

**IKEJI FESTIVAL OF ARONDIZUOGU:  
RETELLING THE STORIES AND REKINDLING  
THE VALUES OF AN ANCESTRAL HOMELAND**

Prof. KANU, Ikechukwu Anthony, O.S.A.  
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies  
Tansian University, Umunya  
Anambra State

**Abstract**

*Cultural festivals are unique moments in the lives of particular communities when the vital components of their worldview are explicitly displayed through various cultural acts, amplified with colourful costumes and culinary delights. This becomes more interesting in relation to the Arondizuogu Ikeji Festival. Arondizuogu is a group of sprawling communities, spreading across three local government areas in Imo State, with its largest area located in the land obtained from Umualaoma town. For the Arondizuogu, the Ikeji Festival is an annual festival of thanksgiving, merriment and propitiation, which comes up either in the month of March or April every year. It is very rich, in both historical and cultural festivities, filled with scintillating performances from masquerades, memorable sights, comic acts and magical dances from different dance groups. The festival began as a ceremony to mark the end of the planting season and the beginning of the harvest season. The festival is a four-market days' (out-izu uka) festival, which is equivalent to one week in the English calendar. Each of these market days: Eke, Orie, Afor and Nkwo, has its own significance and represents a particular aspect of the Ikeji festival. The present work on schedule is an attempt to retell the dimensions of the Ikeji Festival for the purpose of rekindling the values that underlie the colourful and scintillating event. The historical and phenomenological method of enquiry would be employed for the purpose of this research. The present work submits that the Ikeji festival is not only a yearly ceremony, but an annual event that retells the story of the Arondizuogu people and rekindles their*

*shared values.*

**Keywords: Ikeji Festival, Arondizuogu, Stories, Values, Ancestral, Homeland.**

## **Introduction**

Festival is from two Latin words *festum* and *feria*. *Festum* means public joy, merriment, revelry and *feria* means abstaining from work in honour of the gods. During the ancient period when the words were popularly employed for the description of such occasions, they were always employed in the plural as *festas* and *feriae*. The use of the concept in the plural is indicative of the fact that festivals were always celebrated in days rather than just a day, with every day bringing with it a new event. Taking from the meanings conveyed by the two concepts, festivals had the taste of sacredness and popularity. And as a result of its popularity and sacredness comes the idea of public joy and abstaining from work-meaning that at festival times, people usually do something that they have not been doing; they abstain from something they have not been abstaining from; they carry on to extreme behaviour that which was moderated. This notwithstanding, festivals can be understood as having the following meanings: a periodically recurrent sacred or secular time for celebration marked by special observances. It could involve the celebration of a renowned person, secular or religious, or the period of harvesting a product that occupies a fundamental place in the lives of particular people. It could also be a cultural event involving the performance of works in the fine arts. This is always inundated by an atmosphere of

cheerfulness, conviviality, celebration, etc.

Festivals, as an instrument of social and community cohesion exist in virtually all human cultures (Felsenstein and Fleischer 2003) and this is evident in the increasing number of local events in different parts of the world (Falassi 1987). During the past few years, scholars have developed interest in the study of festivals. These symbolic events create a sense of identity for local people: a sense of 'this is who we are' or 'this is what we have' or 'this is what we can do'. It strengthens a people's sense of identity and sense of belongingness. With a profound realization of these factors, and the relationship between communities and festivals, a lot of studies have been done on the festivals of different peoples all over the world. The present paper is an attempt to bring to light the Ikeji festival of the Arondizuogu people of Imo state. It places a major concern on a historical understanding of the Arondizuogu people as a basis for a better grasp of the Ikeji festival. It thus, studies the festival from a phenomenological point of view, relating how it retells the story of the Arondizuogu people and rekindles their values each time it is celebrated. It goes further to study the relationship between satisfaction and future intentions to attend the festival as a structural model that would help, not just the interpretation of the Ikeji festival in relation to future events, but to help scholars and beyond in the interpretation of festivals in Igbo land and beyond. This notwithstanding, who are the Arondizuogu people?

### **The People of Arondizuogu**

## **The People of Arondizuogu**

Arondizuogu is a group of communities that spread across three local government areas in Imo State (Okigwe, Ideato North, Onuimo), however, it has the greatest area located in Umualoma town, which was formally known as Isiokpu. It is bounded to the North by Akokwa town and to the South by Omuobum. The east is occupied by Umualoma in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra state. It lies close to the equator having its Longitude between  $7^{\circ} 26'$  t,  $7^{\circ} 30'$  t and its latitude is between  $5^{\circ} 27'5$  and  $5^{\circ} 30' N$ . It is made up of twenty towns and ten autonomous communities. They were predominantly migrants. There are different perspectives as regards how the Umualoma land was acquired. For some, it was through begging, for others, trickery, for some others, it was through a guerrilla warfare and open massacre of people from Umualaoma. History has it that the people of Arondizuogu were famous for their bravery and great strength, in terms of warfare and slave trade (Akobundu 2016). This perspective supports the third record of history they got the Umualoma land through guerrilla warfare and open massacre.

The story of the Arondizuogu is anchored on two great slave trade merchants and warriors, without whom the history of the Arondizuogu would remain incomplete. Mazi Izuogu Mgbokpo and Chief Iheme, in the mid 18th century, after the abolition of slave trade, founded the “Arondizuogu.” Mazi Izuogu was a powerful slave merchant from Arochukwu, while Chief Iheme was Mazi

capital of the present Anambra State. They both fought against the people of Umualaoma and took over the town. *They used to pass through Umualaoma (Isokpu) on their way to Awka in search of slaves, and were usually haboured by a friend from Umualaoma where he slept, and later with his soldiers when going in search of slaves and with his goods (slaves) when coming back en route Calabar.*

*Both the master and the chief servant decided to kill their host and his relations, take and settle in the land when they noticed that the British colonial masters had settled at Okigwe in a bid to block their slave trade route. They also fought against the British colonial masters and conquered them. After decades of good relationship and collaboration in war and trade, Izuogu and his people (Ndizuogu) united with Iheme and his people (Ndiheme) to form the Aro kingdom of Arondizuogu which eventually became one of the largest states in the Aro Confederacy. Because of the strong link between Izuogu and Iheme, it is not surprising that the arondizuogu people refer to themselves as IZUOGU AND IHEME (Wikipedia 2016). Until this day, Arondizuogu is the biggest former Aro colony and a land of immigrants settling mainly on the rich land. Izuogu communities and their locations include:*

1. Awa – a) Ochie Uno b) Aro Umulolo
2. Uche – a) Ochie Uno b) Umuduru (near Aniche Uwakonye) c) Ikpatu (Ofe Imo) d) Aro Onu Imo
3. Njoku – a) Ochie Uno b) Aro Amuro c) Aro Okigwe d) Ikpa Akanu

Ikpa Akanu

4. Imoko – a) Ochie Uno
5. Amazu – a) Ochie Uno b) Ikpa Akaputa c) Ikpa Ocha d)  
Ndi Okoli Igbo e) Aro Amuro f) Ikpa Akwu
6. Ejezie – a) Ochie Uno
7. Adimoha – a) Ochie Uno
8. Anyake – a) Ochie Uno
9. Uwaonu – a) Aro Okigwe
10. Ucheagwu – a) Aro Umulolo
11. Ndubisi – a) Aro Umulolo
12. Ekwulu

**Theme Community and their locations:**

1. Aniche – a) Ochie Uno b) Obinetiti c) Uwakonye d) Ndi be  
Ezeana e) Ndi be Ogbuda, f) Ikpenyi g) Ogene
2. Onuoha – a) Ochie Uno b) Ofe Imo c) Aro Umulolo
3. Eze – a) Ochie Uno b) Aro Umulolo c) Aro Ofe Imo d) Umuedi
4. Okonkwo – a) Ochie Uno b) Ofe Imo
5. Ogbuonyeoma a) Ochie Uno b) Ndi be Uche c) Umudike d)  
Okwu Achara e) Umuedi f) Umu Orji
6. Akeme – a) Ochie Uno b) Ohia Uchu c) Ikpa Okoli d) Nduka e)  
Ugwaku
7. Ukwu – a) Ochie Uno b) Ofe Imo
8. Akunwanta – a) Ochie Uno b) Nkwo Fada c) Idozuka (Aro  
Umulolo)

The villages of Arondizuogu are arranged in order of seniority.

Izuogu clan has seniority over the IHEME clan. Awa and Uche are ranked first in terms of seniority due to the ongoing dispute of who should be the head of the Izuogu clan.

However, during the early part of the 19th century, Mazi Okoli Idozuka, an immigrant from Isi-Akpu Nise to Arondizuogu, a great slave warrior and known as the Chief of Staff, expanded Arondizuogu's boundaries by fighting against villages at night and market days. In these raids, many, including women and children lost their lives. Although a ruthless and almost conscienceless slave trader, Idozuka was a great leader. His first son was Nwankwo Okoro. At the age of 21 he joined his father in the slave trade. He was as ruthless and conscienceless as his father. Through collecting slaves and war-captives he was able to build a very large family. He was very popular that when the British came, they made him a Warrant Chief. The purpose was to use his influence to subdue any body and collect the tax they desperately needed (Nwokeji 2013).

### **The Ikeji Festival of Arondizuogu**

One of the greatest cultural festivals in Igboland is the Ikeji festival. How did it all begin? Several traditional historians have presented several arguments as regards the origin or history of the Ikeji festival. The first argues that it began when Dikeji, a warrior from Arochukwu went for war with the purpose of capturing territories in Ujalli, which was already occupied. In the war, he defeated the occupants of Ujalli, and instead of destroying the place completely, the king of Ujalli Eze Nwaka promised him that there would be an annual ceremony to commemorate his defeat before the gods of

annual ceremony to commemorate his defeat before the gods of ujali. This would be held annually. After some time, Eze Nwaka stopped the annual ceremony in commemoration of the victory of Dikeji; he also discontinued paying tribute. This angered Dikeji who came and cut off his head and took it to Arochukwu where the event of Eze Nwaka's defeat was celebrated as "Ikeji Ugwo". This version says that the celebration started in Ujalli from where it has now moved to Arochukwu and gradually to all the rest of Aro colonies including Arondizuogu. With the passage of time the name "Ikeji Ugwo" was cut short to "Ikeji festival".

A second version of the origin of Ikeji festival has it that Izuogu the founder of Arondizuogu was kidnapped on one of his commercial trips away from Arochukwu. During this journey, he had forgotten to take with him his traditional "Omu" (palm frond). The Omu for the Aro was a symbol of the protection of Ibim-Ukpabi, the Long juju of Arochukwu. When his kidnappers asked him where he came from and the source of his power, he said to them that he was from Aro and that his power came from "Ike-jim-Aga Mba" which means the power that leads me through towns and villages unharmed. While still under hostage, three masked figures believed to have come from Abam appeared on an Afor day and liberated Izuogu. Since that day, the people of that town started celebrating "Ike Jim Aga" which was later known as Ikeji festival.

The third version of the history of Ikeji festival has it that the festival

Aro had the privilege of going to anywhere without being harmed or enslaved or harmed. They travelled with the “Omu” (palm front). Without travelling with the Omu, an Aro could be enslaved. Any Aro man who was sold into slavery was easily identified with his saying the secret phrase “Aka Ike Jim”, meaning strong hands are holding me. No merchant hears this phrase without releasing the Aro. Anything less than this would incur the wrath of Ibini Ukpabi, the Arochukwu deity. The Aros that were killed during slave trade were remembered on the occasion called “Aka Ike Jim”, a festival that later became known as 'Ikeji’

Yam occupies a very fundamental place among the Igbo people. This explains why they give their children names like Ugoji, Ezeji, Ikeji, Umeji, Okparaji. The fourth version argues that Ikeji ceremony, as can be drawn from the name was a celebration of New Yam festival. This has been supported with the fact that yam occupies a central place in the ceremony. This perspective is attractive given that Ikeji, from translation means the tying of yam on the stakes in the barn.

While all these version are attractive, the most popular perspective, which is the position of this work on the origin of Ikeji festival goes back to the relationship between Izuogu and Iheme. After Izuogu and his chief servant Iheme had settled in their different places of abode, once in a year, as it is the custom of servants, Iheme would in consultation with other servants fix a date that they would go and work for their master Izuogu. This arrangement is usually made among them and then they would send a message to their master

work for their master Izuogu. This arrangement is usually made among them and then they would send a message to their master Izuogu to inform him of the date that they would be coming for the work. This explains why until date, the date for Ikeji is always fixed at Ndi Aniche by Ndi IHEME. After the date is fixed, Ndi Awa, the first son of their master would not be informed. They always came to help Izuogu in his yam farm, and one of the major works that they do is Ike ji, that is, tying of yam. This has been preserved right from then to this time. With the changes taking place in society, the Ike ji has gone through so many changes. Since slavery has been abolished and trade has taken over farming, all that remains of Ike ji is the ceremony that we now have. Ikeji festival is celebrated by almost all Aros in Igboland especially Arochukwu, Arondizuogu and Aro Ajalli. In Arondizuogu it is celebrated every April each year often falling alongside Easter.

The celebration begins from Eke market day when purchases of food stuff for consumption on Ikeji day and other items for offering sacrifices. The Eke market day is the market day of all Arondizuogu. It is usually a big market day. The Eke market day preceding Ikeji is always populated as the people of Izuogu believe that the items sold on the market day are provided by ancestors. The next day after Eke market day is Orié. It is the day set aside for families and communities to offer sacrifices to their ancestors in thanksgiving and in anticipation of their blessing and protection during the festival. The main festival takes place on Afor day. On this day, women exhibit their cooking talent as different types of foods are

prepared in each family home. There is a lot of eating and drinking on this day. All the masquerades from the villages in Arondizuogu assemble at the village square to perform in so many ways. This is usually the most interesting part of the festival. It takes place on Afor and Nkwo market days. The masquerades that perform during the festival include, first the “Mgbadike”, father of the masked spirit, “Aburuja” the mother of masked spirit, and their son “Ojionu”. These masquerades are accompanied by a flute player (Onye Oja) who transmits spiritual messages to the masked spirits, and the praise singer called “Okwo mkpokpo”.

On the main day, all roads lead to Nkwo-Achi the central venue of the activities. While the dancing is going on, different masquerades display their powers. The efficacies of charms are also tested on each other. The main interesting contest has got to do with the loosening of a ram tied to a post by a tiny string which the ram, under normal circumstances can break away from. Masquerades and other people interested are challenged to untie the ram. It takes only the most powerful charm to accomplish the task. The person who succeeds is declared winner of the contest and he takes the ram home as his prize (Niyi 2016).

### **Ikeji Festival as a Retelling the Arondizuogu Story**

The Igbo people just like other Africans are story telling people. They preserve their stories in various forms for the next generation. In Igbo festivities, the stories of the Igbo people are told. In the Ikeji festival, the story of the Arondizuogu people is told. The festival is the story of two great ancestors, Izuogu and Iheme. Without their

the story of two great ancestors, Izuogu and Iheme. Without their having existed, the Ikeji festival would not have existed or had the meaning that it does among the Arondizuogu people. Since the Igbo person does not just tell stories for the purpose of telling them or simply entertainment, the Ikeji festival therefore tells a story that teaches a variety of lessons, ranging from the bravery and hard work of Izuogu through his economic sense and the loyalty of his chief servant Iheme, to the Igbo philosophy of Igwebuikwe, which is seen in the cooperation of Izuogu and Iheme. Their achievements would not have been possible without the complementary roles that they played in the lives of each other. Each time this festival is celebrated, the story of the Arondizuogu people is retold, which in turn renews the life stream of the community by creating a new energy and giving sanction to the Arondizuogu authentic identity.

### **Ikeji Festival as Rekindling Arondizuogu Values**

- 1. Brotherhood:** A powerful valued rekindled at the Ikeji festival is the sense of brotherhood, community. Ikeji promotes a sense of connectedness among the people of Arondizuogu which extends to their neighbours and their spatial environment. A good number of brothers and sisters return home for the festival and during the visitations, sharings, their brotherhood is rekindled. *The value of brotherhood* among the Igbo is very importance. This explains why it is expressed in proverbs: *Ngwere ghara ukwu osisi, aka akpara ya* (If a lizard stays off from the foot

(variety is the spice of life); *otu asisi anaghi eme ohia* (a tree does not make a forest); *gidigidi bu ugwu eze* (the dignity of a king is the number of his followers); *mmetuko ahụ bu uto ndu* (the beauty of life is in mixing up with others). Mbiti (1970) has classically proverbialized the community determining role of the individual when he wrote, “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am” (p. 108). Achebe (1958) brings the essential nature of the Igbo-African communal relationship to a higher and more fundamental focus when he wrote:

A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Everyman can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so (p. 133).

With the style of existential expression, he wrote further:

We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him (p. 132).

The idea of a man asking his fellow man to scratch his back speaks of the fundamental complementary role which a

speaks of the fundamental complementary role which a fellow being plays in the life of another. This sense of brotherhood is renewed at the Ikeji festival.

2. **Ancestors:** On the Ikeji day, sacrifices are offered in honour of the ancestors. That that day they are remembered. As libation is poured in every family, families remember their ancestors and ask for their blessings. This is indicative of the fact that the African universe is made up of myriad of spirits. Death is not the final end of man and that the after-life for the African is a life of continuing relationship with the living dead. These ancestors according to Metuh (1991), are under the presidency of the *Ala* deity. They are the guidance of morality and the owners of the soil. They occupy a very significant place in Igbo life and religion. Uchendu (1965) avers that they are the invisible segment of the Igbo lineage. Their world and the human world are very similar, just like in the human world, they have their farms, their roads, their markets, the only difference is that while our world is visible, theirs is invisible. They are honoured and not worshipped during the Ikeji festival. The honour given to them is anchored on the principle of reciprocity and philosophy of reincarnation: having been honoured, they are expected to reincarnate and do for the living what they did for them.

3. **Yam:** In the Ikeji festival, one observes a cosmological

cosmic drama between god and man, land and crops. Yam is very prominent in Igbo sacrifice and life, a situation which warrants its annual elaborate festival throughout Igbo land. Yam is not just a mere crop, it represents life. The yearly Ikeji festival is not just a yearly festivity, but the yearly celebration of life. It also celebrates the relationship between man and Chukwu, who through the earth provides food for mankind (Kanu 2015a&b). The relationship between God, man, yam and the earth would be appreciated the more from the perspective of the Nri myth. At a time when there was no food on the earth, Eri offered sacrifice to Chukwu with his son and daughter. At the place where he buried his son, yam grew up from there and where he buried his daughter, cocoyam grew up from there (2004). Thus, when the Igbo celebrates yam in a yearly festival, he is not just celebrating a crop, but life.

### **A Structural Model for Ikeji Festival Sustainability Phenomenon**

This section of the research on schedule on the Ikeji festival focuses on the possibility of sustainability of the festival. To achieve this, it interprets the relationship of the festival with the fundamental elements of satisfaction, identity, authenticity and motivation. The basic reason for this study is to help, although hypothetically, the analysis of people's future intention, in terms of attendance of the festival.

#### **a. Ikeji Festival, Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention**

festival.

**a. Ikeji Festival, Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention**

When individuals attend festivals or engage in activities, it is always for the purpose of achieving an outcome (Lazarus 1991), and in most cases, it is for the purpose of achieving satisfaction. Satisfaction belongs to the realm of the emotional response to an experience. In relation to the Ikeji festival, it speaks of the emotional response of those who attend the festival towards their experience of the festival. Yuan and Jang (2008) avers that their experience maintains, increases or decreases their satisfaction level. In an economic sense, Oliver (1997) speaks of it as the consumer's response to goods and services. According to Tudoran et al (2012), such an experience would always have an impact on the behavioural intention of the consumer- either to stop consumption or to consume more of the goods and services. Usually, those who have high satisfaction in a festival in the future revisit the festival. And the number of people that occupy the streets and travel from far and near, both indigenes and non-indigenes reveals that the satisfaction level at the festival is high.

**b. Ikeji and the Question of Identity**

There is always a cognitive connection between the attendant of the Ikeji festival and the place, Arondizuogu where the festival is held. The idea of identity embodies the value of the first principle of being: the principle of identity. This principle states that every being is determined in itself, is one with itself and is consistent with itself.

The knowledge of the identity of a thing helps you know what the thing in question is and what may be legitimately attributed to it (Kanu 2013). By organizing and participating in the Ikeji festival, it gives the people of Arondizuogu an identity. Such that whenever it is mentioned, it is immediately recognized and identified with the Arondizuogu people. Thus, Derrett (2003), Gu and Ryan (2008) and Ramkisson et al (2012) assert that festivals create a strong sense of identity among a people. It strongly asserts local cultural values and preserves the traditions and cultures of a people that has been handed down from one generation to another. The place identity in the Ikeji festival provokes the loyalty of the residents and thus promotes satisfaction and future intentions.

#### **c. Authenticity and Ikeji Festival**

There is a very strong connection between festival's authenticity and the satisfaction derived from it (Getz 1997). In relation to the Ikeji festival of Arondizuogu, the perceived authenticity that the people experience to a great extent affects their decision to attend the festival the next year. The idea of authenticity does not only affect the consumption of the festival but also induces governments and non-governmental organizations that are interested in culture to invest in it knowing fully well that such an investment would promote the advancement of tourism in the state. This notwithstanding, authenticity as observed by Shin et al (2012) and Song et al (2013) has always been an antecedent of satisfaction in festivals.

#### **d. Motivation and Ikeji Festival**

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**Motivation** can be understood as the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors in a person or any other subject. It is what causes us to act, whether it is getting a plate of food to reduce hunger or reading a book to gain knowledge. As regards festivals, there is always a strong connection between satisfaction, future behavioral action towards the festival and the festival itself (Park et al 2008 and Yolal et al 2012). During the Ikeji festival, the entertainment coming from the masquerades, relaxation, meeting family members, cultural expressions, etc., gives satisfaction to the people who come for the festival. This satisfaction gives them the motivation to take a future decision to be in attendance at the festival.

#### **Ikeji Festival and Cultural Economy**

The preceding discussion has focussed on the nature and integrity of Ikeji festival among the people of Arondizuogu. However, this piece is very much interested in establishing the logical flow between the satisfaction that people gain from attending the Ikeji festival and their future intention to attend the festival. This takes us a little bit away from the phenomenological study of the Ikeji festival to an analytical study of Ikeji festival. There is a little bit shift from the otological and historical study of Ikeji festival to an economic evaluation of Ikeji festival in terms of tourism. This study would be presented in seven proposals classified as hypothesis from one to seven. This proposals or hypothesis reveals that satisfaction

people's intentions to attend the ikeji festival in the future.

**Hypothesis 1:**

**The Authenticity of Ikeji Festival positively influences people's satisfaction with the festival**

**Hypothesis 2:**

**The Authenticity of Ikeji Festival positively influences people's behavioural intentions towards the festival**

**Hypothesis 3:**

**Ikeji Festival motivation positively influences people's satisfaction with the festival**

**Hypothesis 4:**

**Ikeji Festival motivation positively influences people's behavioural intentions towards the festival**

**Hypothesis 5:**

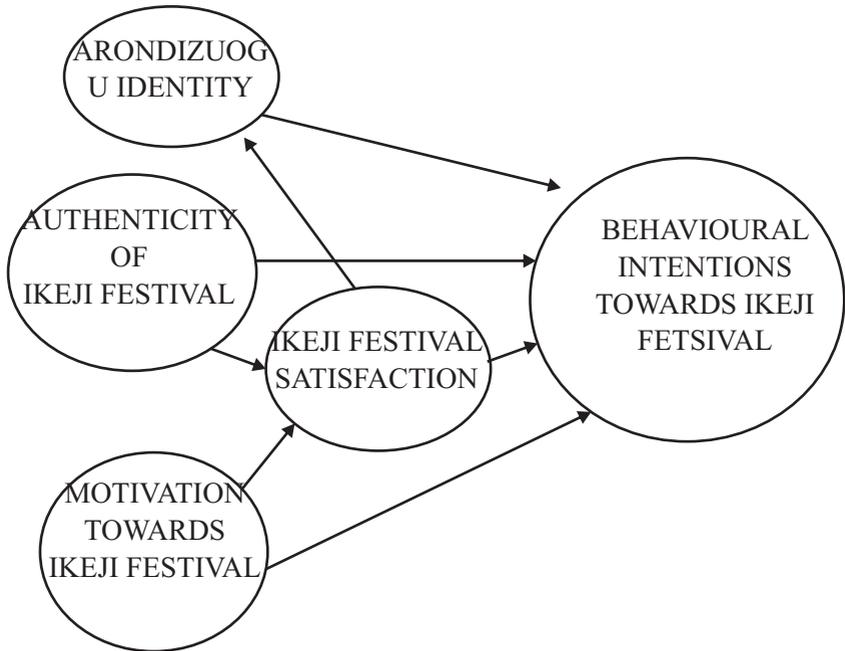
**Ikeji Festival satisfaction positively influences the Arondizuogu people's identity**

**Hypothesis 6:**

**Arondizuogu identity positively influences people's behavioural intentions towards the festival**

**Hypothesis 7:  
Ikeji Festival satisfaction positively influences people's  
future intentions towards the festival**

in general and for the promotion of festivals at the local and national levels.



**FIGURE 1. Theoretical Framework**

**Conclusion**

Festivals is a vibrant part of culture found everywhere; and has continued to serve as a cultural space and time for people to celebrate publicly communal identity, values, history, status, cultural continuity, physical survival and to cooperate with the natural order. The foregoing is a contribution to the growing interest

in the study of festivals, as an instrument of social and community cohesion. It has attempted to bring to light the Ikeji festival of the Arondizuogu people of Imo state. It places a major concern on a historical understanding of the Arondizuogu people as a basis for a better grasp of the Ikeji festival and studies the festival from a historical and phenomenological point of view, relating how it retells the story of the Arondizuogu people and rekindles their values each time it is celebrated. It goes further to study the relationship between satisfaction and future intentions to attend the festival as a structural model that would help, not just the interpretation of the Ikeji festival in relation to future events, the model is designed to help Igbo scholars and beyond in the interpretation of festival. In the study of the Ikeji festival, this piece has discovered that there is a very strong relationship between the topsy-turvy events of the festival and the people's daily way of life. This is because a careful analysis of every festival reveals the identity of the people who are celebrating the festival. In every festival, there is always an echo of who the people are, what they have and what they can do. Beyond a historical and phenomenological study of the Ikeji festival, this paper introduces the relevance of cultural economy and sustainability into an interpretation of the festival. It argues that for the sustainability of the Ikeji festival, its organizers must pay attention to the satisfaction gained by those who attend.

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