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Application Of Communication Strategies In Cultural Preservation In Rivers State

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Abstract: *The study investigated the application of communication strategies used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State. The objectives of the study were to: finds out the communication strategy used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State; evaluates the effectiveness of the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage. The study was based on Cultural Studies and Social Identity Theories. It adopted a survey research design with a total of 8,122,472 residents of Rivers State. The study employed Taro Yamane's sample size determination formula to arrive at 400 selected respondents using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. It used a questionnaire and Weighted Mean Score on a 4-point Likert scale as the instrument of data collection and data analysis. The results of the study reviewed that language identity, cultural festivals/events and cultural education were the major strategies used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State; use of communication strategies for preserving the cultural heritage in Rivers State is effective since the strategies raise awareness. The study recommended that: The government and organisations should help communities develop and implement frameworks to assess the social, economic and environmental effects of tourism and adjust strategies accordingly, and local artisans and craftspeople should be adequately supported through the provision of training, resources and market opportunities that help to preserve traditional crafts and promote economic development.*

Keywords: Communication, Strategies, Cultural, Preservation

INTRODUCTION

Strategic communication has emerged as a crucial discipline in development and cultural discourse, integrating purposeful messaging, planning, and execution to achieve desired outcomes. It transcends mere information dissemination by aligning communication processes with strategic objectives that influence public attitudes and behaviour (Hallahan et al., 2007). In cultural preservation, strategic communication creates intentional narratives, bridges generational gaps, and ensures heritage is not only safeguarded but meaningfully transmitted. One of the central strengths of communication strategies is its capacity to leverage multiple media platforms and integrate both modern and traditional systems. This makes it especially useful in contexts where cultural erosion is accelerated by globalisation and urbanisation. Strategic communication offers a framework that empowers communities to protect their intangible cultural assets, such as languages, rituals, and oral traditions (Servaes, 2013). In recent years, scholars have highlighted the capacity of local broadcasting to promote linguistic and cultural resilience. Radio dramas, community programmes and televised cultural showcases, not only entertain, but also embed cultural practices into public consciousness. For example, rural radio cab be employed to revive storytelling traditions, while in Nigeria, community broadcasting supports intergenerational dialogue (Alozie, 2019). Such media strategies demonstrate how communication can be mobilised for cultural sustainability.

Cultural preservation is not only about maintaining traditions but also about ensuring cultural dynamism. Scholars stress that preservation must avoid fossilisation; instead, it should encourage adaptation of cultural practices to contemporary realities (Smith, 2006). Strategic communication facilitates this balance by enabling dialogue between tradition and modernity, highlighting cultural elements that remain relevant while providing room for creative reinterpretation. Beyond entertainment and digital spaces, ritual communication is equally vital. Rituals, ceremonies, and symbolic performances constitute a non-verbal form of strategic communication. They embody meaning, values, and norms, serving as living archives of identity. Olanrewaju and Talabi (2024) argue that ritual communication functions as a pathway to social cohesion and cultural preservation by making heritage participatory and experiential. These processes ensure that culture is not abstract but lived and felt in daily interactions.

Institutional frameworks also matter. Cultural ministries, heritage councils, and tourism boards increasingly integrate strategic communication into their mandates to promote cultural festivals and heritage sites. States provide legitimacy and resources for preservation efforts. In South Africa, for instance, the Department of Arts and Culture has used mass campaigns to promote indigenous languages, while in Ghana, cultural policy includes community engagement strategies that emphasise heritage sustainability (Appiah, 2020). However, the effectiveness of strategic communication in cultural preservation is not without

challenges. Issues of authenticity, commercialisation, and elite capture often arise. When cultural practices are commodified solely for tourism, the meaning for local communities can be diluted (Cohen, 1988). Strategic communication must therefore navigate the tension between preservation and commercialisation, ensuring cultural heritage remains meaningful to those whose identity it embodies. Finally, Rivers State's experience reveals that strategic communication must function on multiple levels: media outreach, digital documentation, ritual continuity, and institutional promotion. When integrated, these approaches reinforce cultural identity, intergenerational transfer, and community cohesion. Thus, an appraisal of Rivers State shows that strategic communication is not merely supportive but central to preserving cultural heritage in a rapidly changing socio-political and global context.

Statement of the Problem

Cultural heritage represents the identity, values and traditions of a people, serving as a vital link between past generations and the future. In Rivers State, with its rich mosaic of ethnic groups and unique traditions, preserving cultural heritage is essential for sustaining social cohesion and communal pride. However, globalisation, urbanisation and the rapid spread of Western values have created a growing threat to the survival of indigenous customs, languages and art forms. When culture is eroded, there is usually a decline in intergenerational transmission of traditions, as younger generations increasingly adopt foreign lifestyles and neglect indigenous heritage. Without effective strategies to reverse this trend, states (including Rivers State) stand risks of losing significant elements of their cultural identity.

Strategic Communication has emerged globally as a powerful tool for influencing perceptions, shaping behaviours, and mobilising communities toward shared goals. It can be used to create awareness, foster pride and encourage participation in cultural activities. However, in Rivers State, the potential of Communication Strategies for cultural preservation appears underutilised or inconsistently applied. While there are occasional government and non-governmental cultural campaigns, many lack continuity, clear messaging, or the targeted approach needed to reach diverse demographic segments. Consequently, the impact of these efforts on cultural preservation remains questionable.

Objectives of the Study

The focus of this study is to examine the application of communication strategies in cultural preservation from the lenses of different cultures in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

1. find out the communication strategy used in the preservation cultural heritage in Rivers State.
2. evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. What is the communication strategy used in the preservation cultural heritage in Rivers State?
2. How effective are the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage?

Scope of Study

The scope of this study is delimited to Rivers State culture. The study focuses on the theoretical and practical dimensions of communication strategies that facilitate cultural preservation in multi-ethnic contexts. Geographically, the study is restricted to Rivers State, Nigeria, which is a culturally diverse region comprising over 20 ethnic groups, each with unique languages, customs and traditions. Given the region's exposure to modernisation, migration and environmental challenges such as oil exploitation, the preservation of cultural identity has become increasingly critical.

The study will also limit its population of analysis to cultural stakeholders, including traditional institutions, cultural organisations, media practitioners and government agencies directly involved in cultural promotion and preservation in Rivers State. It does not extend to the broader Nigerian context, though lessons drawn may have wider applicability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Studies Theory

Cultural Studies Theory emerged in the mid-20th century as an intellectual movement seeking to understand the relationship between culture, communication, and power. The roots are traced to Richard Hoggart, who founded the CCCS in 1964. Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson also laid much of the intellectual groundwork in the 1960s with their Marxist-inspired writings on culture. Stuart Hall (1970) is widely recognized as the key figure who articulated and popularized Cultural Studies, especially through his seminal works in the 1970s and 1980s. Rooted in critical theory and influenced by Marxist traditions, cultural studies viewed culture not as a fixed set of artifacts but as a dynamic terrain where meanings are produced, contested, and negotiated.

The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, became the hub of this intellectual development. Scholars such as Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, and Paul Willis advanced the idea that culture should be understood as the lived experiences of ordinary people, rather than merely "high culture" such as literature, art, and classical music (Hall, 1980; Storey, 2015). At the heart of cultural studies is the notion that culture is not merely expressive but also political. Raymond Williams (1976) defined culture as a "whole way of life," emphasizing that everyday practices such as storytelling, music, dance, and rituals are central to how communities understand themselves. This perspective broadened the analytical scope of communication studies, shifting focus from elite cultural forms to popular culture and indigenous traditions. The recognition of popular and local practices as legitimate cultural expressions is particularly relevant to contexts such as Rivers State, where cultural preservation involves sustaining traditional performances, languages, and rituals that might otherwise be dismissed as secondary to dominant global cultural forms.

Ideology plays a central role in cultural studies theory, as culture is seen as a site of ideological struggle. Drawing from Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Cultural Studies scholars emphasise that ruling groups maintain dominance not only through coercion but through securing consent by shaping cultural meanings (Gramsci, 1971; Kellner, 2020). Media and communication often normalize certain identities and practices while marginalizing others. For instance, in many African contexts, Western media representations have historically depicted indigenous traditions as primitive, thereby devaluing them. Applying this insight to Rivers State suggests that cultural preservation requires strategic communication that resists hegemonic narratives and foregrounds the richness and sophistication of indigenous practices.

Identity construction is also foregrounded in cultural studies, which emphasises that identities are not fixed but socially constructed and fluid. Jenkins (2014) argues that identities are formed through social interactions and reinforced through communication. This makes media and cultural discourse central to how individuals and groups perceive themselves. In diverse societies such as Rivers State, strategic communication can help strengthen ethnic and cultural identities, particularly in the face of globalisation and urbanisation that threaten to homogenize traditions. For example, campaigns promoting indigenous languages, dress, and customs contribute to the ongoing negotiation of cultural identity among younger generations.

When applied to communication strategies, cultural studies underscore the need to critically examine how cultural content is framed, disseminated, and interpreted. Communication strategies aimed at cultural preservation must go beyond promotion to engage with questions of authenticity, representation, and community agency. For example, promoting a masquerade festival in digital media should not reduce it to entertainment value but should highlight its spiritual, historical, and social significance. Such framing ensures that preservation efforts respect and maintain the integrity of cultural practices (Akpan & Udoakah, 2021).

Cultural studies also offers insights into education and policy frameworks for cultural preservation. Integrating indigenous cultural knowledge into curricula and using local languages in education reflect the theory's call to legitimize marginalized cultural forms. In Rivers State, formal and informal education can play a crucial role in transmitting traditions to younger generations. Strategic communication in this context may involve storytelling, drama, and interactive media that foster cultural pride while resisting cultural homogenization (Okorie & Ojebuyi, 2019).

Cultural studies theory provides a rich framework for appraising strategic communication in cultural preservation. Its focus on ideology, representation, identity, and resistance helps uncover the complexities involved in safeguarding culture in a rapidly globalizing world. For Rivers State, where indigenous traditions face pressures from modernisation, political marginalization and globalisation, cultural studies offer tools for critically examining how communication can either reinforce cultural erasure or contribute to authentic preservation. Cultural Studies moves cultural preservation discourse beyond celebration to critical engagement with power, identity and representation.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) emerged from the pioneering work of Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 1980s, with its most definitive articulation published in 1979. The theory was developed in response to research on intergroup relations, prejudice, and discrimination. Tajfel's earlier work on social categorisation, particularly his famous *minimal group experiments*, showed that even arbitrary distinctions between groups could produce in-group favouritism and out-group bias (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel & Turner,

1979). This insight marked a fundamental departure from purely individual-level psychological models, instead centring identity as a social construct shaped by group memberships.

At its core, social identity theory argues that individuals strive for a positive self-concept, which is partly derived from the groups they identify with. Group membership provides individuals with a sense of belonging, pride and meaning. These groups can be based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, profession, gender, or even fandom. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), people categorise themselves and others into in-groups ("us") and out-groups ("them"), a process that influences attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour.

Social comparison is the third process described in social identity theory. Individuals compare their in-group to relevant out-groups to establish a favorable social identity. When in-groups are seen as superior, members' self-concept is enhanced; when they are inferior, members may seek ways to improve the group's status. Strategies may include leaving the group, redefining group attributes, or engaging in social competition to challenge the out-group (Turner & Reynolds, 2010).

The theory has been widely applied to explain ethnic and national identities. In African contexts, SIT has been used to analyze how colonial legacies and ethnic divisions shape intergroup relations. For example, in Nigeria, social identity theory provides insights into how ethnic affiliations influence political participation, resource distribution, and conflict (Okeke, 2019). Ethnic identity often overrides national identity, leading to fragmentation and challenges to nation-building.

In organisational studies, social identity theory has been applied to understand workplace dynamics. Ashforth and Mael (1989) argued that organisational identification is an extension of SIT, where employees derive self-concept from membership in organisations. High organisational identification fosters loyalty and cooperation, while low identification can lead to disengagement or turnover. This perspective has influenced research on leadership, diversity management, and corporate culture. Social identity theory also intersects with education, particularly in multicultural settings. Students' academic performance and social integration are often shaped by the identities they hold and how those identities are perceived by peers and teachers. Steele and Aronson's (1995) concept of stereotype threat builds on social identity theory, showing how negative stereotypes about a group can undermine individuals' performance when that identity becomes salient.

One critique of social identity theory is that it tends to overemphasise group-level processes while underestimating individual differences. Critics argue that not all individuals identify strongly with groups, and personal identity can sometimes override social identity (Hogg et al., 1995). To address this limitation, scholars developed Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), which elaborates on how individuals switch between personal and social identities depending on the context (Turner et al., 1987). Despite critiques, social identity theory has proven remarkably versatile across disciplines. Its application extends to political science, where it helps explain populism, nationalism, and voting behaviour. Political leaders often mobilize social identities by framing issues in terms of "us versus them," thereby strengthening group solidarity and influencing electoral outcomes (Huddy, 2001). This underscores the enduring relevance of social identity theory in contemporary political communication.

Social identity theory also provides insights into cultural preservation. Cultural groups often mobilize around shared identities to resist assimilation and preserve traditions. In places like Rivers State, cultural associations and festivals foster group identity and pride, reinforcing the value of heritage in the face of globalisation. Social identity theory explains why communities invest resources in safeguarding practices that affirm their collective identity (Nse, 2021).

This principle can be applied in multicultural societies to address conflicts rooted in religious divides. Another contribution of social identity theory is its ability to explain intergroup cooperation. The theory suggests that when groups share a superordinate identity, intergroup biases can be reduced. This is consistent with the Common In group Identity Model, which builds on social identity theory to show that recategorization into a larger group can improve intergroup relations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). For cultural preservation, promoting a collective identity that values diversity can strengthen unity while respecting group differences. Despite criticisms, social identity theory remains highly relevant across contexts, including education, politics, organisations, health, and cultural preservation. For societies such as Rivers State, where cultural identity is central to community life, social identity theory provides a valuable tool for analyzing how communication strategies can sustain traditions while fostering inclusive social cohesion.

Conceptual Review

Communication

Communication is described as information sharing or the transferring of knowledge (Yahiaouia et al., 2016; Sarala et al., 2016). Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal, where the verbal language takes form in sounds, intonation, grammar, and dialects (Browaeys & Price, 2011) together with connotations and pre-determined assumptions of the language community. Face-to-face communication is one type of verbal communication, which takes place between minimum one sender and one receiver. When communicating, the sender and receiver refer to a communication framework consisting of their knowledge about the subject, individual or professional experience, and assumptions (Browaeys & Price, 2011). Requirements for the sender to adapt the information in favor of the receiver when communicating depends on the hierarchical structures present (Browaeys & Price, 2011).

Strategic Communication

Communication is a concept that everyone is familiar with. It is impossible not to communicate (Watzlawick et al. 1967). Communication is everywhere and is everything - from verbal to non-verbal interactions (Griffin, 1997 cited in Anty, 2017). Therefore, this broad notion does not have a single and simple definition as it can mean different things to different people. When it comes to defining and designing strategic communication-based systems and activities, there are two schools of thought - the transmission-based and the dialogue-based models.

The first one is often represented in a linear way (communication models of Shannon and Weaver, Lasswell or Jakobson) and focuses on the transmitter and the message to transmit (Shannon & Weaver, 1957; Lasswell, 1948 cited in Anty, 2017). This way of perceiving communication renders the receiver passive and the feedback non-existent. While it is not the model having the best results in terms of long-term relationships and satisfaction, it is currently the most widely used notably due to the advertising and marketing sector. The second model views communication as a more complex system involving the consideration and cooperation of the "receiver" - co-construction of meanings (Anty, 2017). The latter is no longer considered as a "consumer of information" but as a social being capable of reasoning. Thus, a particular attention is brought on citizens' needs in contrast to solely transmitter's interests. Despite the differences in applications, both models meet saying that strategic communication should be consistent, coordinated, structured and should have a clear agenda and settled goals (Bennett & Jessani, 2011).

In practice, strategic communication often involves a combination of persuasion and relationship-building. According to Zerfass et al. (2018), it goes beyond simple message transmission by fostering long-term trust and credibility among stakeholders. This is particularly important in contexts where organisations must manage complex relationships with multiple publics, ranging from customers to policymakers and local communities. Strategic communication also emphasises two-way engagement, echoing the principles of dialogic communication. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) excellence theory underscored the value of symmetrical communication, where dialogue and feedback shape organisational decisions. This approach has become increasingly relevant in the digital era, where social media platforms allow for real-time interactions between institutions and their publics (Johnston & Sheehan, 2020). Within organisational contexts, strategic communication is closely tied to reputation management. Fombrun and van Riel (2004) note that an organisation's reputation is built and maintained through consistent, transparent, and values-driven communication. Crises, scandals, or misinformation can erode trust, but strategic communication provides the tools for crisis response, brand repair, and long-term reputation recovery.

Culture

The influence of culture on business operations in an international context has been one of the most important components in international business research (Caprar et al., 2015). Although not being researched specifically through its influences on both communication and collaboration. Understanding culture enables teams and managers to operate across borders and take advantage of culture. Culture is present on national, regional, and organisational level, where subcultures can coexist within a subset of individuals and their perceived national culture. The definition of culture can be found in the social anthropology research presented by Kluckholn and Strodtbeck (1961), which is a foundation of the cultural research performed by, amongst others, Trompenaars, Hall, and Schein (Browaeys & Price., 2011). The work of Kluckholn and Strodtbeck (1961) consists of six cultural orientations with a focus on the nature of and relationships between and among individuals, which has inspired Hofstede and his cultural dimensions (Browaeys & Price, 2011). In addition to definitions of culture, there is different theory on what elements an organisation's culture is built upon. In previous research, Johnson et al. (2017) highlight theoretical contributions by researcher Edgar Schein in describing an organisational culture through different layers. These layers consist of values, beliefs, behaviours, and taken-for-granted assumptions (Johnson et al., 2017).

Cultural Preservation

Cultural preservation refers to the conscious efforts made to safeguard and sustain traditions, practices, knowledge systems, and heritage that define a people's identity. It encompasses both tangible elements, such as monuments and artifacts, and intangible aspects like language, rituals, music, and folklore. According to UNESCO (2022), cultural preservation is not simply about protecting the past; it is about ensuring that cultural heritage remains a living, dynamic resource for future generations.

One of the most important dimensions of cultural preservation is language. Language is a repository of collective memory and knowledge, serving as a medium for transmitting traditions and values. However, with globalisation and dominant languages expanding, many indigenous languages face extinction. Harrison (2020) notes that every two weeks, a language dies, taking with it unique worldviews and histories. Preserving endangered languages through education, documentation, and digital tools is thus vital for cultural continuity.

Media and Culture

Cultural preservation in Rivers State, Nigeria, is essential given the state's rich ethnic and cultural diversity. Home to more than 20 ethnic groups, including the Ikwerre, Kalabari, Ogoni, and Okrika, Rivers State embodies a wide variety of traditions, languages, and heritage practices. As UNESCO (2022) emphasises, safeguarding such cultural diversity ensures not only identity and dignity

for the people but also contributes to sustainable development in a rapidly modernizing region. Language preservation in Rivers State represents one of the most urgent aspects of cultural heritage. Many indigenous languages, such as Ikwerre and Kalabari, are at risk due to the dominance of English and Pidgin in education and daily interactions. Harrison (2020) stresses that the extinction of local languages leads to the erosion of indigenous knowledge. Community-driven language documentation, inclusion in school curricula, and digital archiving are critical strategies for ensuring linguistic continuity in Rivers State.

Empirical Review

Okonkwo and Eze (2021) explored the use of strategic communication to revive endangered languages in southeastern Nigeria. The central objective was to understand how communication campaigns and advocacy could improve linguistic diversity and slow the extinction of minority languages. Their key position was that language is a vital cultural resource, and without deliberate communication strategies, many indigenous languages risk disappearing within a generation. The study employed a mixed-methods design that combined surveys of language teachers and students with focus group discussions. Findings revealed that awareness campaigns and school-based language clubs improved youth interest in learning native languages, but a lack of government involvement and limited digital tools undermined long-term impact. The researchers recommended collaborations between the government, NGOs, and digital platforms to design inclusive language policies, fund language teaching initiatives, and expand the use of indigenous languages in both print and online media. The study is similar to the present study because both study looked at how communication can be for cultural preservation. The previous study concentrated on the use of strategic communication to revive endangered languages in southeastern Nigeria. The present study focuses the application of communication strategies in preservation of culture in Rivers State.

Logan (2021) conducted research on the role of tangible cultural heritage such as artifacts, crafts, and monuments, in identity construction within rapidly urbanising African states. The main objective was to examine how physical cultural materials contribute to pride, intercultural understanding, and historical continuity in modern societies. The study's key position was that tangible heritage remains essential for maintaining cultural authenticity in the face of globalisation and mass production. Using case studies and interviews with artisans, museum officials, and community leaders, the research revealed that crafts and traditional artifacts not only fostered cultural pride but also served as economic assets for communities. However, globalisation, cheap imports, and insufficient government protection endangered the authenticity of local products. Logan recommended stronger heritage legislation, increased funding for artisan training and the promotion of local crafts in both domestic and international markets as a strategy for preserving authenticity and boosting economic empowerment. The study is related with present study because both studies focused the development of cultural identity and heritage in Nigeria. However, the previous study focused on the role of tangible cultural heritage such as artifacts, crafts, and monuments, in identity construction within rapidly urbanising African states. It failed an empirical evidence of how communication is applied to preserve culture and identity. The present study provides empirical evidence of the application of communication strategies in the preservation of culture in Rivers State.

The study by Gbarabe, Leka, and Agare (2024) aimed to examine the intersection between cultural tourism and socio-spatial factors in Ikwerre Local Government Area. Their core objective was to evaluate how accessibility, amenities, cultural centres, and community integration contribute to sustaining cultural practices. The authors argued that tourism cannot thrive in isolation from spatial planning, and cultural heritage cannot be fully appreciated without adequate infrastructure.

Central to their position is the idea that space and culture are interdependent. They contended that when public spaces, such as open grounds, community halls, and roads, are designed with festivals and performances in mind, they enhance both tourism viability and cultural identity. Conversely, when amenities are neglected, even strong traditions risk decline due to poor accessibility and weak visitor experience. Their framework therefore ties cultural communication to the built environment, reframing urban planning as a mode of heritage communication.

The methodology combined household surveys (about 96 respondents), key informant interviews, and spatial mapping. These approaches provided both quantitative ratings of socio-spatial indicators (high, medium, low) and qualitative insights into community perceptions. By surveying communities such as Isiokpo, Aluu and Omagwa, the study highlighted variations in infrastructure and how these differences influence cultural sustainability. Findings showed that accessibility scored high, many communities were reachable by road, but the presence of cultural centers and amenities was mixed to low. Events such as the Egelege wrestling and new yam festivals emerged as powerful cultural anchors, fostering identity and attracting visitors. However, inadequate infrastructure, limited amenities, and weak communication strategies constrained these events from scaling into sustainable tourism products. The lack of coordinated messaging also limited visitor understanding and appreciation.

The recommendations were practical: improve amenities, plan dedicated cultural spaces, and develop deliberate communication systems, such as event calendars, signage, and interpretive content. The authors also urged policy alignment at the LGA level so that infrastructure and cultural programming reinforce each other rather than remain isolated. Such alignment ensures that both physical and narrative spaces support cultural vitality. For Rivers State, the study highlights how strategic communication extends beyond media into the design and management of space. Signage, programming, and visitor information become tools of communication

that preserve and present culture. This integrated view is crucial for understanding how cultural heritage can be preserved through both narrative and spatial strategies.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of this study requires a design that can elicit multiple layers of data from the right audiences, hence the need for a mixed method involving survey and interview. The survey was responsible for generating a wide range of data from a broad number of individuals selected from different cultures within Rivers State. This created room for a more robust opinion from the general public believed to be members of these cultures. The interview on the other hand targeted at the traditional custodians of culture within the selected ethic nationalities within Rivers State. The population census conducted in Rivers State recorded 5,198,716 as at 2006; this record grows by 2.9% as at every year. The population consist of the residents of Rivers State in the 2006 National Population Census. The dated nature of this census was projected at an annual growth rate of 2.96 of at 2024. The population of the study is 8,122,472. The sample size for this study is 400. This was determined using Taro Yamane's sampling formula. The study adopted stratified random and purposive sampling techniques as its approach. The choice of purposive and stratified sampling techniques is justified by the unique nature of this study, which seeks to evaluate how strategic communication contributes to cultural preservation in Rivers State.

The instruments for this study are the questionnaire and interview guide, which were carefully designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the objectives of the study. The research instrument undergoes validation by the supervisor to confirm that it is thoughtfully constructed, properly aligned with the study's objectives, and capable of eliciting relevant data. To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test will be conducted with a small group of respondents from the population who shared similar characteristics with the study population but will not be included in the final sample. The responses obtained were analysed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency.

Data analysis is a critical phase of research, as it involves systematically organising, interpreting, and presenting collected data to draw meaningful conclusions. For this study, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to analyse the data generated from the questionnaire and interview guide. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were coded, entered and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and mean scores were used to summarise and present responses. The qualitative data derived from the interview guide were analysed thematically. Responses were transcribed, carefully read and categorised into emerging themes and patterns that reflect participants' perspectives on strategic communication and cultural preservation.

DATA PRESENTION

Objective one: find out the communication strategy used in the preservation cultural heritage in Rivers State.

Table 1: Communication strategy used in the preservation cultural heritage in Rivers State

Communication strategy used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	WMS	RMK
Language identity is the strategy adopted for cultural preservation.	93	102	112	80	982	2.5	Agreed
Community engagement is the strategy adopted for cultural preservation.	71	42	93	181	777	2.0	Disagreed
Collaboration/partnership is the strategy adopted for cultural preservation.	53	61	83	128	689	1.8	Disagreed
Cultural festival and events is the strategy adopted for cultural preservation.	121	112	69	85	1043	2.7	Agreed
Cultural education is the strategy adopted for cultural preservation.	151	89	73	74	1091	2.8	Agreed

The data in Table 1 indicated that language identity, cultural festivals/events and cultural education were the major strategies used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State.

Objective two: Evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage

Table 4.2: Effectiveness of the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage

Effectiveness of the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	WMS	RMK
Communication strategies raise awareness about cultural heritage.	165	112	74	36	1180	3.0	Agreed
Communication strategies for cultural preservation foster community involvement	132	121	96	38	1120	2.9	Agreed
Communication strategies for cultural preservation facilitate cross-cultural understanding.	49	61	99	178	755	2.0	Disagreed
Communication strategies for preservation safeguard cultural heritage for future generations.	87	214	37	51	1115	2.9	Agreed

The data in Table 2 showed that the use of communication strategies for preserving the cultural heritage in Rivers State is effective, as the strategy raises awareness, fosters, and safeguards cultural heritage from generation to generation.

Discussion of Findings

Research question 1: What is the communication strategy used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State?

The study investigated the application of communication strategies in cultural preservation from the lenses of different cultures in Rivers State and found that language identity, cultural festivals/events and cultural education were the major strategies used in the preservation of cultural heritage in Rivers State. The finding is related to that of Olufemi (2021), who discovered that communities employ strategic communication such as campaigns of their festival, dances, symbols and values to safeguard traditions, languages, and heritage in the face of globalisation and modernisation. The awareness campaigns and school-based language clubs improved youth interest in learning native languages, but a lack of government involvement and limited digital tools undermined long-term impact (Okonkwo & Eze, 2021).

It is pertinent to note that the vents, such as the Egelege wrestling and new yam festivals, emerged as powerful cultural anchors, fostering identity and attracting visitors. However, inadequate infrastructure, limited amenities, and weak communication strategies constrained these events from scaling into sustainable tourism products (Gbarabe et al. 2024). The lack of coordinated messaging also limited visitor understanding and cultural appreciation. According to Oso (2012), the erosion of indigenous languages and practices has been linked to a lack of strategic cultural programming in national broadcasting. The intergenerational transmission of Ikwerre has significantly declined. The language lacks prestige in schools and formal communication, and media choices further entrench English usage. These factors collectively accelerate language shift and cultural loss, as indigenous knowledge encoded in Ikwerre remains unused and undervalued (Ezi-Nlerum & Blessing, 2023).

The Finding agrees with the cultural studies theory used in the study**;** cultural studies theory emphasises the importance of representation and how it shapes our understanding of culture. Effective communication strategies can ensure that cultural representations are accurate, respectful, and empowering. The theory also highlights the role of power in shaping cultural narratives; it means that communication strategies can be designed to challenge dominant narratives and amplify marginalised voices.

Research question 2: How effective are the communication strategies in preserving Rivers State's cultural heritage?

The study observed that the use of communication strategies for preserving the cultural heritage in Rivers State is effective since the strategies raise awareness, foster and safeguard cultural heritage from generation to generation. The finding is similar to the findings of Adekola (2019), whose findings showed that community radio and local newsletters were highly effective in promoting traditional songs, proverbs, and oral histories, they were hampered by inadequate funding, poor policy frameworks, and political interference. This makes communities take ownership of their heritage, communication becomes circular, flowing from elders to youth, within community institutions, and outward to external audiences in ways that reinforce identity and continuity (Etuk & Kobani, 2024). Even though there are some pressing challenges, dwindling youth interest in cultural activities, modernisation pressures, and limited financial support for heritage initiatives. Despite these obstacles, community respondents identified a few highly effective strategies:

school–community partnerships that embed cultural content in curricula, festival promotion that preserves narrative accuracy, and establishing a local archive for safeguarding crafts and oral traditions (Etuk & Kobani, 2024).

There were positive effects: stronger participation, enhanced dissemination of heritage information, and increased support for digitisation. Notable examples included museums that used social media analytics to understand audience engagement and refine storytelling (Liang, 2023). Digital storytelling projects have shown particular effectiveness in communities across Africa, as they have begun to digitise proverbs, rituals, and performance art, making them accessible to global audiences while safeguarding them from extinction (Adejunmobi, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a rising awareness about the importance of cultural heritage preservation and promoting education on local culture and history, especially on language identity, cultural festivals/events and cultural education were the major strategies used in the preservation of cultural heritage. This has helped to foster and safeguard cultural heritage from generation to generation using radio, television and social media. The essence was to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation through cultural exchange programmes.

1. There should of digital archives and online platforms to showcase cultural artefacts, stories and historical events, ensuring their accessibility and longevity.
2. The government and organisations should help communities develop and implement frameworks to assess the social, economic and environmental effects of tourism and adjust strategies accordingly.

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