is shaped simultaneously by cultural meaning and institutional pressure.

Blending these approaches also supports triangulation, which strengthens the credibility of the findings. The study draws on multiple data sources and perspectives, allowing interpretations to be cross-checked rather than relying on a single viewpoint. This

methodological care helps ensure that the analysis remains firmly grounded in context while maintaining analytical rigor.

Overall, the qualitative research design used here is not simply a method selection, it is more like a deliberate and theoretically aware decision that matches the research question, the interpretivist paradigm, and the study goals. With ethnography and a case study working together, the research can catch the messy complexity of festival programming as both a cultural process and also an institutional one. As a result, it gives a rich, and multidimensional analysis of how the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture is involved in shaping contemporary cultural practices in Edo State.

3.3 Study Area

The study is carried out in Edo State, Nigeria, a place that is widely known for its long historical depth, cultural intricacy, and steady traditions related to art and ceremony. Edo State sits in the South-South geopolitical zone, so it has a meaningful place inside Nigeria's cultural scene, not only because of where it is located, but also because of its past link to the Benin Kingdom. The Benin Kingdom is widely viewed as one of the most refined precolonial political and cultural systems in West Africa. Even now, this background still affects day to day cultural practices, especially when it comes to festivals, performance traditions, and the ways cultural authority is organized or understood.

The Benin Kingdom, with a history spanning several centuries, is renowned for its tightly organized sociopolitical structure, complex artistic traditions, and rich ceremonial life. In this setting, festivals are not merely routine events; they are woven into the cosmological, political, and social workings of the community, serving multiple functions simultaneously,

including the reaffirmation of royal power, the honoring of ancestors, and the strengthening of shared communal identity. Scholars such as Bradbury and Nevadomsky have highlighted how ritual performance and symbolic expression occupy a central place in Benin culture, with festivals functioning as meaningful spaces where history, authority, and spiritual life converge. This continuing thread makes Edo State a particularly strong case for examining how traditional cultural systems relate to modern institutional frameworks in a genuinely connected, rather than superficial, manner.

Benin City, the capital of Edo State, serves as the principal locus of this study. It functions as both an administrative and cultural hub, hosting the headquarters of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, and thus also serves as the epicenter of organized cultural activities within the state. The city is also home to major royal institutions, including the palace of the Oba of Benin, which continues to hold significant influence over how key festivals are arranged and legitimized. Because so many institutional, political, and cultural actors are concentrated in Benin City, the city offers a strategic vantage point for understanding how festival programming is shaped by the interaction between state agencies and traditional authorities.

The Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) constitutes the core institutional focus of this study. As a government-established body, ESCAC is tasked with overseeing the development, promotion, and regulation of cultural activities across the state. Its role extends beyond administrative coordination to include cultural preservation, heritage management, and the promotion of tourism. In practice, this means the council is deeply involved in planning, financing, and structuring festivals, while working alongside multiple stakeholders, including community groups, traditional institutions, and private sponsors. ESCAC therefore

sits at the intersection of policy, culture, and economic development, making it an important focal point for examining how institutional influence manifests in everyday decisions.

Importantly, ESCAC does not work by itself; it sits inside a wider network of cultural governance that includes traditional authorities, local communities, and external actors, producing a complex and interconnected system. As a result of this multi-layered structure, festival programming is shaped through negotiation, gradual adaptation, and at times outright contestation. The study area is therefore not merely a geographic location but a socio-cultural and institutional space where different forms of authority overlap and a variety of cultural expressions coexist.

The research examines selected festivals connected to ESCAC, including royal festivals, community-driven celebrations, and state-sponsored events. Royal festivals, such as those tied to the Benin monarchy, help illustrate how institutional frameworks intersect with deeply embedded traditional practices. Community festivals, in contrast, offer insight into grassroots cultural expression and everyday participation, often revealing tensions between indigenous governance systems and the institutional involvement that seeks to shape them. State-sponsored events, meanwhile, illustrate how festivals are organized and presented within formal administrative structures, frequently linked to tourism objectives, media representation, and policy priorities.

The selection of these festivals is guided by their relevance to the research objectives, particularly in explaining how programming decisions are made, implemented, and experienced across different levels of cultural organization. Examining multiple festival types also allows the study to identify variations in institutional involvement and recurring

patterns of influence that might not be apparent if the analysis were confined to a single type of event.

Selecting Edo State as the study area is also analytically significant because it provides a setting in which traditional cultural systems remain highly visible and influential even within a modern state framework. This coexistence of indigenous practices and institutional governance creates a distinctive environment for exploring the central concerns of this research: the ways institutional frameworks shape, refine, or interact with existing cultural practices.

In sum, the study area offers a rich and shifting context for investigating the relationship between cultural institutions and festival programming. Its historical depth, institutional entanglement, and the variety of cultural expressions make it especially fit for addressing the research questions, and for generating insights that can feed into wider debates on cultural governance and policy in African contexts.

3.4 Population of the Study

The population of this study includes a range of individuals and groups, both directly and indirectly tied to how festivals are organized, administered, and performed in Edo State. Because the research relies on qualitative and interpretive logic, “population” is not treated as a purely statistical matter. It is instead understood as a network of meaningful actors whose lived experiences, responsibilities, and viewpoints help explain the phenomenon being studied. Population is therefore defined by relevance and function to festival programming and by the degree of institutional influence involved, rather than by sheer numbers.

At the center of this population are officials of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture. They hold crucial administrative and decision related positions within the

institutional setup. These officials are involved in policy formulation, planning activities, funding decisions, and the coordination of festival undertakings in general. For this reason, their participation matters greatly, it helps to make sense of the internal ways programming choices are imagined and later carried out, plus the institutional interests that guide cultural production.

Beyond institutional figures, the study also brings in festival organizers and coordinators who work at the boundary between policy and day to day practice. They handle the task of turning institutional instructions into actual programming results. In doing so, they often have to juggle logistical, financial, and cultural issues, while also negotiating the pressures that come along with them. Their insights, in other words, support a clearer understanding of how policies get translated into practice, and how different challenges are handled when events are actually happening.

Cultural performers, including dancers, musicians, and troupe leaders, constitute another significant part of the study population. As the primary vehicles of cultural expression, they are directly affected by programming choices, particularly regarding how performances are structured, what content is presented, and how compensation is handled. Their lived experiences therefore offer a valuable lens for understanding how institutional influence manifests at the performance level, and how it may shape or constrain artistic and cultural expression in practice.

The study also includes traditional authorities, such as chiefs, palace representatives, and other custodians of indigenous knowledge systems. In many African settings, including Edo State, these actors hold cultural and spiritual legitimacy that predates the modern state or

operates in parallel with it. Their involvement in festival organization is often rooted in customary law, ritual authority, and historical continuity. Including traditional authorities in the study enables closer examination of how indigenous governance systems interact with modern institutional frameworks, particularly regarding questions of authority, authenticity, and cultural ownership.

The study also includes community members who actively participate in festival events, whether as organizers, volunteers, or audience members. These individuals reflect the broader social context within which festivals are embedded, and their perspectives are essential for understanding participation patterns, inclusivity, and the continued cultural relevance of the festival. Community members often experience the effects of programming decisions differently from institutional actors, making their inclusion important for achieving a more complete, rather than purely top-down, understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Sponsors and other stakeholders in cultural events also constitute part of the study population. These actors, which may include corporate organizations, private donors, and media partners, play an increasingly influential role in shaping festival programming, particularly regarding funding, branding, and audience engagement. Their presence reflects broader trends toward commercialization and public-private cooperation in cultural governance, and their perspectives provide insight into the economic dimensions of festival organization.

The inclusion of these varied groups is guided by the understanding that festival programming is not a singular process but a multi-layered one, involving numerous actors with different responsibilities, motives, and degrees of influence. By engaging participants

across institutional, traditional, and community levels, the study is better able to trace the complex relationships that shape, and are shaped by, cultural production in Edo State.

Worth noting, the population selection is not meant to chase statistical representativeness. Instead, it is designed to secure analytical depth and practical relevance. Because qualitative research usually leans on the richness, and the context of the data, the attention is on pulling out detailed, meaningful perspectives from participants who are informed and actively involved in the phenomenon under examination. This fits with the interpretivist paradigm supporting the research, where understanding matters more than generalization.

Overall, the population of this study illustrates how festival programming is interconnected, both culturally and institutionally. By including this wide range of actors, the study is well positioned to examine how institutional influence is constructed, negotiated, and experienced at different stages of cultural engagement. This comprehensive approach strengthens the study's credibility and depth, grounding the findings in the lived realities of those directly involved in festival practices in Edo State.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

For the participants, this study employs purposive sampling as the primary approach, consistent with the qualitative and interpretivist orientation of the research. Purposive sampling involves the intentional selection of individuals identified because they possess relevant knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the situation being studied. As Creswell explains, this strategy is well suited to qualitative work, where the focus is on depth of understanding rather than broad coverage or statistical representativeness (Creswell 155). In this study, participants are selected according to their level of engagement in festival

programming, cultural administration, and performance-related practices within Edo State, ensuring that the data produced remains firmly rooted in context and analytically meaningful.

To capture diverse yet focused perspectives, the study employs a form of maximum variation sampling within a purposive structure, combining intentionality with sufficient breadth. In practice, participants are selected from key stakeholder categories that reflect the multi-layered nature of festival programming, including an official from the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, a festival organizer, a cultural performer, a representative of traditional authority, and a community participant. Including these distinct categories allows the study to address the institutional, performative, indigenous, and communal dimensions of festival practice. Rather than pursuing numerical variety, the aim is conceptual diversity, enabling examination of how institutional influence is experienced, shaped, and reinterpreted from contrasting positions within the cultural ecosystem.

Snowball sampling is also employed as a complementary approach, primarily to strengthen the strategic selection of participants, particularly when identifying individuals with specialized or insider knowledge that may not be immediately apparent. The process typically begins with an initial key informant, often an institutional official or a well-known festival coordinator, who is asked to suggest other individuals with relevant experience in festival organization or participation. Referrals are not accepted automatically; each individual is assessed against explicit inclusion criteria, including their depth of involvement in festival programming, familiarity with institutional processes, and relevance of their experience to the research questions. This ensures that the sampling remains purposeful and analytically driven, rather than random or merely convenient.

Importantly, multiple referral pathways are considered to prevent over-reliance on a single network or standpoint. By involving participants from different stakeholder positions, the study reduces the likelihood of bias and strengthens the trustworthiness of the data. This layered sampling approach reflects an awareness that cultural governance is often complex and hierarchical, with access to knowledge distributed unevenly across actors, so not everyone can “see” the same things.

The study uses a sample size of five participants. That choice is methodologically intentional and also linked to theory. Sure, five might look small if someone is thinking in quantitative terms, but in qualitative research the emphasis is more on depth, richness and analytical insight rather than on numerical scale. As Guest, Bunce, and Johnson note, smaller samples can still work in qualitative studies, particularly when the research question is tightly focused and the participants are chosen deliberately for their relevance, and expertise (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 74). In this study, each participant acts like a pivotal node within the festival programming network, which helps the information gathered feel both intensive and genuinely meaningful.

The rationale for this sample size is further strengthened by the study’s focused scope. It centers on a single institutional case, specifically the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture. Within this bounded context, the goal is not to generalize findings across multiple situations, but rather to build a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how institutional processes operate and how they shape culture in practice. The selected participants, by virtue of their positions and experiences, provide access to key dimensions of this process, making it possible to achieve analytical saturation within a relatively small sample.

The concept of data saturation is central to this justification. Saturation occurs when additional data no longer generate new themes or insights, but instead reflect recurring patterns already identified. In studies involving knowledgeable participants and multiple data collection methods, saturation can often be reached with a smaller number of participants. In this study, semi-structured interviews are supplemented by participant observation and document analysis, together generating sufficiently rich material for thorough thematic exploration. The triangulation of these approaches reduces the need for a larger participant group, as findings can be corroborated across different sources.

Qualitative interviewing also tends to be intensive in a specific sense, as it involves sustained engagement, follow-up probing, and interpretive processing. Consequently, smaller samples are both manageable and methodologically appropriate. Each participant receives sufficient attention to allow the researcher to examine their lived experience, viewpoints, and interpretations in depth. This emphasis on depth improves data quality and supports the development of sound analytical conclusions.

All things considered, the sampling approach used in this study keeps a balanced tension between variation and depth, making sure key perspectives are present while still staying focused on analytical rigor. Using purposive sampling, maximum variation, and snowball techniques gives a practical route for picking participants who can best illuminate the research question. The sample size of five is modest, sure, but within the qualitative framework it is still defensible, and it should be enough to meet the study's aims. With this strategy the research produces rich, credible, and contextually anchored findings on the institutional influence of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture on festival programming.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Data for this study are generated through several qualitative approaches, which is necessary given the complexity of the research problem and the need for a nuanced understanding of institutional influence on festival programming from more than one angle. In practice, the study relies on semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis as the principal methods of data collection. This integration is not arbitrary; it is based on the principle of methodological triangulation, which strengthens qualitative research credibility, depth, and overall trustworthiness, as findings can be checked or supported across different sources and viewpoints (Denzin 291).

The choice of these methods aligns closely with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning the study. This paradigm emphasizes that social phenomena should be understood through the meanings people attach to them and through how participants experience those phenomena. Each method is therefore designed to capture a distinct yet related dimension of the same problem. Interviews provide access to participants' perspectives and interpretations, while observation offers a direct view of everyday practice and the interactions surrounding it. Document analysis adds a further layer by revealing formal structures, policy decisions, and institutional narratives that may not be explicitly articulated. Taken together, these methods enable a comprehensive exploration of festival programming as both cultural practice and administrative routine, rather than examining either dimension in isolation.

Semi-structured interviews are the main data collection method used in this study. This format works especially well for qualitative research because it keeps some structure but still stays flexible. The researcher can steer the discussion, but participants still get the room to

expand on the topics they feel matter most. An interview guide is developed to ensure consistency across participants, focusing on key themes such as institutional policies, decision-making processes, funding mechanisms, programming practices, and experiences of participation. At the same time, the open-ended nature of the questions allows for the emergence of unanticipated insights, thereby enriching the data.

The use of semi-structured interviews is especially important, given the small and carefully selected sample size of the study. Each participant is engaged in depth, with interviews designed to elicit detailed narratives and reflective accounts of their involvement in festival programming. Interviews are conducted face-to-face where possible, allowing for observation of non-verbal cues and the building of rapport, both of which are essential for generating rich qualitative data. With participants' consent, interviews are audio-recorded and later transcribed to maintain accuracy and to support more rigorous analysis.

Participant observation works as a complementary method, it lets the researcher step right into festival activities and the related institutional processes in their natural surroundings. This approach is especially useful when studying cultural practices, because meaning is often tucked inside performance, interaction, and lived embodied experience. Through observation, the researcher can note how festivals get organized, how performances are shaped, and how various actors coordinate within the programming process. This covers attending festival events and rehearsals, and where there is access, even planning meetings that are coordinated by institutional actors.

The strength of participant observation lies in its ability to capture elements of social life that may not be fully articulated in interviews. As Spradley suggests, observation enables the researcher to move beyond what people say and examine what they actually do,

producing a more complete understanding of cultural practices (Spradley 54). Field notes are then recorded systematically to capture what was observed, the surrounding context, and emerging analytical insights. These notes form an important component of the dataset, contributing to the interpretation and validation of interview findings.

Document analysis constitutes the third method of data collection, focusing on the examination of relevant textual and archival materials related to festival programming and cultural administration. In practice, these documents include policy statements, official reports, festival schedules, funding records, sponsorship agreements, and media publications. Taken together, they provide insight into the formal and institutional dimensions of festival organization, including stated goals, regulatory systems, and patterns of resource allocation over time.

Document analysis is also significant because it helps reveal the gap between what institutions state and what they actually do in practice. Interviews and observations capture lived experiences and everyday interactions, but documents show how festivals are framed, organized, and defended within official discourse. As Bowen argues, document analysis works well in qualitative research because it enables verification of information and highlights consistencies and discrepancies across different data sources (Bowen 29). In this study, the documents are examined critically in order to identify themes related to policy direction, programming focus, and institutional influence.

Using these three methods together creates a stronger and multi-angled way of collecting data. When the study brings in participants' viewpoints, watches cultural practices, and also reviews institutional records, it can produce a fairly complete account of festival programming in Edo State. This triangulated method supports credibility, but it also adds

analytical depth, so the research can better explain the back and forth between cultural expression, and the structures that sit behind it, in institutions.

Employing multiple methods also helps mitigate the limitations inherent in each individual approach. For example, biases that may arise from self-reported interview data are balanced with observational evidence and documentary sources, while the contextual richness gained from observation is paired with the interpretive depth offered by interviews. This methodological combination reflects a careful and reflective research design, ensuring that the data gathered remain both dependable and meaningful, rather than merely present.

Overall, the data collection methods used here were not randomly chosen, they were picked on purpose and then applied in a systematic way to meet the study objectives. Taken together, they allow the work to go past a surface-level account and instead deliver an analysis that is firmly grounded in how institutional influence actually shapes festival programming, especially within the Edo State setting.

Even though the study is analytically focused on festival programming in Edo State from 2010 to 2025, the main fieldwork for this research happened within only six months, from March through August 2025. That difference is meant to show the gap between the wider time span the study examines, and the specific window in which the data were collected.

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews serve as the central method of generating data in this study, and they are well suited to topics involving complex social processes within qualitative research. What makes this approach particularly useful in interpretive work is that it supports in-depth conversation about participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and meaning-

making, while allowing sufficient flexibility for the research context to emerge in its full complexity. As Kvale and Brinkmann contend, qualitative interviewing is not only a method for gathering information; it is also a form of ongoing meaning-making in which knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and the participant (Kvale and Brinkmann 6). For this study, this is significant because the focus is on how various actors interpret and experience institutional influence on festival programming in practice rather than merely in theory.

The semi-structured format offers a balance, it keeps some consistency but it also stays open. In other words the researcher can steer the dialogue around key thematic areas, but at the same time remain responsive to each participant's singular standpoint. This flexibility seems essential here, since the participants are diverse: their roles stretch from institutional officials to cultural practitioners, and also community members. With open-ended questions, people can explain their experiences in their own words and frame, which then helps produce data that is detailed and nuanced. And importantly, this data may not surface as easily in more rigid, structured approaches.

An interview guide is carefully constructed to maintain coherence across interviews while preserving the exploratory character of the method. The guide is organized around core themes derived from the research objectives, including institutional policies and frameworks, decision-making processes, funding and sponsorship dynamics, the structuring of programming, and the relationship between traditional authorities and state institutions. These themes are not treated as fixed categories but as starting points for conversation, allowing participants to elaborate on issues they consider most significant. Throughout the interviews, probing techniques are used to clarify responses, examine underlying

assumptions, and draw out richer insights, thereby strengthening the analytical depth of the data. The interviews are conducted in a manner intended to encourage open, thoughtful dialogue, primarily through face-to-face conversations held in settings familiar and comfortable to participants, such as institutional offices, cultural centers, or community spaces. This approach facilitates rapport and allows the researcher to attend to non-verbal cues, which can add further meaning to participants' responses. Where physical access is difficult or limited, alternative methods such as telephone or virtual interviews are used to maintain data collection while respecting ethical requirements and practical considerations. The relatively small sample size of the study further enhances the depth of engagement, as each participant is given sufficient time and attention to provide detailed and reflective accounts of their experiences.

Ethical considerations are embedded throughout the interview process. Before each interview, participants are informed of the aims of the study, their role, and their rights, including the option to decline participation or withdraw at any stage. Written informed consent is obtained prior to the interview, and participants are assured that their information will be treated confidentially and anonymized in the presentation of findings. With participants' consent, interviews are audio-recorded to ensure accurate capture of responses and to facilitate subsequent detailed analysis. This recording reduces the risk of data loss and allows the researcher to remain present in the conversation rather than relying on extensive note-taking during the interview. Alongside the audio recordings, field notes are taken during and immediately after each interview to capture contextual details, non-verbal expressions, and initial reflections. These notes serve as a complementary resource, contributing to a more comprehensive and interpretive understanding of the material. The information generated

through semi-structured interviews forms the empirical core of the study. Because this approach provides access to the views of key actors engaged in festival programming, the research is able to surface the meanings, incentives, and power relations that shape institutional practices. When paired with other sources, such as observation and document analysis, these interview insights contribute to a more robust and triangulated understanding of the research problem.

Overall, the use of semi-structured interviews in this study reflects a careful and theory-led methodological approach. Their flexibility, depth, and interpretive texture make them especially suited to examining the intricate relationship between institutional structures and cultural practices, directly supporting the broader analytical aims of the research.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions

In this study, focus group discussions are incorporated as an additional qualitative approach, providing a complementary lens for capturing collective viewpoints and tracking how understandings of festival programming are constructed through everyday social interaction. Unlike one-to-one interviews, which tend to prioritize personal narratives and reflective accounts, focus groups create an interactive setting where participants respond to one another, revealing the social dynamics behind opinions and the points at which agreement or disagreement emerge. As Morgan notes, focus groups are particularly useful not only for uncovering what people think, but also for understanding how and why those viewpoints develop within a shared social setting (Morgan 12). This method is especially relevant to a study concerned with cultural practice and institutional influence, since meanings are often negotiated collectively rather than formed solely within individual experience.

Within this research context, focus group discussions are organized to pick up the collective, dialogic dimensions of festival life, especially for actors who operate within comparable cultural or organizational spaces. Participants are purposively arranged according to related roles or common experiences, for instance cultural performers or community participants, so interaction feels more meaningful and shared narratives actually have room to emerge. This grouping strategy allows participants to draw on common frames of reference, thereby enriching the discussion and generating insights into collective understandings of festival programming and institutional involvement.

Because the study adopts an overall qualitative approach with a relatively modest sample, only a small number of focus group sessions are conducted. Each group is deliberately composed to prioritize depth over broad coverage. Sessions typically include three to five participants, a size that balances active engagement with coherent discussion. Smaller groups are particularly effective in this context, as they support sustained involvement among participants and allow the researcher to attend closely to emerging themes.

A discussion guide is prepared to give some shape and direction to the focus group meetings, but it still leaves room for freer exploration. The guide is laid out around main thematic areas that come from the research goals, such as accounts of attending festivals, views on how institutions show up, how programming is actually done, and how traditional decision practices relate to more formal governance systems. The questions are worded to invite back and forth conversation and reflection, so participants can pick up on each other's comments, and they can clearly explain where they see agreement as well as where they part ways.

The researcher takes on the role of moderator, meaning they facilitate the conversation in a way that keeps a balance between steady structure and openness. This includes encouraging input from everyone in the room, handling any more vocal members who might dominate, and building an atmosphere where participants feel safe sharing a range of perspectives. Special care is taken regarding the ethical and interpersonal sides of the group setting, so that what gets discussed remains respectful, and also non coercive at all times. The moderator also remains attentive to group interactions, noting moments of consensus, disagreement, or tension, as these interactions often provide valuable insight into underlying social and cultural dynamics.

With the informed consent of participants, focus group discussions are audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of the conversation. In addition, detailed field notes are taken to capture non-verbal cues, group dynamics, and contextual factors that may not be fully reflected in the audio recordings. These notes are essential for interpreting the data, as they provide insight into the relational aspects of the discussion, including patterns of agreement, hesitation, and emphasis.

The inclusion of focus group discussions enhances the methodological rigor of the study by complementing the depth of individual interviews with a broader understanding of shared experiences and collective meaning-making. While interviews provide detailed individual perspectives, focus groups reveal how these perspectives are shaped, reinforced, or contested within a social context. This dual approach allows the study to capture both the individual and communal dimensions of festival programming, thereby providing a more comprehensive analysis of institutional influence.

Furthermore, the use of focus groups contributes to triangulation by introducing an additional layer of data that can be compared and integrated with findings from interviews, observation, and document analysis. This strengthens the credibility of the research by enabling the identification of consistencies and discrepancies across different sources of data.

In sum, focus group discussions serve as a valuable methodological tool in this study, providing insight into the collective processes through which cultural meanings and institutional experiences are constructed and negotiated. Their integration within the broader research design reflects a deliberate effort to capture the complexity of festival programming as both an individual and socially embedded phenomenon.

3.6.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation is adopted in this study as a key qualitative method for generating firsthand, contextually grounded insights into festival practices and institutional processes. This method involves the researcher's direct engagement with the field, enabling the observation of social actions, interactions, and cultural performances as they occur in their natural settings. Within qualitative research, participant observation is particularly valued for its capacity to capture the lived realities of participants beyond what can be articulated in interviews, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of social phenomena. As Spradley notes, observation allows the researcher to move beyond reported behavior to examine actual practices, routines, and interactions within their cultural context (Spradley 3).

The relevance of participant observation to this study lies in the performative and embodied nature of festivals. Cultural meaning within festivals is not only expressed verbally but is also enacted through ritual actions, symbolic gestures, spatial arrangements, and

patterns of participation. Consequently, reliance solely on interview data would be insufficient for capturing the full complexity of festival programming. Participant observation enables the researcher to document how institutional decisions are translated into practice, how performances are structured and sequenced, and how different actors interact within the festival space.

In the course of the study, the researcher attends selected festival events, preparatory activities, and institutional engagements related to festival organization. These include rehearsals, planning interactions, and live performances. Such settings provide opportunities to observe the dynamics of programming in action, including the coordination of events, the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, and the interaction between institutional representatives and community participants. Particular attention is paid to the sequencing of performances, the allocation of roles, patterns of audience engagement, and the extent to which institutional actors influence or regulate the flow of activities.

The researcher adopts a moderate participant-as-observer role, maintaining a balance between engagement and analytical distance. This positioning allows for meaningful interaction with participants while preserving the objectivity necessary for systematic observation. It also facilitates access to informal conversations and backstage processes that are often not visible in formal settings, thereby enriching the data with insights into the underlying mechanisms of festival programming.

Data generated through participant observation are systematically documented through detailed field notes. These notes consist of both descriptive and reflective components. The descriptive aspect captures observable events, actions, and interactions in as much detail as possible, including sequences of activities, spatial arrangements, and patterns of participation.

The reflective component, on the other hand, records the researcher's interpretations, impressions, and emerging analytical insights. This dual approach ensures that the data retain both empirical richness and interpretive depth.

The process of recording field notes is continuous and iterative, with observations documented during and immediately after each field engagement to ensure accuracy and completeness. Attention is also given to contextual factors, such as the social environment, institutional presence, and audience composition, as these elements shape the meaning and organization of festival activities.

Participant observation significantly enhances the depth and credibility of the study by providing empirical evidence of how festival programming is enacted in practice. It enables the researcher to compare observed behaviors with participants' accounts obtained through interviews and focus group discussions, thereby identifying consistencies, contradictions, and gaps between discourse and practice. This comparative dimension is critical for understanding the complexities of institutional influence, as it reveals not only what stakeholders say but also what they do within the festival context.

Furthermore, the integration of participant observation within the broader methodological framework contributes to triangulation, strengthening the validity of the findings. By combining observational data with interview narratives and documentary evidence, the study is able to develop a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of festival programming and institutional dynamics.

In sum, participant observation serves as an indispensable methodological tool in this research, offering direct access to the performative, interactive, and organizational dimensions of festivals. Its inclusion reflects a commitment to methodological rigor and

depth, ensuring that the study captures the complexity of cultural practices as they are experienced and enacted within their real-life context.

3.6.4 Document Analysis

Document analysis is used here as a key qualitative approach for examining existing textual and archival materials related to festival programming and institutional operations. In qualitative research, documents are not treated as neutral records; they are socially constructed texts that reflect the intentions, priorities, and power structures of the institutions that produce them. As Bowen explains, document analysis offers a systematic process for reviewing and interpreting documents in order to extract meaning, develop understanding, and gain empirical insight (Bowen 27). This is particularly useful when the study focuses on institutional influence, because official narratives and written practices can significantly shape how cultural processes unfold.

Using document analysis in this research has several aims. First it gives contextual and historical grounding that places current festival programming inside wider institutional and policy structures. Second, it supports checking and confirming information that comes from interviews and participant observation, which in turn helps bolster the trustworthiness of the results. Third, it reveals structured routines, guidelines, and representations that might not be fully stated by participants but are still tucked into institutional documentation.

The specific documents chosen for analysis cover a range of material that fits the research goals. This includes official reports, policy documents, festival programmes, administrative records, archival materials, and also media publications. Each category of document contributes a distinct perspective to the study. Policy documents and official reports provide insight into institutional mandates, strategic priorities, and regulatory

frameworks. Festival programmes and schedules reveal how events are structured and presented, offering concrete evidence of programming decisions. Administrative and financial records shed light on resource allocation and organizational processes, while archival materials provide historical continuity and trace changes over time. Media reports, on the other hand, offer representations of festivals as communicated to the public, reflecting both institutional narratives and broader societal perceptions.

The selection of documents is guided by relevance, authenticity, and accessibility, rather than the inclusion of any available material. Generally, only materials with a direct bearing on festival programming, institutional decisions, or cultural representation are included. The aim is to ensure that the documents are credible and drawn from reliable sources, thereby supporting the overall trustworthiness of the data. At the same time, the researcher remains attentive to the possibility that documents can reflect institutional biases, uneven reporting, or strategic presentation, and are therefore approached with an interpretive and analytical mindset rather than accepted at face value.

The document analysis process follows a systematic yet iterative approach. Texts are read closely, often multiple times, in order to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories relevant to the research questions. Particular attention is given to policy directives, programming structure, funding priorities, institutional language, and how cultural events are framed or portrayed. Through this process, the researcher is able to surface both explicit statements and underlying assumptions that shape institutional practice.

Beyond thematic work, the study also takes account of discursive dimensions, meaning it looks at how language is used to shape cultural activities and define institutional

roles. This involves analyzing terminology, the underlying narratives, and the symbolic representations in general

Document analysis further helps identify consistencies and discrepancies between formal records and actual practice. By comparing documentary evidence with data gathered from interviews and participant observation, the study can reveal gaps between policy and practice, or between intention and implementation. This comparative approach is important for understanding institutional influence, as it makes visible the ways official frameworks are interpreted, modified, or contested in everyday settings.

Combining document analysis with other methods further strengthens methodological triangulation. Because the study draws on multiple data sources, it achieves greater analytical depth and credibility, ensuring that conclusions are not based on a single standpoint but rely on converging lines of evidence. This multi-source approach makes it possible to reach a fuller, more nuanced understanding of festival programming and the institutional dynamics that shape it.

Overall, document analysis functions as a key component of the research methodology. It provides access to institutional knowledge, historical context, and the formal ways in which cultural practices are represented. When used systematically yet interpretively, it strengthens the study's rigor and contributes to a more balanced understanding of how institutional structures relate to festival programming in Edo State.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data generated in this study are analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytical approach that supports the identification, interpretation, and organization of patterns of meaning within complex datasets. In interpretive research, analysis is not merely

a technical step but an intellectually rigorous process through which raw data are transformed into meaningful insights. Thematic analysis is particularly well suited to this study because it can accommodate multiple forms of qualitative material while offering flexibility and supporting depth of interpretation. As Braun and Clarke argue, thematic analysis provides a systematic yet adaptable structure for analyzing qualitative data in a manner that preserves contextual richness while enabling conceptual clarity (Braun and Clarke 79).

The analytical process actually starts with preparing and organizing the dataset. All interviews and focus group discussions are transcribed verbatim, so that accuracy is maintained and the integrity of participants' expressions stays intact. Verbatim transcription captures not only what participants say, but also smaller features like pauses, emphases, and tonal shifts, which can indicate meaningful layers of information. These transcripts are then read together with field notes that are produced through participant observation and with materials sourced from document analysis, which results in a more complete, multi-layered dataset. Bringing these different sources together shows the study's commitment to triangulation, and this in turn improves the reliability of the analysis.

After transcription, the researcher moves into an intensive phase of familiarization. This part means repeated, careful reading of all the materials, with the aim of building a deep and whole understanding of the content. Familiarization is not a passive activity but an active and reflective engagement with the data, during which initial impressions, recurring patterns, and notable contradictions begin to emerge. Attention is directed not only to what participants say but also to how they articulate their experiences, including the language, metaphors, and emphases employed in their narratives. This interpretive sensitivity is

essential for capturing the nuanced meanings embedded within cultural and institutional contexts.

The coding process constitutes a central step in the analysis, in which data are organized into meaningful segments. Coding involves identifying portions of the text relevant to the research questions and assigning them descriptive or conceptual labels. In this study, coding employs a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive coding allows themes to emerge naturally from the data, ensuring that participants' voices remain central to the analysis. Deductive coding, in contrast, is guided by the study's theoretical framework, drawing on concepts such as institutional isomorphism, performance structures, and postcolonial cultural governance. Combining these approaches produces an analysis that is both empirically grounded and theoretically informed.

As coding progresses, related codes are systematically compared and organized into broader thematic groupings. This stage involves identifying similarities and differences across the dataset and tracing connections between codes. Theme-building is iterative and reflexive, involving continuous movement between the raw data and emerging interpretations. Themes are adjusted, merged, or renamed as needed to capture the complexity of the data while remaining aligned with the research objectives. This process reflects what qualitative scholars describe as a "constant comparative method," in which analytic categories are continually tested against the data to support validity and coherence.

Finally, interpretation constitutes the most critical part of the analysis, in which the identified themes are examined alongside the broader conceptual and theoretical concerns of the study. At this stage, the analysis moves beyond description toward explanation, seeking to uncover the underlying meanings, assumptions, and power dynamics that shape

participants' experiences. The themes are interpreted in light of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two, particularly in relation to institutional control, the performative structuring of cultural expression, and the historical dynamics of postcolonial governance. This theoretically informed interpretation enables the study to situate its findings within wider academic debates, thereby enhancing its scholarly contribution.

Throughout the analytical process, particular attention is given to rigor, transparency, and credibility. Data from interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and document analysis are systematically compared and cross-referenced to identify convergences and divergences that might not otherwise be apparent. This triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings by ensuring that conclusions are supported by multiple types of evidence rather than a single source. The researcher also maintains a reflexive stance, remaining aware that personal perspectives can influence data interpretation. This reflexivity is important in interpretive research, as the researcher is not external to the process but an active participant in producing knowledge.

The analytical approach used in this study also assumes that meaning is not some static object. It is constructed, through social interaction and institutional processes, and it changes depending on who is speaking, and how. So the analysis looks closely at the ways participants negotiate, contest, and then reproduce meanings, especially around festival programming. This means examining how institutional narratives are told, how cultural practices get framed and then reinterpreted, and how various actors locate themselves inside structures of power, authority, and sometimes quiet pressure.

In sum, thematic analysis offers a rigorous, coherent framework for dealing with all the complexity in the data collected in this study. It is flexible enough to bring together

multiple data sources, while still using systematic procedures that keep analytical depth and consistency on track. By mixing inductive sensitivity with theoretical insight, the method supports a more nuanced investigation of the link between institutional structures and cultural practices, and, in the end, a comprehensive understanding of festival programming within the context of Edo State.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, the conventional notions of validity and reliability are reframed through the concept of trustworthiness, which emphasizes credibility, dependability, confirmability, and the overall coherence of the research process. Unlike quantitative work, which relies heavily on measurement and repetition, qualitative inquiry is more attuned to depth, authenticity, and the contextual appropriateness of its findings. Lincoln and Guba argue that trustworthiness offers a more suitable framework for evaluating qualitative research, as it accounts for the interpretive and socially constructed nature of knowledge (Lincoln and Guba 290). For this study, which examines how institutions shape festival programming, maintaining trustworthiness is essential to producing results that are analytically rigorous while remaining grounded in participants' lived experiences.

One main move used to strengthen credibility is triangulation. In practice this means bringing together several kinds of data and ways of collecting them, like semi-structured interviews, focus group conversations, participant observation, and also document examination. When those different approaches are used together the researcher can look at the research puzzle from a few separate directions, and that tends to yield a more complete and subtly informed grasp of the phenomenon being studied. Rather than leaning on one lone source of evidence, the study compares and cross-verifies the material across methods, so

that convergence and divergence can be spotted in a systematic way. For example, what participants say in interviews is reviewed alongside what is seen in observations plus documentary traces, this makes it easier to test whether claims hold up, spot strange mismatches, and build firmer explanations interpretations. This process not only strengthens the credibility of the findings but also reduces the likelihood of bias or partial representation.

Participant validation further enhances the credibility of the study by helping to ensure that participants' perspectives are accurately represented rather than interpreted solely through the researcher's assumptions. In practice, selected interpretations or summaries of the findings are shared with participants for feedback. This allows them to confirm whether the interpretations reflect their experiences and viewpoints or to provide clarification where necessary. This process adds an additional layer of validation, as it allows participants to confirm, clarify, or challenge the researcher's interpretations, ensuring they remain grounded in participants' lived experience rather than solely the researcher's own interpretation. It also reinforces the collaborative nature of the qualitative process, as knowledge is co-produced rather than transmitted unilaterally from researcher to participant.

The study also employs peer review as a means of strengthening analytical rigor and dependability. Regular discussions with academic supervisors and scholarly peers create opportunities for critical engagement with the research, from its design through data collection to analysis. Through this exchange, the researcher is able to refine methodological choices, examine emerging interpretations, and address possible sources of bias. Peer review therefore functions as an intellectual audit, helping to keep the analytical process transparent, methodical, and evidence-based.

Prolonged engagement in the field constitutes another key strategy for strengthening trustworthiness. By remaining in the research setting for an extended period, the researcher develops a deeper and more nuanced understanding of festival life and the institutional dynamics underlying it. This sustained presence helps build trust with participants, who are more likely to share their experiences openly and genuinely as a result. It also makes it easier to identify recurring patterns and gradual shifts over time, reducing the risk of drawing conclusions from a single unusual case or isolated instance. This extended engagement is especially important in studies of cultural practice, as meaning is often embedded within repeated actions, ritual movements, and everyday social interactions.

Alongside these approaches, reflexivity remains present throughout the research process and is used to strengthen confirmability. The researcher maintains careful awareness of how personal assumptions, individual perspectives, and positionality might influence the interpretation of the data. Through ongoing reflection, and by grounding interpretations in empirical evidence, the study aims to ensure that the findings are shaped by what the data actually shows, rather than by preconceived ideas. This reflexive stance is particularly important in interpretive research, where the researcher is directly involved in how meaning is constructed.

The study also ensures dependability by maintaining a clear and systematic research process. Detailed records are kept of how data were collected, along with the analytical decisions and methodological choices made throughout the study. This documentation ensures that the work remains transparent and consistent, allowing other researchers to follow how conclusions were reached, which in turn enhances the reliability of the study within a qualitative framework.

Taken together, these strategies establish a solid foundation for the trustworthiness of the research. By incorporating triangulation, member checking, peer review, prolonged engagement, and reflexivity, the study makes sure its results are credible, stable, and clearly tied to empirical data. This broader approach to trustworthiness reflects an ongoing commitment to methodological rigor and aligns with established practices in qualitative research, thereby supporting the overall validity and reliability of the study.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations make up a key dimension of this research, especially given its attention to cultural practices, institutional processes, and community participation. Qualitative work like this involves direct interaction with people, social groups, and culturally sensitive settings, so it calls for a high awareness of ethics and real responsibility . As scholars such as Creswell note, ethical research goes beyond simple procedural compliance, it also includes a sustained commitment to honoring participants, defending their rights, and ensuring that the research process does not cause harm (Creswell 92). In this study, ethical principles are integrated at every stage of the research process, from data collection to analysis and reporting.

A central ethical principle guiding this study is informed consent, which ensures that participants take part willingly and with adequate understanding of the study's purpose and implications for them. Before inclusion, participants are given clear and well-explained details about the study's aims, what they will be asked to do, and how their data will be handled and used. This information is communicated in an accessible and transparent manner, both verbally and, where appropriate, through written consent forms. By ensuring that

participants genuinely understand the broader research context, the study also protects their autonomy and their right to decide whether to participate.

Closely related to this is the principle of voluntary participation. Participants are explicitly informed that joining the study is optional and that they may decline or withdraw at any point without adverse consequences. This is particularly important in the context of this research, as some participants may hold roles within formal organizations or longstanding social hierarchies. Such settings can give rise to subtle pressures to participate, making it important for the researcher to emphasize that participation is entirely voluntary, and to create conditions in which individuals can express their preferences openly and without constraint.

Confidentiality and anonymity are kept very tightly during the whole process, so participants' identities stay protected and sensitive material doesn't get exposed. All personal identifiers are taken out of every transcript, and then replaced with pseudonyms, or sometimes more general descriptions that point to participants' functions without actually giving away who they are. In the presentation of findings, care is taken to ensure that descriptions, quotations, and contextual details do not inadvertently expose participants or compromise their positions within their institutions or communities. This is particularly important given the potential sensitivity of discussions relating to institutional practices and decision-making processes.

Ethical responsibility also extends to how data are managed and stored. All research materials, including audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes, are securely stored through password-protected digital systems. Only the researcher and authorized academic supervisors have access, reducing the risk of unauthorized disclosure. Data are retained only for as long

as necessary to complete the research and are processed in accordance with applicable institutional and academic guidelines. This careful approach to data handling supports both the safety and integrity of the research process.

Given the strong cultural setting of this study, particular attention is given to cultural sensitivity and respect for indigenous practices. Festivals and cultural events often include sacred elements, layered symbolic meanings, and established protocols that require careful, rather than casual, treatment. The researcher therefore engages with these settings in a mindful manner, observing local norms, values, and expectations. Where required, permission is sought in advance, and appropriate cultural protocols are followed. This also involves respecting restrictions on access to certain rituals or spaces, and avoiding the recording or sharing of culturally sensitive information that may be considered unsuitable for public circulation.

Additionally, the study adopts an ethical stance that emphasizes respectful representation. Cultural practices and participants' views are presented in a manner that seeks to avoid distortion, misunderstanding, or exploitation. The researcher remains attentive to the power dynamics inherent in the knowledge-production process, ensuring that participants' voices are accurately and respectfully conveyed. This aligns with broader ethical concerns in qualitative research, where the representation of others carries significant responsibility.

Reflexivity further supports the ethical framework of the study. The researcher maintains ongoing awareness of their own positionality and how it might influence interactions with participants and the interpretation of data. By critically examining these dynamics, the study seeks to reduce bias and ensure that the research process remains both ethically sound and analytically credible.

Overall, the ethical considerations guiding this study reflect a comprehensive and interconnected approach to responsible research practice. Through informed consent, genuinely voluntary participation, confidentiality, secure data management, cultural sensitivity, and reflexivity, the study seeks to protect participants' dignity, rights, and overall well-being. This commitment to ethical integrity strengthens the study's trustworthiness and supports a meaningful contribution to scholarly and cultural discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the empirical findings drawn from fieldwork on how the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) influences contemporary festival programming in Edo State. Following the methodological structure set out in Chapter Three, this chapter transforms raw qualitative material into organized analytical insights. It also examines closely how institutional processes shape cultural output, performance arrangements, and community involvement. In qualitative work, presenting findings cannot

be separated from interpretation, as the data are not treated as plain, neutral facts but as socially constructed accounts that require careful contextualization and critical engagement throughout.

The study uses a qualitative, multi method approach, mainly so it can provide depth, strengthen credibility, and keep methodological thoroughness. Primary evidence was gathered across a six month stretch, March to August 2025, while the festival programming analysis reaches from 2010 right up to 2025. This extended time range supports continued contact with the research setting, and helps in building more subtle understandings of both institutional practices and cultural dynamics. Using several data collection ways, like semi structured interviews, focus group sessions, participant observation, and document review, is part of a planned triangulation strategy. In other words, it helps the study hold the festival programming puzzle in view from different angles, instead of relying on only one view, which would be too thin.

The empirical material comes from a carefully chosen set of participants, whose roles and experiences connect directly to the research issue. Altogether five key informants were engaged through in-depth interviews, comprising officials of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, festival organizers, cultural practitioners, traditional authorities, and representatives of sponsoring organizations. This diversity of participants ensures that the findings reflect a broad spectrum of perspectives, encompassing both institutional viewpoints and community-based experiences. In addition to the interviews, three focus group discussions involving three participants were conducted across selected communities in the Benin, Esan, and Afemai regions. These discussions provide insight into shared experiences

and collective interpretations of festival practices, complementing the individual accounts obtained through interviews.

Participant observation forms a major component of the dataset, providing the researcher with direct access to the performative and organizational dimensions of festival programming. By attending selected festivals, rehearsals, and a range of institutional events, the researcher was able to observe how programming choices are implemented, how stakeholders interact, and how cultural practices are expressed in embodied ways. This process generated detailed field notes incorporating both descriptive and interpretive elements, depending on the context. Documentary sources, including policy documents, programming schedules, financial records, sponsorship agreements, and internal reports, further supplement this material by offering official accounts of institutional functioning and continuity over time.

This chapter serves a twofold purpose. First, it presents the empirical findings in a clear, systematic manner, organized around thematic patterns that emerge across the different data sources. These themes are not arbitrary; they are anchored in the analytical steps set out in the earlier chapter, so they tie back to recurring patterns and relationships identified through careful data analysis. Second, the chapter moves beyond presenting results to offer an interpretive analysis of what these findings mean in relation to the research questions and objectives outlined in Chapter One. This involves situating the empirical material within broader theoretical and scholarly conversations about cultural governance, institutional influence, and the transformation of festival practices.

The presentation of findings is both descriptive and analytical in nature. While care is taken to keep the organization of themes clear and coherent, equal emphasis is placed on

critically engaging with the data, connecting empirical observations to frameworks such as institutional isomorphism, performance theory, and postcolonial perspectives on cultural governance. This combined approach ensures that the chapter does not merely describe what occurred, but offers a more nuanced understanding of the processes and forces that shape festival programming in Edo State.

In accordance with the ethical considerations outlined in Chapter Three, all participants are identified through descriptive labels corresponding to their roles and, where relevant, their contextual positions. These identifiers are designed deliberately to protect anonymity while retaining sufficient detail for meaningful analysis. The contributions are therefore presented in a manner that remains ethically responsible while still being analytically informative.

Overall, this chapter serves as the empirical backbone of the study, drawing on data from multiple sources to provide a comprehensive and textured account of how institutions shape festival programming. By weaving rich descriptive detail together with critical analysis, the chapter establishes the foundation for the following discussion of findings in relation to the study's research questions and theoretical framework.

4.2 Findings

This part lays out the findings that came out of the fieldwork done for this study. The information here is pulled from interview responses, observations during festival activities, and an analysis of the relevant institutional documents. The way it is presented is organized thematically, following the objectives of the study. It mainly emphasizes the role of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture in festival programming, the actual processes behind

programming decisions, and what happens next in terms of how institutional involvement reshapes festival structure and cultural representation.

4.2.1 Institutional Involvement in Festival Programming

The field findings suggest that the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture occupies a central, almost coordinating position in the organization and programming of festivals across the state. Most respondents were consistent in pointing to the Council as the main coordinating body, the one responsible for overseeing festival happenings, especially those that obtain formal recognition or government backing, which is not small at all.

Officials from the Council said their role starts way back during the planning stage, like when they hold meetings to decide the reach and the basic layout of the festival happenings. In these sessions there are internal staff members too, but also a few picked stakeholders, such as cultural practitioners and, when it comes up, people who represent traditional institutions. The Council then has to build a broad outline for the festival, meaning they pinpoint the key activities, arrange time slots and manage the logistics, more or less all together.

Field observations suggest that festivals organized under the Council's supervision exhibit a strong degree of structure and coordination. Activities are arranged according to a predetermined schedule, producing clear deadlines for performances, processions, and other key moments. By comparison, smaller community-based festivals tend to be more flexible, with programming that is less formally arranged and more responsive to circumstances.

Several respondents also indicated that Council involvement is frequently tied to funding and resource provision. If a festival receives financial backing from the government, it is more likely to fall under institutional supervision. As a result, programming choices

typically reflect the Council's expectations and priorities. In such cases, the Council exerts considerable influence over the festival's overall direction.

4.2.2 Processes of Programming Decision-Making

The findings show that festival programming follows a structured decision-making process involving several distinct stages. Respondents described a process that begins with preliminary consultations, proceeds to planning meetings, and concludes with final approval from the relevant authorities within the Council.

During the consultation phase, the process draws on input from various stakeholders, including cultural groups, performers, and community leaders. These suggestions are considered in shaping the festival program, though respondents noted that not every proposal is adopted, making the process inherently selective. In practice, final decisions are based on a combination of factors, including available resources, logistical realities, and the institutional priorities of the Council.

Council officials also underlined that decisions on programming are steered by the goal of making sure festivals are properly arranged, easy to reach, and able to draw a broad crowd. Because of that, the Council often places emphasis on activities that are thought to be engaging and attractive. For example, performances like music, dance, and drama are frequently prioritized since they are considered to have wide audience appeal.

The results also suggest that there is a formal approval process for festival programs. Once a draft program is prepared, it is reviewed by senior officials within the Council, who assess its feasibility and alignment with organizational objectives. Only after this review is the program finalized and put into operation.

4.2.3 Selection and Structuring of Festival Activities

The field data suggest that the choice of festival activities is influenced by both cultural considerations and practical limitations. Respondents explained that although efforts are made to include traditional shows and rituals, the final selection is often shaped by time constraints, funding conditions, and logistical practicality.

Regarding structure, festival activities are typically organized into separate segments, each assigned a specific time slot. For instance, opening ceremonies are scheduled apart from cultural performances, and closing events are likewise scheduled separately, producing a clear sequence of activities. This structured approach was observed during site visits, where events proceeded in a predetermined order with very little deviation.

Respondents also brought up coordination, saying it helps the different activities connect into one coherent program. That means handling transitions between events, coordinating performers, and ensuring that activities do not overlap. The Council plays a key role in this process, providing guidance and oversight to ensure that the program runs smoothly.

4.2.4 Influence of Institutional Priorities on Programming

The findings suggest that institutional priorities have a noticeable effect on festival programming. Respondents shared that festivals supported by the Council often come with components that point toward wider goals, like boosting cultural heritage, making tourism stronger, and positioning the state's cultural assets.

In some situations, this leads to the insertion of activities that are meant to attract outside audiences, including guests and tourists. These kinds of things might include arranged performances, curated exhibitions, and other presentation formats, that are planned so they are straightforward to follow and enjoyable for different groups of people.

At the same time, respondents noted that some traditional elements can be adjusted to fit the broader program. This may involve shortening or extending the duration of rituals, altering the sequence of events, or reshaping how performances are presented. Although these modifications are usually made for practical reasons, they nonetheless reveal how institutional priorities guide programming decisions.

4.2.5 Interaction between Institutional and Traditional Authorities

The study also revealed that festival programming in Edo State involves ongoing interaction between institutional actors and traditional authorities. Respondents indicated that while the Council is responsible for organizational aspects of festivals, traditional authorities retain control over ritual components and cultural practices.

This division of roles establishes a collaborative arrangement in which both sides contribute to the programming process. Traditional authorities function much like a compass, providing guidance on cultural protocols and ensuring that rituals are conducted in accordance with established practices, while the Council focuses on coordination and logistics.

Still the results also hint that the interaction is not always smooth. A few respondents mentioned moments where different priorities caused disagreements about programming decisions. Those disagreements tended to circle around scheduling, whether certain activities get included, and how traditional practices are adapted in practice.

Despite these tensions, the overall relationship between institutional and traditional actors was described as cooperative, with both sides agreeing that collaboration is essential to the success of the festivals.

4.2.6 Audience Engagement and Participation

The field observations indicate that festival programming significantly affects audience engagement and participation. Respondents noted that festivals with varied, well-organized programs tend to attract larger audiences and encourage attendees to participate actively rather than merely observe.

Music, dance, and interactive performances came up as especially effective. Those parts make it easier for participation because they create chances for attendees to become involved in the festival experience, like not only observing.

Also, field notes showed that how activities are arranged changes how people move around and interact. When schedules are clear and performance spaces are set, then audience flow becomes more predictable, and interactions happen more naturally help to guide audience behavior, ensuring that participants can easily navigate the festival environment.

However, some respondents noted that highly structured programming may limit opportunities for spontaneous participation. In contrast, less formal festivals were described as allowing greater flexibility, enabling participants to engage more freely with activities.

4.2.7 Challenges in Festival Programming

The findings highlight several challenges affecting festival programming in Edo State. One of the most frequently cited challenges is limited funding, which influences the overall scope, scale, and reach of festival activities. Many respondents noted that financial constraints require organizers to prioritize certain activities over others. The result is selective programming, driven not by preference but by necessity.

Logistical problems were also identified, including coordination, timing, and resource management. Running multiple activities within a short window requires careful planning, and even minor disruptions can affect the smooth progression of the festival.

Another concern relates to balancing institutional requirements with traditional practices. Respondents noted that efforts to structure and formalize festivals can sometimes conflict with established cultural norms, leading to tensions between stakeholders whose expectations do not always align.

Still, despite all these issues, respondents showed an overall commitment to make festival programming better. There are ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening organization, boosting participation, and keeping cultural elements intact.

4.3 Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section presents a systematic analysis and discussion of the study's findings, primarily addressing the research questions and objectives outlined in earlier chapters. Rather than merely describing the data, it interprets the patterns, connections, and themes that emerge, situating them within the broader theoretical and empirical framework underpinning the study.

Building on the conceptual and theoretical foundation established in Chapter Two, the discussion examines how institutional structures, processes, and priorities shape festival programming in Edo State. Particular attention is given to the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, focusing on how its activities affect the selection, arrangement, and presentation of festival content.

By bringing together empirical evidence with theoretical insights, this section seeks to demonstrate how institutional influence operates in practice. It highlights both its supportive and constraining dimensions, offering a more balanced understanding of how institutional frameworks relate to cultural expression, thereby advancing the study's central argument.

4.3.1 Policies and Administrative Structures Guiding Festival Programming

This section analyzes the policies and administrative structures that guide how the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture manages festival programming, drawing on the empirical findings presented earlier. The discussion moves beyond description to examine how institutional arrangements shape decision-making, influence cultural representation, and structure the relationship between state and community actors.

The findings indicate that decision-making is highly centralized, concentrated primarily among senior officials within the Council. Decisions regarding festival approval, scheduling, and overall organization are made predominantly at the top levels, with limited input from external stakeholders. As a result, the Council functions not only as a coordinating body but also as a dominant regulatory force in the management of cultural production across the state. This pattern aligns with what institutional scholars describe as hierarchical governance structures, in which authority is embedded within formal organizational systems that regulate cultural practice (Scott 56).

In addition, the fact that external stakeholders are kept at the margins of the decision process points to a top-down administrative model, where cultural production is shaped more by institutional priorities than by any meaningful community input. This also ties in with the idea of institutional control, where organizations exercise authority over the production and the circulation of cultural forms (DiMaggio 440). In this setting, festival programming becomes platform where institutional values are pushed forward, often with less regard for participatory cultural processes, or at least that is how it tends to work in the evidence presented.

The findings further show that administrative procedures also end up playing a noticeable role in structuring festival activities. The use of formal planning mechanisms,

scheduled programming, and bureaucratic approval processes reflects an attempt to standardize festival organization. While such structures enhance coordination and efficiency, they also introduce rigidity into cultural practices that are traditionally fluid and dynamic. This transformation can be understood within the framework of institutional isomorphism, where cultural practices are reshaped to conform to formal organizational norms (Scott 60).

The centralization of decision-making also has consequences for cultural representation. When institutional actors control festival programming, they effectively determine which stories and identities are presented to the public. This selective display reveals how institutional power shapes cultural meaning, reinforcing the notion that cultural production is not neutral but is instead filtered through structures of authority and control.

4.3.2 Institutional Funding, Sponsorship, and Festival Execution

This part looks at how institutional funding and sponsorship actually influence festival execution in Edo State, using the empirical material discussed in the earlier section. The focus is on what the financial setup does to programming choices, how it regulates the size and organization of the festival activities, and how it also affects participation patterns alongside cultural representation.

The results suggest that funding is a primary driver of how festivals are carried out, with the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture serving as a major financial backer for state-recognized festivals. This role positions the Council not only as a coordinator but also as a key actor in defining the boundaries within which festivals are organized. Many respondents consistently noted that the availability of funds shapes decisions regarding the number of performances, the selection of cultural groups, and the overall scale of festival activities. This observation illustrates the extent to which economic resources steer cultural production,

supporting the claim that artistic and cultural expressions are often conditioned by institutional funding frameworks (Quinn 935).

Institutional funding creates a framework within which festival organizers must align their programming with funders' expectations, or what are perceived as the "right" priorities. Programming decisions are not only about cultural significance; they are also shaped by considerations such as audience appeal, public visibility, and perceived economic value. This aligns with broader thinking in cultural policy studies, where festivals are increasingly designed to serve multiple purposes simultaneously, including cultural promotion, tourism stimulation, and financial benefit (Gibson and Connell 78). In practice, festival execution becomes a negotiated process, in which artistic content is shaped not only by creative considerations but also by institutional agendas that are rarely neutral.

In addition to state funding, the results indicate that corporate sponsorship plays an increasing role in how festivals are organized. Respondents noted that private sponsors typically contribute funds in exchange for visibility and brand association, which influences the overall tone of the programming process. Corporate actors thus extend the influence of institutional structures beyond the state, forming a broader stakeholder network whose interests must be managed during execution. Sponsor presence was also reported to affect decisions related to event presentation, branding, and audience targeting, reflecting the broader trend toward commercialization in cultural festivals (Getz 21).

The implications of this arrangement are most evident in how resources are distributed among participants. The findings show differences in compensation, where some cultural groups receive more support than others. These differences are usually tied to factors such as perceived audience appeal, institutional recognition, and the ability of groups to align with

the objectives of sponsors. This pattern reflects broader inequalities within cultural production, where access to resources is unevenly distributed, thereby shaping who is visible and who is marginalized within festival spaces (DiMaggio 443).

Furthermore, reliance on institutional funding introduces constraints that shape how festival activities can be carried out. Respondents noted that when funds are limited, organizers frequently make practical compromises, such as shortening performance duration, reducing the number of participants, or omitting certain cultural elements. These limitations highlight the tension between maintaining cultural authenticity and contending with resource constraints. Festival execution thus becomes an ongoing negotiation, in which cultural expression is adjusted to fit within the available budget.

At the same time, institutional funding also seems to push the whole festival scene toward professionalization. With financial support, it becomes easier to set up structured programming, run better logistics, and coordinate activities more smoothly. This shift toward a more professional setup can improve the overall quality and visibility of festivals, which then makes them easier to reach for wider audiences. Still, there is a tradeoff, because the added formality can reshape the spontaneous, community-led character that many traditional festivals are known for. It suggests a movement toward more organized and institutionally supported ways of presenting culture, (Getz 25).

The findings also indicate that funding directly affects when and where festivals take place. Events are often planned and arranged to maximize visibility and efficiency, reflecting the priorities of both institutional and corporate stakeholders. This rigid structure stands in contrast with more flexible festivals, where community rhythms and local traditions guide

the organization of activities. The shift toward structured programming highlights the role of funding in reshaping not only what is presented but also how it is experienced.

The involvement of sponsors and funding agencies also frames festivals as cultural products that can be packaged, marketed, and consumed. Within this framing, emphasis is placed on spectacle, stagecraft, and audience participation, often favoring elements that are visually appealing and easily accessible rather than those most rooted in local tradition. While this can increase the appeal of festivals, it may also encourage the simplification or adjustment of complex cultural practices, raising questions about where cultural preservation ends and commercialization begins.

Taken as a whole, the analysis shows that institutional funding and sponsorship play a critical role in how festivals are carried out in Edo State, rather than functioning merely as a background factor. Financial resources influence programming choices, shape participation, and guide how cultural material is presented. While funding is essential for organizing and sustaining festivals, it also introduces new dynamics that can shift cultural representation and authenticity. This interplay between financial structures and cultural activities underscores why festival programming should be understood as produced through wider institutional and economic forces, rather than as a standalone event.

4.3.3 Political and Bureaucratic Influences on Decision-Making

This section examines the political and bureaucratic dimensions of decision-making in festival programming in Edo State, building on the empirical findings presented earlier. The central argument is that power, administrative routines, and politics shape the way decisions are reached, with implications for how culture is presented in practice and who is able to participate.

The findings reveal that decision-making within the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture is not purely administrative; it is deeply embedded in political and bureaucratic arrangements. Respondents explained that major decisions, including festival planning, resource allocation, and program approval, are influenced by rank and formal procedures. This reflects a bureaucratic order in which authority is exercised through established rules and official roles, shaping the direction and outcome of cultural programming. This pattern aligns with Weber's conception of bureaucracy, which operates through hierarchy, formal processes, and centralized control (Weber 212).

Beyond this, the results also suggest that political considerations significantly influence what is selected for programming. Respondents noted that certain festivals receive greater attention and support because they are viewed as important for enhancing the state's image or aligning with government priorities. This suggests that festival programming is not merely a cultural matter but also responds to wider political objectives. In this context, festivals function as instruments through which political actors project identity, legitimacy, and cultural pride, thereby reinforcing the connection between cultural production and state power (Bennett 63).

The influence of political factors is also evident in the prioritization of specific events and activities. The findings show that programming decisions often reflect the interests of those in positions of authority, with certain cultural expressions being elevated while others receive less attention. This selective emphasis highlights the role of power in determining cultural visibility, supporting the argument that cultural production is shaped by institutional forces that regulate what is recognized and valued (DiMaggio 441).

Furthermore, bureaucratic procedures were found to structure the decision-making process in ways that affect flexibility and responsiveness. The requirement for approvals, adherence to formal protocols, and reliance on administrative channels can slow down decision-making and limit the ability to accommodate diverse perspectives. While these procedures ensure accountability and coordination, they also introduce constraints that may restrict innovation and community participation. This tension reflects the dual nature of bureaucracy as both an enabling and limiting force within institutional systems (Weber 218).

The findings also point to the existence of informal dynamics within the decision-making process. Respondents suggested that personal relationships, networks, and internal negotiations sometimes influence outcomes, indicating that decision-making is not entirely governed by formal rules. These informal elements highlight the complexity of institutional processes, where official procedures coexist with less visible forms of influence. Such dynamics underscore the importance of understanding decision-making as a socially embedded process shaped by both formal and informal structures.

In addition, the interaction between political authority and bureaucratic administration has implications for the autonomy of cultural practitioners. The findings indicate that artists and cultural groups often have limited influence over programming decisions, as these are largely determined within institutional frameworks. This limited autonomy can affect the diversity of cultural expression, as practitioners must align their contributions with institutional expectations in order to be included in festival programs.

The role of political and bureaucratic influence is further reflected in the standardization of festival programming. The emphasis on order, predictability, and alignment with official objectives leads to the adoption of structured formats and regulated

activities. While this enhances organization, it may also reduce the spontaneity and variability that characterize traditional cultural practices. This transformation highlights the impact of institutional governance on the form and content of cultural events.

Moreover, the findings suggest that political and bureaucratic influences help frame festivals as public events that serve wider state interests. In practice, these festivals are organized not only as cultural celebrations but also as platforms for showcasing the state's achievements and its sense of identity. This dual function reinforces the role of institutions in shaping the meaning and purpose of festivals, situating them within a broader socio-political context.

Overall, the analysis shows that decision-making in festival programming results from a complex interplay between political and bureaucratic factors. Authority, power relations, and administrative procedures together shape what gets included, how everything is organized, and whose voices are represented. While these structures provide a framework for coordination and governance, they also introduce constraints that can affect participation, creativity, and cultural diversity. Understanding these dynamics is therefore important for appreciating the broader implications of institutional influence on festival programming in Edo State.

4.3.4 Institutional Influence on Authenticity and Sustainability of Festivals

This section looks at how institutional involvement in festival programming impacts the authenticity, and the long term sustainability of cultural practices in Edo State. Drawing on the empirical findings presented earlier, the analysis explores the ways in which

institutional structures shape cultural expression, mediate traditional practices, and affect the long-term continuity of festivals.

The findings suggest that institutional involvement plays a dual role in relation to cultural authenticity. On one hand, the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture appears to support the maintenance of cultural heritage by providing organizational backing, funding, and visibility for festivals. Through these efforts, the institution helps sustain cultural practices, particularly those at risk of declining amid changing social and economic conditions. This supportive role aligns with the broader conception of cultural institutions as custodians of heritage, expected to protect and transmit cultural traditions across generations (Smith 29).

On the other hand, the findings also show that institutional influence can alter traditional practices in ways that affect authenticity. Respondents explained that certain elements of festivals are modified to fit within structured programming, time constraints, and audience expectations. For example, ritual sequences may be shortened, performances rearranged, or organizers may emphasize visually engaging elements over cultural practices that are less immediately observable. These changes reflect the pressures that arise from presenting culture within institutional settings, where the drive for order and accessibility often shapes how traditions are performed and experienced.

This connects clearly to the concept of cultural commodification, in which cultural practices are adapted for presentation to wider audiences, often in ways that prioritize consumption over original meaning. Scholars argue that when cultural expressions are reworked to satisfy institutional preferences or market demands, there is a real possibility of diminishing their symbolic depth and contextual significance (Greenwood 131). In the

context of Edo State, the findings suggest that festival programming sometimes emphasizes spectacle and performance, potentially altering the cultural meanings embedded in traditional practices.

At the same time, the issue of authenticity is not static but is subject to negotiation and reinterpretation. The findings indicate that cultural practitioners and traditional authorities continue to play a role in maintaining the core elements of festivals, even within institutional frameworks. This suggests that authenticity is not entirely lost but is instead reconfigured through ongoing interactions between institutional actors and community stakeholders. This perspective aligns with the view that authenticity is a socially constructed concept, shaped by changing contexts and practices rather than fixed historical forms (Cohen 374).

In addition to authenticity, the findings highlight the impact of institutional influence on the sustainability of festivals. Institutional support provides essential resources that enable festivals to continue over time, particularly in the face of economic challenges and declining community participation. The involvement of the Council facilitates the organization, coordination, and promotion of festivals, thereby enhancing their viability and reach. This contribution is especially important in contemporary contexts where traditional systems of support may no longer be sufficient to sustain large-scale cultural events.

However, the reliance on institutional structures also introduces new challenges for sustainability. The findings suggest that festivals become dependent on external funding and administrative support, raising concerns about their long-term continuity in the absence of such support. This dependency can create vulnerabilities, particularly when funding is inconsistent or subject to political and economic changes. As a result, the sustainability of

festivals becomes tied to institutional priorities, rather than being rooted solely in community engagement.

Furthermore, the structuring of festivals within institutional frameworks may affect the transmission of cultural knowledge. Traditional festivals often serve as spaces for informal learning, where cultural values and practices are passed down through participation and observation. The introduction of formal programming and structured schedules may limit these opportunities, particularly when activities are compressed or reorganized to fit institutional requirements. This shift has implications for the intergenerational transmission of culture, which is a key aspect of sustainability.

The findings also suggest that audience expectations play a role in shaping both authenticity and sustainability. Festivals designed to attract broader crowds, including tourists, may lean toward elements that are more accessible and engaging. While this can boost visibility and participation, it can also result in complex cultural practices being simplified or diluted. This tension between accessibility and authenticity represents a central challenge in how festivals are organized by institutions.

Nevertheless, the results suggest that institutional involvement does not automatically erode cultural sustainability. Instead, it often creates conditions under which cultural practices continue to be modified, reworked, and renegotiated over time. When institutional structures interact with traditional practices, new forms of cultural expression emerge, carrying both continuity and change. This capacity for adaptation appears crucial to the long-term survival of cultural traditions, particularly in a rapidly changing world.

Taken together, the analysis shows that institutional influence significantly affects both the authenticity and sustainability of festivals in Edo State. Institutional backing can

strengthen organization and increase visibility, yet it also shapes how cultural practices are presented and experienced. The central challenge lies in balancing the advantages of institutional involvement with the need to preserve the integrity and deeper meaning of cultural traditions. Maintaining this balance is essential to ensuring that festivals remain culturally meaningful and sustainable over time.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive synthesis of the study, bringing together the main findings, interpreting their significance, and situating them within wider academic and policy conversations. It is the final section of the research, where the empirical insights are drawn together into clearer conclusions and tied back to the theoretical and conceptual structures outlined earlier. The study examined how the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) shapes festival programming today, with particular attention to administrative arrangements, funding systems, decision-making processes, cultural authenticity, and community participation.

As shown in the previous chapters, festival programming in Edo State is shaped by a complex interplay of bureaucratic governance, political priorities, and commercial dynamics. These interconnected drivers affect how festivals are selected, arranged, and presented, and they also influence whose cultural expression is acknowledged within the institutional framework. Although ESCAC plays a central role in sustaining festivals and enhancing their visibility, its day-to-day operational practices reveal underlying tensions that complicate its role, as it is expected to function simultaneously as a cultural promoter and as a regulatory authority, a balance that is not easily achieved.

One of the central insights emerging from this study is the tension between preservation and transformation. Institutional involvement helps sustain and even expand festivals, primarily through funding, coordination, and increased public visibility. At the same time, this involvement produces significant modifications in traditional practices, such as how performances are restructured, how ritual elements are adapted, and how

contemporary or commercial influences are incorporated. This raises important questions about cultural authenticity, and about how far institutional frameworks can support heritage preservation without altering its underlying meanings.

The study also draws attention to issues of participation and representation in festival programming. The findings show that community stakeholders, including traditional authorities and cultural practitioners, often have only limited roles in decision-making. This marginalization reflects broader trends associated with centralized governance and contributes to a disconnect between institutional priorities and the realities of community-based cultural practice. The continued growth of corporate sponsorship further complicates this picture, as commercial interests increasingly shape both the structure and aesthetics of festivals.

This chapter consolidates the empirical findings and assesses their wider implications for cultural governance in Edo State and similar contexts. It also engages critically with the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter Two, including institutional, performative, and postcolonial frameworks, in order to deepen the interpretation of the findings. In doing so, the chapter demonstrates how the study contributes to existing scholarship by providing context-specific insights into the relationship between institutions and cultural production in African settings.

Furthermore, the chapter points out clearly, how the study adds something new to knowledge, through empirical evidence, theoretical framing, and methodological value. It also lays out a group of practical recommendations, meant to push for a more inclusive, transparent, and culturally responsive way of doing festival programming. Those

recommendations are based on what the study found, and they are supposed to be useful for both policy making and day to day institutional conduct.

Overall, this chapter offers a reflective critique of the study, drawing together its main arguments while emphasizing its relevance to current conversations around cultural governance, heritage safeguarding, and institutional power, particularly in postcolonial settings.

5.2 Summary

This study set out to examine the extent to which institutional structures influence festival programming in Edo State, with particular emphasis on the role of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture. The central question driving the research was how programming choices are formed within an institutional setting, and in what ways this influence shapes cultural representation, participation levels, and the overall organization of festivals.

The study is also situated within a broader context of cultural change and administrative intervention in what was once considered “traditional” practice. Festivals in Edo State have long functioned as central elements of social, spiritual, and political life, grounded in indigenous systems of authority and shared communal involvement. Recent developments, however, have introduced new dynamics, most notably the increased participation of formal institutions in planning and executing festivals. This shift raises several important questions, including whether cultural authenticity is maintained, how traditional practices are restructured, what occurs when institutional influence takes precedence over local authority in shaping festival agendas, and the extent to which institutional priorities shape cultural expression. The increasing formalization of festival

organization, particularly through agencies such as the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, necessitates a critical examination of how programming is influenced within these evolving contexts.

In response to these concerns, the study was guided by clearly defined objectives. The primary goal was to examine the role of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture in shaping festival programming across Edo State. More specifically, the study sought to determine how programming decisions are made, to assess the extent of institutional involvement in selecting, arranging, and organizing festival activities, and to understand how that involvement affects cultural representation and audience engagement. The study also examined the relationship between institutional structures and traditional systems of festival organization, including how these systems interact and how that interaction shapes the continuity and transformation of cultural practices over time.

To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative research design, regarded as the most appropriate approach for capturing the complexity and contextual nature of festival programming. This approach allowed for deeper examination of institutional processes, cultural practices, and the perspectives of different stakeholders. The study population included officials from the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, festival organizers, cultural practitioners, and community participants involved in festival activities within Edo State. A purposive sampling method was used to select respondents possessing relevant knowledge and lived experience in festival organization and programming.

Data for the study were collected through multiple methods, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to gain insights into the processes and considerations involved in festival

programming. Participant observation enabled the researcher to directly engage with festival activities, providing firsthand understanding of how programming is implemented in practice. Document analysis involved the review of policy documents, festival schedules, and institutional records, which provided additional context for understanding the role of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved the identification and interpretation of recurring patterns and themes within the data. This approach allowed for a systematic examination of the relationships between institutional influence and festival programming, as well as the broader implications for cultural representation and social interaction. The analysis was guided by the theoretical frameworks outlined in the study, particularly those relating to institutional influence, cultural production, and festival theory.

The findings of the study reveal that the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture plays a significant role in shaping festival programming. Institutional involvement was found to influence key aspects of programming, including the selection of performances, the structuring of events, and the allocation of resources. Through these processes, the institution contributes to the organization and coordination of festivals, ensuring a level of structure and consistency in their execution. This involvement enhances the visibility and accessibility of festivals, making them more appealing to wider audiences.

However, the study also found that institutional influence introduces certain constraints on cultural expression. Programming decisions are often guided by considerations such as policy objectives, funding availability, and audience expectations, which may not always align with traditional practices. As a result, some cultural elements are modified or

excluded, leading to selective representation. This finding underscores the role of institutions as gatekeepers, shaping what is presented and how it is perceived.

Another important finding relates to the interaction between institutional structures and traditional systems of authority. The study reveals that festival programming in Edo State is characterized by a complex interplay between formal institutions and indigenous cultural frameworks. While traditional authorities continue to play a significant role in determining ritual aspects of festivals, institutional actors influence organizational and performative elements. This interaction creates a hybrid system in which programming reflects both continuity and change.

The study further highlights the impact of programming on audience engagement and participation. Festivals that incorporate diverse and inclusive programming were found to attract broader participation, fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity. Conversely, narrowly defined programming was observed to limit participation, reducing the social impact of festivals. This finding reinforces the importance of programming as a determinant of both cultural representation and social outcomes.

In addition, the study found that institutional involvement contributes to the professionalization of festival organization. The introduction of structured programming, formal scheduling, and coordinated activities enhances the efficiency and management of festivals. However, this professionalization also raises concerns about the potential erosion of spontaneous and community-driven aspects of cultural practice.

Overall, the findings of the study demonstrate that festival programming is a dynamic and multifaceted process, shaped by a combination of cultural, social, and institutional factors. Institutional influence plays a central role in this process, affecting not only the

organization of festivals but also their meaning and impact. While such influence can enhance the sustainability and visibility of festivals, it also has implications for cultural authenticity and representation.

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between institutional influence and festival programming in Edo State. By focusing on the role of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cultural practices are shaped within contemporary institutional frameworks. The findings highlight the need for a balanced approach to festival programming, one that recognizes the importance of institutional support while preserving the integrity of traditional practices. This study therefore adds to the growing body of knowledge on cultural production and institutional influence, offering valuable insights for policymakers, cultural practitioners, and scholars interested in the dynamics of festival organization.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that institutional intervention through the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC) has significantly reshaped the character and orientation of festival programming in Edo State. Festivals that once functioned as organic expressions of communal identity, spiritual continuity, and indigenous knowledge systems are now increasingly restyled as structured and regulated events aimed at administrative, political, and economic objectives. Festivals are thus acquiring a changed meaning and function, particularly when viewed within a modern institutional setting.

Underlying this is a broader tension within cultural governance between preservation and modernization. On one hand, institutional involvement provides tangible benefits, such

as improved organization, increased visibility, and continuity, supported by financial backing, administrative coordination, and wider public exposure. On the other hand, these same structures introduce mechanisms of control that can steer cultural practices in directions that weaken or disrupt the meanings they previously carried. Centralized decision-making authority narrows the space for traditional custodians and other community stakeholders to genuinely shape events. Consequently, programming does not always reflect the values, priorities, or cultural logic of the communities from which the festivals originate.

Corporate sponsorship adds a further dimension to this picture. While sponsorship is important for financial sustainability, it also extends beyond simple support into broader influence, shaping the aesthetic, structural, and symbolic dimensions of festivals. When branding becomes integrated into performances, the visual rhythm and narrative character of events begin to shift, transforming what was once a communal story into a more managed presentation of cultural expression, contributing to a shift toward commodified representations. In this context, festivals increasingly function as platforms for visibility and consumption, raising critical concerns about the ownership, control, and authenticity of cultural heritage.

A further conclusion relates to the sustainability of cultural transmission, particularly in relation to younger generations. Institutional efforts to engage youth through contemporary and hybrid performance styles reflect an attempt to adapt to changing cultural environments and audience expectations. However, this approach risks weakening the transmission of traditional knowledge if it is not grounded in a strong understanding of indigenous practices. Sustainable cultural continuity requires a careful balance between adaptation and

preservation, ensuring that innovation does not come at the expense of cultural depth and historical continuity.

The study also highlights the importance of equity and inclusivity in cultural policy. The uneven distribution of resources and institutional support across different regions reveals structural disparities that limit the representation of diverse cultural expressions. Festivals in urban centers benefit disproportionately from funding, infrastructure, and visibility, while those in rural areas remain underrepresented. Addressing these imbalances is essential for creating a more inclusive cultural framework that reflects the full diversity of Edo State's heritage.

In essence, the study identifies a fundamental paradox within institutional cultural governance. ESCAC, as the body responsible for preserving and promoting cultural heritage, simultaneously contributes to its transformation and, in certain respects, its erosion. This paradox is not unique to Edo State but reflects broader challenges within postcolonial cultural administration, where institutions must navigate competing demands of tradition, modernity, and economic relevance.

Resolving this tension requires a reconfiguration of institutional practices toward a more balanced and participatory model of cultural governance. Greater inclusion of community stakeholders, increased transparency in decision-making, and a stronger commitment to cultural sensitivity are essential for ensuring that festivals retain their authenticity while benefiting from institutional support. Ultimately, the long-term sustainability of festival traditions depends on the ability to integrate institutional frameworks with the knowledge systems and values that underpin cultural practice.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes a substantial and original contribution to cultural policy, performance studies, and African cultural governance by offering an empirically grounded yet theoretically informed examination of how institutions influence festival programming in a specific Nigerian setting. Much of the existing scholarship tends to focus on broader themes such as cultural preservation, heritage management, or tourism development. In contrast, this work advances the conversation by examining the specific processes through which festival programming is shaped, negotiated, and experienced by the various actors involved.

One of the study's key strengths is its development of a programming-centered analytical framework. Rather than treating institutions as abstract entities operating in the background, the research directs attention to the concrete ways in which cultural production is arranged and sustained. The focus is not merely on who holds power, but on how that power manifests in practice. By examining festival selection, the sequencing of performances, and the practical control exercised over content, the study provides a more precise, operational understanding of how institutional authority is exercised. In doing so, it also extends earlier theoretical debates by linking macro-level institutional analysis to the micro-level cultural processes observed on the ground.

The study also provides valuable empirical insights into the internal operations of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture. Through an in-depth qualitative investigation, it demonstrates how centralized administrative structures, funding priorities, and political considerations influence festival planning, implementation, and outcomes. This contribution is particularly significant within the broader field of African cultural policy studies, where

empirical research on the day-to-day functioning of institutions remains limited. By describing these processes clearly, the study addresses a notable gap in the existing literature and offers a foundation for future research on institutional behavior within cultural sectors.

In addition, the research advances a conceptual contribution. It frames what may be termed institutionalized cultural transformation. This concept captures the gradual process through which festivals are reconfigured from community-grounded, ritual-centered practices into more structured events shaped by administrative control and commercial interests. It serves as a useful analytical lens for recognizing similar cultural shifts in other African and postcolonial contexts, where institutions increasingly occupy a larger role in cultural production.

Another key contribution links with the discussion on participatory cultural governance. The study seriously points out how grassroots actors are sidelined within institutional arrangements, even folks like traditional authorities, performers, and community organizers. By pinpointing these limits, it doesn't just stop at criticism. It also suggests a way forward, a more collaborative model of cultural governance that emphasizes the integration of state institutions with indigenous systems of authority and community participation. This model has practical relevance for policymakers and cultural administrators seeking to develop more inclusive and sustainable approaches to cultural management.

Furthermore, the study contributes to ongoing debates on cultural authenticity and sustainability by offering a nuanced analysis of the relationship between adaptation, commercialization, and institutional control. It challenges simplistic notions of preservation by demonstrating that sustainability involves more than the continuation of festivals as events. Instead, it requires maintaining the integrity of the cultural meanings and knowledge systems

that underpin these practices. This perspective adds depth to existing discussions and underscores the importance of balancing innovation with cultural continuity.

Overall, the study extends existing theoretical frameworks while grounding its contributions in detailed empirical evidence. Its findings are relevant not only within the Nigerian context but also for broader discussions on cultural governance in Africa and other postcolonial settings. By bridging theory, empirical analysis, and practical implications, the research provides valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and cultural practitioners concerned with the evolving relationship between institutions and cultural expression.

5.5 Recommendations

The outcomes of this study suggest that Edo State should pursue wide-ranging reforms to make festival planning more inclusive, transparent, and culturally responsive. The following recommendations are organized according to the main concerns identified during the research.

Administrative Reforms

There is a clear need to rethink how festival programming is governed, as the current structure limits meaningful participation. Community representatives, traditional authorities, and cultural practitioners should be formally included in the decision-making process, rather than merely consulted informally. This would allow programming to better reflect indigenous knowledge systems and local priorities, while still giving appropriate weight to institutional considerations.

Transparency should also be improved throughout the administrative process. This means creating clear guidelines for festival selection, approval, and the distribution of funding, then sharing those rules publicly. When communities can see how choices are made,

accountability becomes easier, suspicion of bias usually drops, and trust between the institution and the people it serves can grow.

Also, an independent advisory body is recommended to be set up. This group should include cultural specialists, representatives from traditional institutions, and other key stakeholders, and it should provide oversight over programming decisions. In practical terms, its job is to keep cultural considerations in the center, and to reduce how much political or administrative convenience can steer outcomes.

Funding and Sponsorship Guidelines

Funding mechanisms should be restructured to promote equity across different regions of the state. Allocation criteria should move beyond considerations of visibility and economic return to include cultural significance, community participation, and heritage value. Such an approach would support a more balanced representation of cultural diversity.

Corporate sponsorship should be governed by clearly articulated ethical guidelines. While private sector partnerships are important for financial sustainability, they must not undermine the integrity of cultural expressions. Restrictions should be placed on excessive branding within performances, and sponsors should not have authority over core artistic or ritual elements of festivals.

Furthermore, revenue-sharing arrangements involving community performers should be reviewed to ensure fairness and sustainability. Adequate and timely compensation is essential for supporting cultural practitioners and encouraging continued engagement in festival activities.

Cultural Preservation Measures

Deliberate efforts are required to safeguard the authenticity of traditional performances. Cultural custodians should play a central role in determining the content, sequencing, and symbolic elements of festivals. Any modifications to traditional practices should be undertaken with careful consultation and sensitivity to their cultural implications.

Training programs for young performers should adopt a balanced approach that integrates innovation with tradition. While contemporary performance skills are important, equal emphasis should be placed on the transmission of indigenous knowledge, techniques, and cultural meanings. This will help ensure continuity across generations.

In addition, systematic documentation initiatives should be expanded to create comprehensive records of festivals, rituals, and performance traditions. These archives would serve as valuable resources for research, education, and long-term cultural preservation.

Infrastructure Development

Investment in cultural infrastructure is essential for improving both the quality and accessibility of festival programming. Facilities for rehearsal, performance, and training should be developed and equitably distributed across urban and rural areas. This would reduce regional disparities and support wider participation.

Logistical support for rural festivals should also be strengthened through targeted funding and technical assistance. Providing equipment, technical expertise, and organizational support would ease the burden on local communities and enhance the overall standard of festival execution.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A systematic framework for monitoring and evaluation should be established to assess the effectiveness and impact of festival programming. Regular reviews would enable the institution to identify challenges, measure outcomes, and make evidence-based adjustments to its strategies.

In addition, public access to information on programming decisions, funding allocations, and festival outcomes should be enhanced through digital platforms and official publications. This would promote transparency, encourage community engagement, and ensure that institutional practices remain aligned with cultural priorities.

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APPENDICES

|APPENDIX I: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The following questions guided the interviews conducted with officials of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture (ESCAC), festival organizers, cultural practitioners, and other stakeholders.

1. Can you describe your role in festival organization or cultural administration in Edo State?
2. What processes are involved in selecting festivals for institutional support?
3. How are decisions made regarding festival programming and performance content?
4. To what extent do government policies influence festival planning and execution?
5. How does ESCAC collaborate with community leaders and traditional authorities?
6. What role does funding play in determining which festivals are prioritized?
7. How do corporate sponsors influence festival programming, if at all?
8. In your opinion, how has institutional involvement affected the authenticity of festivals?
9. Are local communities adequately involved in decision-making processes? Please explain.
10. What challenges do you encounter in organizing or participating in festivals?
11. How are youth engaged in festival activities and cultural transmission?
12. What changes would you recommend to improve festival programming in Edo State?

APPENDIX II: Focus Group Discussion Guide

The focus group discussions were conducted with community members, performers, and youth participants. The following questions guided the discussions:

1. What does your local festival mean to you and your community?
2. How are decisions made about what happens during the festival?
3. Do you feel that community members are involved in planning festivals? Why or why not?

4. How has the involvement of ESCAC changed the way festivals are organized?
5. What are your views on the role of sponsors in festivals?
6. Have there been changes to traditional performances? If yes, what kind of changes?
7. How do young people participate in festivals today?
8. What challenges affect your participation in festivals?
9. What improvements would you like to see in festival organization?

APPENDIX III: Observation Checklist

The researcher used the following checklist during participant observation of festivals and programming meetings:

- Nature and sequence of festival events
- Roles of institutional officials during events
- Participation of community members and traditional leaders
- Evidence of sponsor presence (branding, announcements, materials)
- Modifications to traditional performances (duration, content, costume)
- Audience composition and engagement
- Infrastructure and logistical arrangements
- Interaction between institutional actors and performers

APPENDIX IV: Sample Informed Consent Statement

Participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study before data collection. The following statement was used:

“This research is being conducted to examine the role of the Edo State Council for Arts and Culture in festival programming. Your participation is voluntary, and you may

withdraw at any time without any consequences. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. No personal identifiers will be disclosed in the final report.”

Participants were asked to indicate their consent verbally or in writing before interviews and discussions commenced.

APPENDIX V: Summary of Fieldwork Activities

- Duration of fieldwork: March – December 2025
- Number of interviews conducted: 3
- Number of focus group discussions: 6
- Total participants in focus groups: 17
- Number of festivals observed: 8
- Number of programming meetings observed: 5

This multi-method approach ensured triangulation of data and enhanced the credibility of the study.

APPENDIX VI: Pictures from the Field



Figure 1: The Researcher Interviewing the Director of arts Blessing Osasogie Aihevbe at ESCAC



Figure 2: The place chief Performing at the Oba of Benin palace 2024 Igue Festival



Figure 3: Governor Godwin Obaseki at the Igue Festival 2024.