Women as Custodians of Indigenous Craft Skills and Their Contributions to Cultural Heritage Tourism Development in Inyi, Oji River Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of women in preserving indigenous craft skills and their impact on cultural heritage tourism development in Inyi, Nigeria. In Inyi, women are the custodians of craft like pottery making. A qualitative research method was employed using semi-structured interviews, and participant observation, and documentary source. Key informants included potters, community leaders and tourism stakeholders who were knowledgeable about the indigenous knowledge of the study area. Inyi pottery represents cultural assets that could promote cultural heritage tourism development if harnessed properly. The rationale for the study is lack of empirical literature on Inyi women as custodians of craft (pottery making). Pottery making supports household livelihood. The study demonstrates cultural continuity and intergenerational knowledge transfer. However, the study identifies key challenges limiting women's full participation in heritage tourism, including cultural erosion**,** inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance and credit, weak markets linkages, weak institutional support, and low integration of craft production into formal tourism planning. The paper argues that empowering women craft custodians through capacity building, policy inclusion, and sustainable tourism frameworks can enhance cultural heritage tourism development in rural Nigeria. The study enhances tourism and heritage scholarship by emphasizing gendered perspectives in cultural resource management, providing policy insights that align with sustainable development goals focused on gender equality, decent work, and cultural sustainability.

Keywords: Women custodianship; Indigenous craft skills; Cultural heritage tourism; Sustainable tourism; Inyi; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, pottery as an indigenous craft is deeply embedded in women's social roles and cultural responsibilities. These practices serve as a vehicle through which cosmologies, histories and aesthetic values are sustained. Despite the cultural significance, women's craft practices are frequently marginalized in heritage discourse and tourism policy, unveiling gendered invisibility in African cultural economies. Indigenous women are not only excluded from public decision making, but they are often invisible as knowledge makers, especially in mainstream science, which has undervalued their knowledge (Aluko, 2018). In many African societies, women are central in the preservation and transmission of indigenous craft skills, which function not only as economic activities but also as makers of gendered identity, memory, and belonging. Women's crafts practices express African identity scholarship, which showcase local agency in understanding Africa's past and present. Pottery making in Inyi reveal women's voice and experiences in indigenous epistemologies.

Rural women are pivotal to development in African countries as they play diversified roles in development. They contribute to the family and wage activities, engage in marketing and the distribution of foodstuff and as wives

and mothers ensure the survival of the family and collectively, the society. Their domestic activities vitally contribute to the maintenance of the local economy to enhance sustainable development (Olatokun & Ayanbode, 2008). Rural women use their indigenous knowledge to develop survival strategies. For example, in Yazd, the "desert capital" of the Islamic Republic of Iran, women have devised a number of highly sophisticated technologies for agricultural production, such as food production in a tunnel constructed underground (Olatokun & Ayanbode, 2008). Pottery products made by Inyi women serve as strategic tool for tourism promotion. The study examines women as custodians of indigenous craft skills and analyzes the contributions to cultural heritage tourism development in Inyi, southeastern Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

African Identity and Indigenous Cultural Practices

African identity is expressed through cultural practices, symbols, and social relations. Cultural expressions include crafts, rituals, and performances (Gyekye, 1996; Mbiti, 1990). Craft production embodies local histories, cosmologies, and gendered divisions of labour, making it a critical lens for understanding how identity is constructed and sustained in everyday life. Of example is Lango pottery, which was primarily produced by women, is a centuries old craft deeply embedded in the social and ritual life of the people. The process involves coiling and molding local clay (awor), which is then fired in open bonfires (Robert & Weiwei, 2026). Lango pottery has a highly symbolic and practical typology. Important types include "the Awor," a big, multipurpose pot for collecting and storing water. "The Agulu" is a pot with a large mouth that is used to cook staple foods like sorghum and millet. "The Abino" is a smaller pot used to brew local beer (kwete) or serve sauces. "Adek" is a small, delicate pot with ritual significance that is frequently used in ceremonies related to ancestral veneration, libations, and traditional healing. This legacy is more than just practical; it is a storehouse of indigenous knowledge, aesthetics, and cosmological beliefs, with decorations and shapes passing down cultural identity through the generations (Robert & Weiwei, 2026).

Women, Craft, and Cultural Identity

Feminist African scholars highlight women's cultural labour as foundational to identity formation, even though it is often rendered invisible in formal narratives of heritage and development (Mama, 1997). Women's craft skills operate as repositories of memory and cultural meaning, transmitted across generations and embedded in social relationships. Through craft production, women assert cultural authority and negotiate their identities within patriarchal social structures. Rural African communities, from the time of our ancestors, have been greatly endowed with 'special' knowledge with which activities were carried out and notable progress made (Olatokun & Ayanbode, 2008). Women contributions have been noted as crucial to biodiversity management, the sustenance of family and community, and the development of new knowledge (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)., 2005). Women produce 80% of the food in Africa, 60% of the food in Asia, and 40% of the food in Latin America (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)., 2005). Due to their work providing food, water, fuel, medicines, fodder, and other necessities to their families, rural women have wide and diverse knowledge about the uses of local resources (Aluko, 2018). The success of development projects and initiatives in Africa depends solely upon grassroot participation of local people; which is a function of the understanding and harnessing of their Indigenous Knowledge. More importantly, rural women as custodians of this knowledge should be recognized and encouraged to use it to enhance sustainable development (Olatokun & Ayanbode, 2008).

Indigenous Crafts as Cultural, Tourism Product and Economic Resources.

Indigenous craft represents the tangible expression of cultural knowledge, skills, and identity, often passed down through generations. These crafts serve not only as cultural markers but also as potential drivers of economic development through tourism (Richards, 2018a). Heritage tourism, in turn, emphasizes the preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural resources for educational, recreational, and economic purposes (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). The intersection of indigenous craft and heritage tourism has attracted scholarly attention, particularly in the context of sustainable cultural tourism in developing regions.

Cultural heritage tourism provides a platform through which indigenous crafts can gain renewed visibility and value. While tourism can commodify culture, it can also serve as a space for cultural affirmation and identity expression when controlled by local actors (Richards, 2018b). For African communities, craft-based heritage tourism offers opportunities to present self-defined identities rather than externally imposed representations. Heritage tourism has been widely recognized as a means of promoting cultural sustainability while providing economic opportunities for local communities (Graham et al., 2000). Cultural heritage sites, festivals, and craft markets attract domestic and international tourists, generating revenue and incentivizing the preservation of traditional skills (UNWTO., 2022). Community-Based Tourism Theory posits that active local participation in tourism development enhances both cultural authenticity and economic benefits, as communities directly manage and benefit from cultural resources (Scheyvens, 2002). Indigenous crafts often form an integral part of heritage tourism experiences, providing tourists with tangible souvenirs and immersive cultural interactions (Richards, 2018b).

Indigenous crafts represent tangible expressions of intangible knowledge, including traditional techniques, symbolism, and community narratives (Smith, 2020). These crafts are repositories of cultural identity, reflecting the customs, beliefs, and aesthetics of their creators. For instance, beadwork, pottery, weaving, and carving often encode stories of lineage, spirituality, and social norms, serving as material carriers of collective memory (Ndlovu, 2017). African Identity Theory emphasizes that indigenous crafts help communities assert cultural uniqueness and continuity, particularly in contexts of globalization and cultural homogenization (Ndlovu, 2017). Furthermore, women, as primary custodians of craft skills, play a central role in intergenerational knowledge transfer and cultural preservation (Moyo & Chikodzi, 2021). Indigenous crafts are increasingly recognized for their economic potential, particularly within cultural and heritage tourism markets (Richards, 2018b). Craft production provides livelihoods for artisans, creates microenterprise opportunities, and contributes to household income, especially in rural communities (UNESCO, 2013). Community-Based Tourism Theory suggests that when local populations actively manage craft-based tourism initiatives, both economic benefits and cultural authenticity are enhanced (Scheyvens, 2002). Tourist demand for authentic cultural experiences such as craft workshops, craft markets, and cultural festivals translates directly into economic opportunities for indigenous artisans (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). By monetizing traditional skills, communities can sustain craft production, invest in local infrastructure, and support broader development objectives. While crafts have economic potential, commercialization poses challenges to cultural integrity. The risk of commodification arises when traditional products are altered to meet tourist expectations, potentially undermining symbolic meaning and authenticity (Graham et al., 2000). Sustainable cultural tourism frameworks emphasize the need to balance economic benefits with cultural preservation, ensuring that craft practices remain meaningful and culturally embedded (Butler, 1999). Strategies such as cooperative artisan groups, government support, training in business management, and integration of digital marketing platforms can help maintain both cultural and economic value (Moyo & Chikodzi, 2021; Richards, 2018b). These strategies also foster women's empowerment by giving female artisans access to markets, financial independence, and social recognition.

Tourism offers a strategic avenue for promoting indigenous craft and heritage preservation while fostering socioeconomic development. Craft-based tourism not only diversifies income sources but also empowers marginalized groups, particularly women, through skill utilization and entrepreneurship (UNESCO, 2013). According to the Gender and Development Theory, integrating women into craft-based tourism initiatives enhances equitable development and strengthens community resilience (Moser, 1993). Sustainable cultural tourism frameworks advocate for balancing economic gains with the protection of cultural and environmental resources (Butler, 1999). In this context, indigenous craft production and marketing within tourism ecosystems contribute to cultural sustainability, preserving traditional knowledge systems while adapting to contemporary market demands (Smith, 2020; Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

Despite its potential, the integration of indigenous craft into tourism faces challenges, including commercialization pressures, loss of authenticity, limited access to markets, and inadequate policy support (Hoffman, 2016). There is also the risk of cultural commodification, which may undermine the spiritual and social significance of crafts (Graham et al., 2000). Nevertheless, strategic tourism development that emphasizes community participation, capacity building, and ethical promotion of craft can create sustainable outcomes. Digital technologies, including online craft marketplaces and virtual heritage tours, offer new opportunities for indigenous artisans to reach global audiences while preserving cultural integrity (Richards, 2018a).

Role of Inyi pottery.

A. **Social cohesion and cultural preservation**
Inyi pottery is essential tool for maintaining cultural traditions. The craft is a library of Inyi indigenous knowledge, with mothers passing on techniques, symbols, and uses to their daughters verbally. Cultural lifecycle of Inyi people depends on pottery products. They unite the people and preserve their identity. For instance, special pots are used during marriage negotiation, childbirth, and funeral rites, anchoring these events in tangible cultural practices. The motifs on the pottery products are not common, they convey social values, historical narratives, and clan identity, strengthening a sense of community in a world that is modernizing quickly.

B. **Economic Sustenance and Livelihood:** Pottery is traditional craft that has provided economic sustenance and self-reliance for Inyi household, especially women (Ejikeme, 2024). It is a source of independent income and a livelihood strategy for potters. Inyi women sell their pottery products at both local and urban markets. At times people go to the potter's house to buy the wares, particularly retail sellers. Pottery making is seen as resilient, low capital enterprise that contributes to household food security and poverty alleviation. While the advent of metal and plastic containers has challenged the domestic demand for traditional pottery, a parallel market persists for ritual uses, and a growing tourist and cultural heritage market offers new, albeit limited, economic opportunities. Thus, the craft supports both subsistence and the potential for small-scale commercial enterprise (Robert & Weiwei, 2026).

C. **Promotion of Cultural Heritage Tourism and Souvenirs:** Cultural heritage serves as a vital link between the past and present, providing communities with a sense of identity, pride, and continuity. In the context of tourism heritage not only enriches the visitor experience but also offers an opportunity to showcase and preserve indigenous knowledge and craftsmanship. One of the most tangible ways this occurs is through the sale and exchange of cultural souvenirs-objects that serve as reminders of place, people and tradition (Alhaji et al., 2025)**.** The pottery products are sold as souvenirs to visitor and tourist especially during festivals in Inyi. It shows the identity of the destination area visited. The visitors/tourists take home mementoes that will remind them of their visit. The economic advantage of souvenir is high (Shen & Lai, 2022). The economic gains can be seen in generation of job opportunities, boost in economic activities, increase in income generation, and increase in the purchase of the cultural handicrafts, etc. the economic gains are extended also to the cultural resources of the host communities specifically on arts and crafts which are acquired by tourists as souvenirs (Alhaji et al., 2025). Souvenirs preserve identity and promoting cultural awareness among visitor. The pottery products were traditionally used in homes, ceremonial and social contexts, its potential as a tourist souvenir remains largely untapped. Souvenirs also serve as substances that mark or memorialize travel experiences and are imperative elements of the tourist experience (Li, 2023; Manola & Balermpas, 2020). Souvenirs have long played a vital role in travel. Early accounts indicate that even thousands of years back earliest Egyptians, Romans and other explorer-travelers brought souvenirs home from their voyages overseas (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Souvenirs plays various role in tourism promotion; it serves as a supplement to tourist attractions, it also serves as a point of attraction to a destination, it serves as a memory store for the tourists, it promotes the image of the destination and provide means of economic gains to the communities (Alhaji et al., 2023). As stated by Rosenbaum and Wong (2008) imaginably it is instinctive that visitors are attracted to patronize a particular destination for its cultural resources. Handcrafts can stay alive merely when they are economically worthwhile. It is obvious that in a lot of tourist destinations, the tourist souvenir business not just has contributed considerably to indigenous economies but similarly has regularly facilitated in sustaining the cultural craftsmanship and had aided in keeping thriving such traditions in destinations that might otherwise have lost these abilities and practices. This is specifically factual among the developing countries of the world, even though, in advanced nations, tourist demand can be an essential element in nourishing native traditions (Richards, 2007; Willians, 1998). Studies show that cultural souvenirs contribute to heritage awareness and community pride (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Swanson and Timothy (2012) emphasized that tourists are drawn to products that tell a story or reflect authenticity. Littrel, Anderson and Brown (1993) opined that tourists often seek souvenirs that represent the authenticity of the places they visit. Traditional crafts such as textiles, pottery or hand-woven fans reflect the unique aesthetics, history and values of the communities that produce them. Labelling

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study are applied throughout the analysis to interpret the findings.

A. **African Identity Theory:** This perspective allows women's craft practices to be understood as expressions of indigenous identity rather than mere economic activities. African Identity Theory is used to understand how women's pottery practices express and sustain cultural identity in the face of modernization and cultural erosion. The study examines how the motifs, forms, and uses of Inyi pottery encode cultural meanings and historical narratives that reinforce community identity.
B. **Feminist Cultural Theory:** Feminist theory falls under the umbrella of critical theory, which in general have the purpose of destabilizing systems of power and oppression (Arinder, 2025). As Hooks (2000) states, "Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. The theory addresses the inequalities between man and women in social, political and economic structures. Feminist Cultural Theory is applied to analyze the gendered dimensions of pottery making, including the ways in which women's craft skills are devalued or rendered invisible in heritage and tourism discourse, and how women negotiate their identities within patriarchal social structures through craft production.
C. **Community-Based Heritage and Tourism Theory:** The theory underscore local participation, ownership, and control over cultural resources. Together, these perspectives enable an analysis of women's craft skills as gendered cultural capital central to identity formation and heritage tourism development. Community-Based Heritage and Tourism Theory is used to assess the extent to which women potters participate in tourism planning and decision-making, and to evaluate the potential for craft-based tourism to generate community benefits when local actors are empowered to control cultural resources.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the cultural, gendered, and economic dimensions of women's custodianship of pottery making in Inyi.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design using ethnographic methods to explore women lived experiences, knowledge, practices, and contributions to indigenous crafts. Qualitative descriptive design "is a straight descriptive summary of the informational contents of data organized in a way that best fits the data (Ejikeme, 2024). The ethnographic approach enabled the researchers to engage directly with the pottery-making environment and document the practices, skills, meanings, and experiences associated with the craft. Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, direct field observation, and photographic documentation. Primary data were collected through semi-structured, with women craft practitioners (potters), non-potters, artisans and users. Direct field observation of the pottery making processes were carried out to document traditional methods and opportunities for presenting pottery as a cultural tourism resource. The research used secondary data such as journals, books, and internet sources to support the findings. The data from the interview session was descriptively analyzed. Inyi was purposively selected as the study area due to its history with indigenous pottery making. The continued practice of pottery making highlights a significant aspect of the material culture and livelihood practices of the Inyi people. The declining number of active potters in contemporary Inyi alerts us to the importance of documenting the surviving indigenous knowledge and continuity over time. The potters passed down the knowledge of the indigenous craft through generations. The presence of elderly potters, artisans, users, and other community members with the knowledge is a plus in the preservation of the oral history of pottery production in Inyi. The survival of the pottery tradition offers an opportunity to examine its potential as a cultural heritage tourism resource. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with direct involvement or insight into the production, promotion, consumption and marketing of pottery products. A total of 28 participants were interviewed, including 7 potters, 6 non-potters, 5 artisans, and 10 users of pottery products.

Study Area

Inyi is in Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. Inyi is about 23km North-east of Enugu and about 60km from Anambra State. Inyi is made up of 9 (nine) villages. The villages include Amankwo, Obule, Alum, Agbalidi, Umuagu, Akwu, Nkwere, and Umuome (Ejikeme, 2012, 2024). Inyi is bounded on the south by Awlaw, east by Achi and west is Akpugoeze, Ufuma is on the southeast, and then Ugwuoba on the North-west. The main vegetation found in Inyi is the tropical rainforest with marked seasonal variation and two rainfall maxima which last from April to October. Inyi is blessed with numerous springs, streams and rivers. These rivers flow to Mmamu River. Culturally, Inyi people depended on their environment for existence. The land of Inyi is fertile, which is good in cassava, yam, cocoayam, and other food and vegetable crops. Inyi is known for their craftmanship. They make baskets, hand fans, wood carving; Odu n'Ikwe (mortar and pestle), Ekwe (wooden gong), Igba (Drum), Abike (A special drum for Ozo title holders), Ikoro (A large wooden community gong) and pottery products. Pottery products include oku (a lidless plate/bowl) of different sizes, ite miri (water pot), ite mmii (wine pot), flower vessel and many others. Inyi have local markets where these crafts are sold. They sell them at Nkwo Inyi, Ekegbo Achi and Afo Ozegu Ufuma.

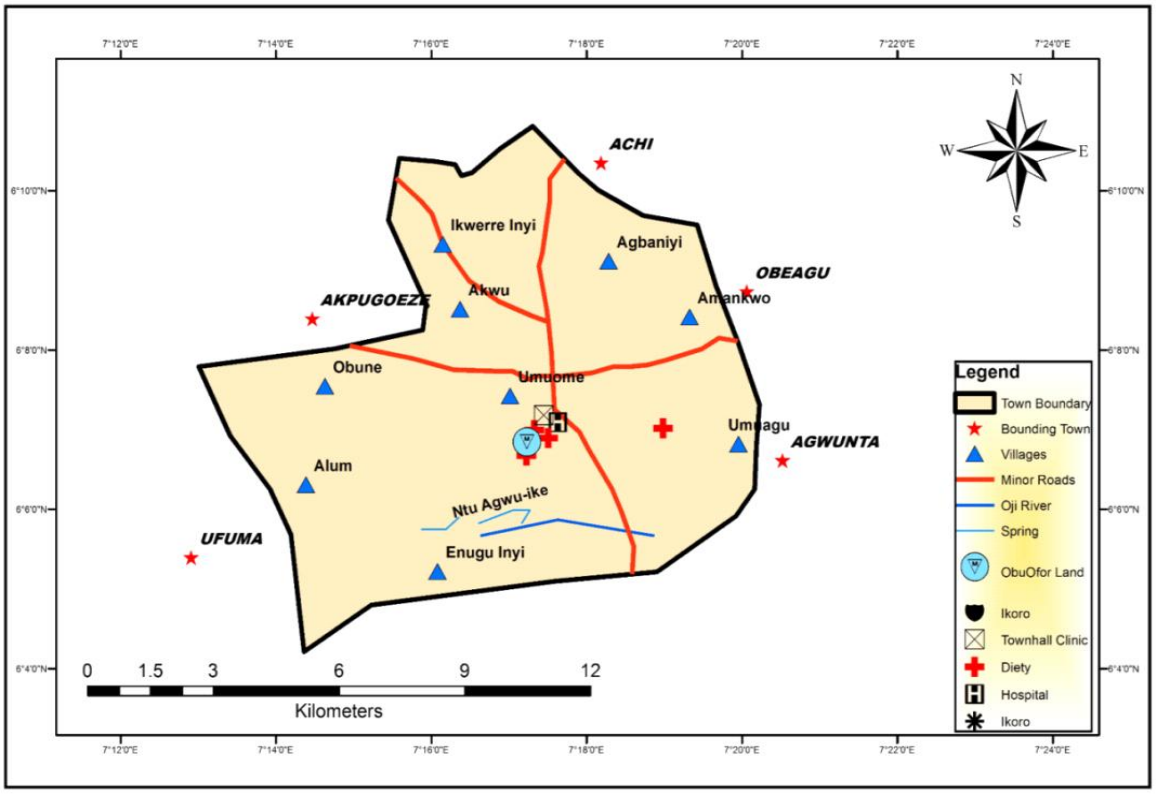


Figure 1: Map of Inyi Showing the Nine Villages

FINDINGS

Data from interviews and observations were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Themes were around the objectives of the study. The findings were interpreted in relation to existing literature on women craftmanship and tourism marketing. Ethical consideration informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. The research adhered to ethical standards for working with indigenous communities and cultural practitioners (potters).

Indigenous Craft Skills Practiced by Women in Inyi

The interviews show that the main indigenous craft skill practiced by women in Inyi is pottery making from clay. Although most of the respondents note that there are several other craft-related activities practiced by Inyi women, like broom making, palm oil processing, and food processing. Pottery making among Inyi women is the strongest and most historically known craft in Inyi. The uniqueness of the Inyi pottery products has attained global recognition. The processes of pottery making reveal the resilience of the women potters in Inyi. All respondents emphasized that pottery making is for strong women who can go through rigorous ways of production.

Pottery Production Process

All the potters interviewed reported the same process of Inyi pottery production. Clay is the main raw material in the pottery production in the study area. Clay deposits are found in different places in Inyi. Inyi has clay deposits in Obule, Alum, and Agbariji. It is in abundance, cheap, and collected from the deposit. Inyi is endowed with this abundant earthly powder produced by the weathering and disintegrating of granitic and other feldspar bearing rocks. Clay when wet forms into desired shape. The organic matter act as gum or glue. Research showed that clay that stays longer time becomes more plastic and workable. Clay shrinks when it dries and shrinks more when fired, and this creates all sorts of problems in making pottery (Ejikeme, 2012). However, pottery is a craft that involves shaping wet clays and firing them under heat to trigger a chemical transformation, thus hardening the clay. Certain amount of uncertainty attends the firing process. Commercial production of pottery products is done during dry season to avoid rain disturbance or disruptions. Dry season was the peak period for pottery production. Firstly, frequent flooding of clay mines during rainy season do not happen on dry season. Secondly, considering the fact that pottery making is an adjunct work that women do during dry season when there is little or no farm work, providing of opportunity to concentrate in pottery making to sell during rainy season. Thirdly, all operations take place in an open air, at times a workshop that is waterproofed. Fourthly, the pottery products produced needed intense sunshine to dry. Finally, during rainy season, collecting of firewood for firing and clay collecting are difficult situation. Only small pottery products that could be kept in the workshop or shade to dry are produced. From the interview, the respondents said that making pottery items are delicate, which has required stages, each process should not exceed the time limit. For instance, after molding, the items should not allow to stay in the sun for a long period. No rain or water should touch the products when displayed in the sun to dry before firing. This could course breaking of the items during firing. To avoid this, potters are conscious anywhere they are to avoid exceeding the time they supposed to do one thing or the other for pottery products. The potter's excuses are honoured in any gathering knowing the rigorous ways of their skill.

Stages in Pottery Making

❖ **Clay Collecting**

Inyi is blessed with clay deposits in Obule, Alum and Agbalidi. Obule Inyi clay deposit is known as Osuigwe, which is the name of the person that the clay is in his land. Alum has four deposits, these include Owerre Umuibudu, Obodoudele, Ogho Ochiri Utu, and Obunma in Duli. Agbariji deposit is in Aguike. Clay deposit in Obule Inyi is been sold because it is owned by an individual called Osuigwe. In Alum and Agbariji, people collect clay free as they want because the deposits are community property. To have a better quality of pottery product, a potter may decide to mix clays from different clay deposits. The collection of clay is risky because clay deposits are inside a mine (deep hole), as years goes by the hole deepens. A digged-up clay could be allowed for months, wrapped in a bag, or kept in a good container. Inyi potters believed that old clay is better.

❖ **Preparation of the Clay for Pot Making**

The clay is collected and kept on the sun to dry for two or more days. It is grounded to a fine texture. Then, the clay to be used immediately is soaked in the water in big bowl for three or four days. The potter uses hand or leg to produce a dough like paste. Tempering material, which is always grounded body herd is mixed with the clay. The potsherd and tempering material are grounded using upper and lower grinding stone. The tempering material added to the plastic clay is called *mgba* (grog). The tempering material helps the plastic clay to be less plastic and easy to work with. It adds strength to the clay (Ejikeme, 2012, 2024). It is also help in a greater measure to reduce shrinkage propensity of the clay. Kneading method is used in mixing the clay and grog. The kneading is done to achieve uniform consistency, until many loaves are formed, piled up in the potter's workshop.

❖ **Forming Pottery Product**

The potter's comfort in the production is important. Firstly, the potter assembles all the tools and clay needed for the production around her. This is to make sure that she will not be distracted when working. Looking for a tool when working could cause damage. A bowl of water is always beside her for the smoothening or washing of hand during production. The potters have a workshop or shade that provides excellent ventilation strictly where she does all her pottery production. The worked clay is used by the potters. They sit on the bare ground when set for work. Potters uses an old pot neck or shoulder as a pedestal stand or they could produce a mold pedestal stand for pottery making. The pedestal stand is called in Inyi dialect *Olu Alulu* or *akpuruakpu*.

Plate 1: Different Pedestal Stands (Olu Alulu or Akpuruakpu)

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork 2024

Plate 2: Women potters from Alum: A. Onyenonanma Madu (Umuochie), B. Caroline Ilomuanya (Umuachaogu), and C. Ezinne Josephine Leweuwa (Umu-Avu).

The potter's tools consist of smoothening and decorative tools. The smoothening tools are *kworinkwo* (smooth pebbles), *oghuru* (wooden paddles), *azu aku oyibo* (coconut shell), udara leave (native apple leaf used in shaping the mouth of products made), while decorative tools are *nde* (bamboo stick shaped to create design), *uli* (black indigo), rag cloth for wiping and smoothening and many other smoothening sticks (Ejikeme, 2012, 2024). A potter start forming an item by building clay into 20 coils as the product she wants to produce is. The coiled clay is called *uro ehurehu*. According to Ejikeme (Ejikeme, 2012, 2024), the potter picks the coil in her right hand in anti-clockwise as she flattens it in her left hand to create a hollow. With careful pressure between the fingers, the wall is gradually thinned and developed into a form. It will continue to form the base until it is big to carry in the hand to form. The formed base will allow to rest on a pedestal stand, *olu alulu* (see plate 1). The pedestal stand helps the potter to turn the mold to any direction she wants. The molding continues as she uses her left hand to support the mold and the interior of the growing pot is smoothened with coconut shell, *"azu aku oyibo"*(Iloka, 2024; Madu, 2024) (Per. Comm., 2024). The potter continues to build with the coil to a desires size she has in mind to produce. At this stage, she gets the desired uniform thickness by adding more clay coil and use wooden paddle called *nchiri uro* to beat around the mouth, forming the rim. Then, the potter uses light wooden plank to flatten the mouth into shape. The wooden plank is known as *"ihe eji atunata onu uro"*. Coconut shell, *udara* leaf, *obara uro* (spatula made from palm frond stick), and piece of rag cloth are smoothening tools used to get uniform thickness. The interior is smoothened before the exterior side. Inyi pottery produts are known for its appliqué found on the design. After the smoothening, the potter adds some pinches of clay coil at the neck wall to make it stronger to other parts.

❖ **Decoration:**

The decoration on Inyi pottery products is unique, showing the cultural identity of the area. When the product is leather hard, an applique could be attached, which may be an animal like Lizard or leaf will be attached. The decorations are put when clay is leather hard. Trimming and handle attachment occurs at this stage. The major decorations in Inyi pottery are burnishing, impression incision and excision. Most of the decoration is applied, or

applique. A river pebble *kworinkwo* is used in doing burnishing. Applied or applique is done by adding clay when the product formed is leader hard. In Inyi pottery design, animals like Lizard, Crocodile and birds of different types are fixed as handle or in the body (Iloka, 2024; Ilomuanya, 2024). The applique design is noticeable in ite ike (big ceremonial pot). Excision and groove are achieved by removal of bits of clay to create a good design using "*Nde"* tool (made from bamboo stick). The designs could be seen in *oku nri* (eating plate), and *oku ozo* (plate for title men). After any decoration, the pottery product is kept on the sun or allowed to dry before firing. The groove lines could be in vertical, horizontal or concentric that covers the body of the product. Before firing, aga design is added to the products.

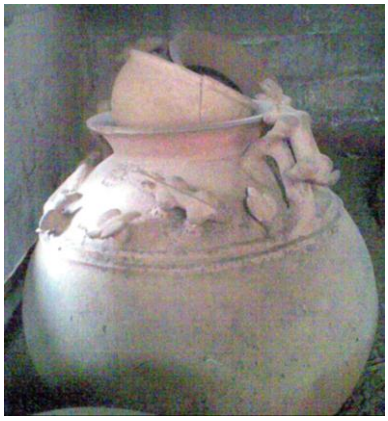


Plate 3: Inyi big pots with Applique or Relief Decoration (Ite Ike/Mbo).

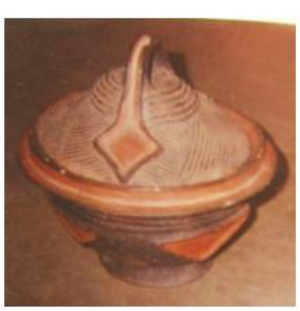
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2012 (Pot made by Late Mrs Nwaebewe from Agbalidi Inyi)

❖ **Firing of the Pottery Product**

Unfired pottery product is called greenware and they are fragile and easily broken. Extra care is needed in handling it. In the study area, firing of pottery is called *"ilu uro"*. In firing, *ahurihu* is used as foundation with baked clay, and many pedestal stand to wedge the pots or/and bowl from collapsing. Firewood from *oka* and *ukpaka* tree are the best during firing. In setting the firing spot, the potter makes a circular form with baked clay and pedestal stand, alternating it with *ahurihu* grass and firewood. More grasses are put at interval to feed the fire. The firing may last for two hours or more depending the size of the pots or bowl. The *uli* design is applied after firing. The potter offloads her wares with two long sticks, avoiding the hotness. The potter checks the quality of the pot/bowl by knocking at the back. The one that produce good sound are assembled together, ready to be sold in the market. The spoilt ones will serve as tempering material in subsequent pottery making. *Ikwo nshi* meaning leaking pot is another way of knowing that the pot is not good.

Women as Custodians of Indigenous Crafts Knowledge in Inyi

Findings revealed that Inyi women are the custodians of pottery making. During an interview, the respondents said that: *they have not heard or seen a man potter in Inyi*. Men could help in the raw materials procurement like digging out the clay and carrying it home, cutting firewood for firing, fetching water and activities associated with the production, but not in making pottery products. God designed the skill for women in building thame to be self-reliant, thereby helping their husband and family. With this skill, no woman was assumed to be a complete housewife in the study area. In Inyi dialect, "Umu nwanyi Inyi na agba mbo", which means that Inyi women are industrious. Although, most potters practice their pottery skill as part-time activities. This gives them opportunity to engage in their farm work. The majority of women who worked in pottery throughout pre-colonial and colonial times were paganists who followed African traditional religion. Nowadays, few potters go to church because their kids think that pagan worship is the same as fetishism. Ejikeme (2012) notes that this could be as a result of aesthetic nature of the skill that has connection with the environment. At the same time Uli which is one of the decorative substances in pottery making is used by pagan worshipers in beautifying their body during festival period like, Otute (New Yam) and Ajana festival. Uli is also used in exterior and interior decoration of mud houses in Inyi (Obiadinma, 2025). Pottery products produced include: water pots, cooking pots, storage vessels, ritual containers, palm wine pots and decorative pottery (see plate 4). Some produce big pots for traditional marriage called *Mbo* (see Plate 5).



a

b

c

d

e

f

g

Plate 4: Some Samples of Pottery Product: a: Oku Ozo b: Ite Mmanya c. Oku Nri for Cooking, d. Oku Akwu, e. Oku Akwu for Storing Water, f. Oku Ncha, and g. Oku Nri

Plate 5: A & B is Big Pots with the Potter (Mrs Cecilia Onyenemelu from Umuilem Agbariji) for Marriage Ceremony (Mbo)

Women are the custodians of pottery because such craft are passed to generations through informal education within families, mainly in matrilineal system. Mothers and grandmothers teach their daughters the techniques, cultural meaning and social value attached in pottery making. This is indigenous system of apprenticeship through observation, imitation, practical demonstrations, and oral instructions. This method of transmission ensures the continuity of cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. In Nigeria, where employment opportunities are highly limited, pottery making of women contributing to household income and community social obligations. Potters are respected in the community because of their skill. This is evident on the respondents' remark that all the potters are noble women with calm disposition. They are kindhearted women that manage their home and life in a natural way, believing that nature blesses their handwork. The sculpture of a woman making pot is a memorial of the pottery craft in Inyi, showing indigenous creativity (see Plate 6). Miriam Babangida attracted pottery centre /site in Inyi for this purpose. The Commissioning plaque reads "Better Life Pottery Project in Inyi, Oji River L.G.A. Inaugurated by the First Lady Mrs Maryam Babangida on Monday, 5th November, 1990". Both the kiln and the administrative structure have dilapidated and abandoned owing to the absence of management culture by the successive administrations (see Plate 7 and 8).

Pottery making in Inyi is a highly functional and cultural significance craft of women from time immemorial. The pottery products are used in traditional ceremonies and rituals in Inyi cosmology. Thus, it holds strong cultural symbol. Tourists speak of the aesthetic expressions on the pottery products which tells the story of the makers and ancestors. Alhaji et al. (2025) notes that tourists understand and connect with the heritage behind a craft, they are more likely to buy and value it as souvenir during visit to Inyi or buy in their local market, Nkwo Inyi Market. The belief between culture, and nature are found in the Inyi pottery. The raw materials are present in the environment.

Plate 6: Statue of a woman potter in Inyi

Plate 7: Dilapidate Pottery Centre/Site built by First Lady, Miriam Babangida in 1990.

Plate 8: Commissioning Plaque for Historical and Material Heritage Source

Table 1: Stages of Pottery Making, Tools Used, and Cultural Significance in Inyi

The following table is based specifically on the pottery-production process documented for Inyi, including the indigenous terminology and practices described in the supplied material.

Stage of Pottery Making	Activities Involved	Tools/Materials Used	Cultural Significance
1. Clay Collection	Clay is collected from deposits at Obule, Alum and Agbariji.	Clay, digging tools, bags/containers	Demonstrates indigenous knowledge of local geological resources and Inyi's relationship with its natural environment.
2. Clay Preparation	Clay is dried for two or more days, ground into a fine texture, soaked in water for three or four days, and kneaded into a workable paste.	Grinding stones, water, large bowl, hands/feet, *mgba* (grog/ground potsherd)	Preserves indigenous knowledge of clay preparation and techniques for reducing shrinkage and strengthening pottery.
3. Forming/Moulding	Clay is formed into coils and gradually built into the desired vessel. The potter develops the base and walls while maintaining appropriate thickness.	*Olu alulu/akpuruakpu* (pedestal), *uro ehurehu* (clay coil), *azu aku oyibo* (coconut shell), *oghuru* (wooden paddle), water	Represents the specialized technical knowledge traditionally transmitted among women through observation, imitation, demonstration and oral instruction.
4. Smoothing and Shaping	The interior and exterior surfaces are smoothened, while the mouth and rim are shaped and given uniform thickness.	*Kworinkwo* (smooth pebble), coconut shell, *udara* leaf, *obara uro* (palm-frond spatula), rag cloth, wooden plank	Reflects the artisan's skill, precision and aesthetic knowledge. It also contributes to the distinctive appearance of Inyi pottery.

5. Decoration	Decorative elements are applied when the vessel reaches the leather-hard stage. Burnishing, incision, excision, grooves and appliqué designs are produced.	*Kworinkwo*, *nde* (bamboo tool), clay appliqué, *uli* (black indigo), leaves, animal forms	One of the strongest expressions of Inyi cultural identity. Lizards, crocodiles, birds, leaves and geometric patterns communicate indigenous artistic traditions and cultural meanings.
6. Drying	Decorated pottery is placed in the sun and allowed to dry before firing. Potters carefully protect the products from rain and excessive exposure.	Sunlight, open-air drying area/workshop	Demonstrates indigenous environmental knowledge and the ability to adapt pottery production to seasonal conditions.
7. Firing (*Ilu uro*)	Dried pottery is arranged carefully and fired in an open firing structure. Firing may last two hours or more depending on vessel size.	*Ahurihu* grass, firewood, baked clay, pedestal stands; *oka* and *ukpaka* wood	Represents the transformation of fragile clay into durable pottery and preserves a traditional firing technology developed through generations of experience
8. Quality Assessment	Fired vessels are inspected by sound and physical condition. Good vessels are selected for sale, while defective pottery may be reused as tempering material.	Two long sticks, hands, fired pottery	Demonstrates indigenous quality-control knowledge and sustainable reuse of failed pottery materials.
9. Marketing and Use	Finished pottery is taken to local markets, including Nkwo Inyi, and used domestically, ceremonially, ritually and decoratively.	Water pots, cooking pots, storage vessels, ritual containers, palm-wine pots and decorative pottery	Reinforces the economic, social, ritual and cultural importance of pottery and provides women with income and recognition within the community.

The Contributions of Craft to Cultural Heritage Tourism

Inyi pottery products are unique than other pottery centers in Nigeria. The potters maintain good ways of production that brings out the beauty of their products. The design, distinctive forms, smoothness and functional uses of Inyi pottery provide material expressions of local cultural knowledge. This contributes to the authenticity of the destination. The findings shows that indigenous pottery is a vital cultural symbol of Inyi people that reflect the belief, history and identity. Inyi pottery continued production by women made it to be seen as a living form of intangible and material heritage. Women potters play pivotal central role in its preservation, production and transmission. The respondents revealed pottery products produced by the potters for domestic, commercial, ceremonial and ritual purposes. These include cooking pots (*Ite Nri/Ofe*), storage and food preparation vessels (*Oku*), serving bowls (*Oku Nri/Oku Oma*), water pots (*Ite Mmiri*), tapioca-preparation bowls (*Oku Akwu* and *Oku Ncha*), ceremonial pots (*Ite Ike/Mbo*), ritual vessels (*Oku Alusi Ulo* and *Oku Alusi Umunna*), narrow-mouthed pots (*Udu/Udu Nono*), pottery lanterns (*Mpanaka*), miniature pots (*Ite Ogwu*), personal spiritual vessels (*Oku Chi*), and special bowls for Ozo title holders (*Oku Ozo*). These items create opportunity for visitors to experience different cultural life of Inyi people through their tangible objects.

The field study shows that pottery making can contribute to cultural heritage tourism by creating an avenue for visitors and tourists to purchase authentic cultural object. For instance, during festivals, potters at times display their products to visitors to buy. Most Inyi people buy pottery product to give out as a souvenir. Cultural meanings attached to some vessels provide opportunities for visitors to learn about local traditions of Inyi. Interview with respondents showed that people travel to Inyi to obtain pottery products directly from potters in their respective communities, and through local markets, especially Nkwo Market, and other surrounding markets such as Ekegbo Achi, and Afo Ufuma. The circulation of Inyi pottery products through these markets extends the economic and cultural reach of the craft beyond individual production centre. The respondents remarked that Ishiagu and Ufuma

people usually come with vehicle to buy Inyi pottery products. This revealed that it has commercial appeal and provides an existing foundation upon which craft-based cultural tourism can be developed. Thus, pottery production provides employment and livelihood opportunities for women in rural communities. The income generated helps them meet family and community needs like paying kindred dues. Most respondents gave the prices of the pottery products in Nkwo Market in Inyi (see Table 2 & 3). In 2024, pottery prices ranged from about N1,200 for *Oku Chi* to N20,000 for ceremonial pots (*Ite Ike*) (Ejikeme, 2024). By 2026, the recorded prices ranged from N2,500 for *Oku Onu Nwa Nkwere* to N60,000 for the large ceremonial pots (*Ite Ike/Mbo*). Several products recorded substantial increases in price over the period. For example, *Ite Mmiri* increased from N3,500 to N15,000, *Oku Akwu* from N7,000 to N17,000, and ceremonial pots from N20,000 to N60,000. This increase suggests growing monetary value for some pottery products and indicates their potential to generate higher returns for women practitioners. The study established that pottery production provides an important source of livelihood for women. Income generated from sales contributes to household expenditure, enabling women to meet social and community obligations. The economic importance of the craft therefore extends beyond individual practitioners to their families and communities.

Interaction between visitors and local residents enhance tourists understanding of local culture and strengthen destination authenticity. Tourists not only purchase the pottery products but also learn the cultural significance of the pottery making process. The tourists and visitors have the opportunity of visiting and witnessing other unique tourists' site of the town. This could also help to exposes the craft to the world and develop a broader cultural tourism circuit. Increased visitation during community events can benefit accommodation providers, transport operators, tricycle (Keke) operators, and motorcycle riders in Inyi. Longer stays by visitors create demand for various services, suggesting that pottery can serve as a catalyst for cultural tourism expenditure, positively impacting the local economy.

Table 2: Pottery Products and their Prices

S/N	Types of Pottery	Local Names	Prices in Nkwo Inyi Market
1	Medium Sized Cooking Pots	Ite Nri/Ofe	N1,500.00
2	Storage Pots/Bowls	Oku	N3,000.00
3	Bowls for Serving Food (Vessels without a neck)	Oku Nri/Oku Oma	N1,500.00
4	Pots for Carriage of Water	Ite Mmiri	N3,500.00
5	Big Bowl for Tapioca Preparation on Occassions	Oku Akwu	N7,000.00
6	Ceremonial Pots	Ite Ike	N20,000.00
7	Ritual Pots/Bowl (at home)	Oku Alusi Ulo	N1, 200.00
8	Ritual Pots/Bowls (in Shrines)	Oku Alusi Umunna	N1, 500.00
9	Narrow Mouthed and Long Necked Pot, sometimes with a hole at the Shoulder	Udu/Udu nono	N3, 000.00
10	Pottery Lantern	Mpanaka	₦2,000.00
11	Miniature pots or bowls	Ite Ogwu	₦1,500.0
12	Small bowl of similar size owned by women (personal god)	Oku chi	₦1,200.00
13	Special Bowl for Serving Ozo Title Holders	Oku Ozo	₦3, 500.00
14	Bowl with Inverted Mouth used in Serving Food	Oku Onu Nwa Nkwere	₦1, 500.00

Source: Ejikeme, 2024

Table 3: Pottery Products and their Prices

S/N	Types of Pottery	Local Names	Prices in Nkwo Inyi Market
1	Medium Sized Cooking Pots	Ite Nri/Ofe	N4,000.00
2	Storage Pots/Bowls	Oku	N5,000.00
3	Bowls for Serving Food (Vessels without a neck)	Oku Nri/Oku Oma	N2,500.00
4	Pots for Carriage of Water	Ite Mmiri	N15,000.00

5	Medium Bowl for Tapioca Preparation in household	Oku Ncha	N5,000.00
6	Big Bowl for Tapioca Preparation on Occasions	Oku Akwu	N17,000.00
7	Big Ceremonial Pots	Ite Ike/Mbo	N60,000.00
8	Ritual Pots/Bowl (at home)	Oku Alusi Ulo	N5, 000.00
9	Ritual Pots/Bowls (in Shrines)	Oku Alusi Umunna	N3, 000.00
10	Narrow Mouthed and Long Necked Pot, sometimes with a hole at the Shoulder	Udu/Udu nono	N7, 000.00
11	Pottery Lantern	Mpanaka	₦3,000.00
12	Miniature pots or bowls	Ite Ogwu	₦4,000.0
13	Small bowl of similar size owned by women (personal god)	Oku chi	₦4,000.00
14	Special Bowl for Serving Ozo Title Holders	Oku Ozo	₦7, 000.00
15	Bowl with Inverted Mouth used in Serving Food	Oku Onu Nwa Nkwere	₦2, 500.00

Source: Ejikeme, 2026

Challenges Facing Women Craft Custodians

Identifies key challenges limiting women's full participation in heritage tourism, including cultural erosion**,** marginalization, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, credit and weak markets linkages, heavy domestic workloads, weak institutional support, exclusion from tourism planning processes and low integration of craft production into formal tourism planning. These constraints limit the transformative potential of craft-based tourism.

1. **Cultural Erosion:** Modernization and urbanization threaten the preservation of indigenous cultural practices, languages, and knowledge systems. There is difficulty in passing the skills to younger women who prefer modern professions.
2. **Marginalization:** Indigenous women are often marginalized within their communities and face multiple layers of discrimination based on their gender and indigenous identity. Women are not often involved in projects like tourism, decision making power is dominated by men, which limits women's ability to influence cultural and economic policies affecting their pottery craft.
3. **Limited Access to Education:** Educational disparities hinder Indigenous women's opportunities for personal growth, advocacy, and participation in decision-making processes. This limits their sell to a wider market.
4. **Poor Infrastructure and Limited Tourism Facilities:** At times tourists are discouraged from visiting craft centers due to poor road network, lack of power supply, and sub-standard accommodation.
5. **Lack of Access to Finance, Credit, and Weak Market Linkages:** Women potters lack access to loan, credit facilities, and financial support to expand their businesses. These local women may not have enough capital to transport their pottery products to urban centers.
6. **Low Policy and Institutional Support:** There is inadequate training programs, poor cultural preservation policies, and weak integration of crafts into tourism development plans. African Women's socioeconomic progress has been effectively hindered by unfavourable legislation, stereotyping, and cultural and religious impediments working against their emancipation and access to opportunities such as education, health, and entrepreneurship (Ogujiuba & Jumare, 2012).
7. **Risk of Declining Youth Interest in Pottery Making in Inyi:** An average youth in Nigeria is desperate to have money. This behaviour made most of youth in Inyi to see traditional craft as economically unprofitable and outdated preferring modern careers instead.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate the unique role women play as custodians of pottery making in Inyi and their contributions to cultural heritage tourism development. The pottery production among Inyi people represents their cultural identity. Women potters contribute in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in Inyi. Pottery making processes are indigenous knowledge passed from one generation to another. Potters continued making pottery products in Inyi retained cultural memory on Inyi communities. Inyi pottery products are unique

in their artistic expression, which is seen in their techniques of production and motifs. Even in decorating their pottery products, they showed expertise. It is also important tourism resource that attracts visitors to Inyi to witness authentic cultural experience. The authenticity of craft souvenirs has been associated with characteristics such as uniqueness, workmanship, aesthetics, cultural and historical integrity, and the genuineness of the production and purchase experience (Littrell et al., 1993). The study revealed that pottery making in Inyi provide livelihood to the people especially women. They make sales to tourists, visitors during festival, at the local markets and in the home, thereby helping their households to solve economic needs. Thus, pottery making is a viable economic activity to those doing business of pottery. Pottery making also creates opportunity for women to be independent. The findings indicate that the pottery production practiced by mostly Inyi women enhances the tourist experience. Tourists have the opportunity to interact with potters, and such interactions foster intercultural understanding and exchange. Therefore, one could argue that women craft custodians contribute to community-based tourism initiatives when properly harnessed for tourism. For instance, during cultural festivals in Inyi, potters and artisans display and demonstrate pottery products for people to see their heritage and some would attract to buy the products as take-home souvenir. Tourists often seek opportunities to observe craft production processes through demonstrations at times. Such interactions create meaningful cultural exchanges between tourists and host communities, thereby improving the attractiveness of the destination. The establishment of a pottery center by Mrs. Mayam Babangida, under her initiative "Better Life for Rural Women," illustrates that Inyi town serves as a pottery hub in southeastern Nigeria, with women as the custodians of this craft. The sculpture of a woman crafting pottery emphasizes that pottery production in Inyi is a female artistry.

The findings of this study align with the broader literature on women's roles as custodians of indigenous knowledge in African societies. The study confirms that women in Inyi are the primary bearers of pottery-making knowledge, which is transmitted through informal education within families, consistent with the findings of Robert & Weiwei, (2026) on Lango pottery in Uganda. The study also supports the arguments of Aluko (2018) and (Olatokun & Ayanbode (2008) that rural women's indigenous knowledge is often undervalued in mainstream development discourse, despite its critical role in sustaining livelihoods and cultural identity. The finding that pottery making contributes to household income and food security is consistent with the broader literature on craft-based livelihoods in rural Africa (Moyo & Chikodzi, 2021; UNESCO, 2013). However, the study also reveals that the integration of indigenous craft into formal tourism planning remains limited, reflecting the challenges identified by Richards (2018a) and Hoffman (2016) regarding the commodification of culture and the marginalization of artisans in tourism development. Tourism can showcase the tangible and intangible craftmanship by combining objects with demonstrations and interpretation of the living production process (Fu et al., 2015). Similarly, White & Adu-Ampong (2024), in their study of a pottery community, demonstrate that tourism and pottery are closely connected through people's understandings of authenticity, place and production practices. The findings demonstrate that the authenticity of pottery heritage in Inyi arises from the interaction of people, place, and products, rather than from the object itself.

The research revealed the economic dimension of pottery making. The prices in Table 2 & 3 demonstrates that pottery possesses measurable commercial value. UNESCO (2015), recognizes that tourism associated with intangible cultural heritage can generate income and employment and strengthen community pride when managed responsibly. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from a Nigerian context, thereby expanding the geographic scope of research on women, craft, and heritage tourism." This addition would strengthen the scholarly contribution of the study. The role of women potters extends beyond the production and sale of pottery objects to the indigenous knowledge that can be experienced by visitors. Traditional crafts are cultural tourism resources because they provide tangible expressions of history, values and creativity of local communities. The uniqueness of Inyi pottery products like *Ite Ike/Mbo*, *Oku Ozo*, *Oku Alusi Umunna*, *Udu/Udu Nono* and *Oku Akwu* are not simply commodities; they are connected with ceremonial, social, domestic and spiritual practices. These pottery objects have more meaningful tourist experience because of its ritualistic nature. This finding is consistent with UNESCO's understanding of traditional craftsmanship as an important manifestation of intangible cultural heritage, in which safeguarding should focus not simply on preserving craft objects but on sustaining the knowledge and skills of practitioners and transmitting them to subsequent generations (UNESCO., 2003).

However, the findings revealed several challenges facing women craft custodians, including limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, weak market linkages, and limited institutional support. The challenges facing

women potters in Inyi—including cultural erosion, limited access to finance, and weak institutional support—are consistent with the broader constraints facing indigenous artisans in developing countries (Smith, 2020; Timothy & Boyd, 2015). These challenges restrict the growth and sustainability of pottery making in Inyi via craft-based tourism activities. As a result of modernization, the youth receive formal education and relocate to urban centers for professional employment. The youths prefer to engage in contemporary crafts such as computer education and fashion design rather than pursuing apprenticeships in pottery that is tedious. This led to a diminished enthusiasm for traditional crafts, jeopardizing the preservation of indigenous knowledge such as pottery in Inyi. For instance, daughters of potters choose career in cities rather than learning the traditional craft process, causing the craft tradition to decline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Women's Empowerment and Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Women ought to be granted access to microfinance initiatives, cooperative organizations, and financial assistance programs. This enables women to broaden their skills to gain international acclaim and exercise economic freedom.
2. **Government Support for Indigenous Craft Development:** Government at all levels (local, state and federal) should develop policies and programmes that supports pottery making in Inyi as a driver for cultural heritage preservation and tourism development.
3. **Capacity Building and Skills Development for Women Artisans:** The government and non-governmental organization should engage the potters on training programs.
4. **Integration of Indigenous Craft Education in Local Schools:** Cultural education in schools should be advocated in order to encourage younger generations.
5. **Digital Marketing and Market Expansion:** Training in social media marketing, and online marketplaces can expand the market beyond local tourist markets. This could be attractive to the younger generation to be involve in pottery making.
6. **Documentation and Preservation of Indigenous Pottery Knowledge:** Cultural institutions, researchers and community leaders should collaborate to document the craft. Proper documentation will preserve the valuable cultural knowledge and support future research, tourism promotion, and heritage conservation.
7. **Strengthening community Participation in Tourism Planning:** Women potters should be actively involved in planning and decision-making processes. Inclusive participation ensures that tourism development aligns with local cultural values and that benefits are equitably distributed within the community.

CONCLUSION

Women in Inyi occupy a pivotal position as custodians of Indigenous pottery knowledge. The preserve pottery making tradition in Inyi, which endures from generation to generations. The craft reflects the community's cultural identity, historical continuity and indigenous technological ingenuity. The pottery processes show relationship between culture and nature. The stages of processes include clay selection, preparation, hand-moulding, decoration, and firing. Women have sustained a body of knowledge that extends beyond technical expertise to encompass environmental understanding, social values, ritual practices, and artistic expression. Knowledge transfer from the women potters to their daughters ensures continuity of the craft. The study further revealed that pottery making has historically contributed to women's socio-economic growth and strengthening household livelihoods. Despite its significance, indigenous pottery in Inyi faces challenges from modernization and urbanization. Safeguarding the pottery heritage of Inyi requires coordinated efforts involves government agencies, educational institutions, and the local community.

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