

## Full Length Research Paper

# Visual Narrative of Omuo festival in Isiokolo Using Photography as an artistic medium

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The Omuo festival in Isiokolo is facing extinction due to the influence of Western culture. Without intervention, the youth may forget the festival's significance. To keep its memory alive, the study aimed to create a visual essay of the festival. The objectives were to visually document the Omuo festival for posterity. The research used a digital camera, scanner, personal computer, Adobe Photoshop CS6, Corel Draw, and printer, along with a digital recorder and photographs. This studio-based study captured major scenes with a camera, later editing them with Photoshop and Corel Draw. Data collection included library research using journal articles, books, and internet resources, alongside interviews with community elders knowledgeable about the Omuo festival. We produced a photo album and a photo storyboard. Our findings suggest that Western cultural influence poses a threat to the festival. Consequently, we documented the festival in a visual essay format to ensure its preservation for future reference. The study recommends further research to comprehensively record other aspects of the community's culture.

**Keywords:** documentary, photography, cultural festival, Omuo deity, visual narrative

## INTRODUCTION

Documentary photography is a prominent genre of photography used to capture and portray significant historical events and everyday life, providing a visual representation of objective reality (Adiji et al., 2015). It documents specific subjects and events as a creative medium, providing a factual visual narrative rather than subjective interpretations (Addison 1991; Rosenblum 1997). The Isiokolo community festival, which is held in honor of the war deity Omuo, aims to protect the community from evil. Every year between January and February, the community celebrates Omuo, revered for his defense against external threats and protection during conflicts. The festival, which is planned by the eldest community member and his chiefs, takes place on a designated market day (Edewor). Key rituals include the sacrifice of a cow, performed by the chief priest (Odjagbon) and the cow killer (Otomi or Obe), symbolising prosperity for the community. Modern influences and a shift towards Western culture have significantly impacted the practice and documentation of this festival. Without proper documentation, there is a risk of losing this cultural heritage. Thus, it is crucial to create a visual record of the Omuo festival through photography,

ensuring its preservation for future generations. Photography, which gained prominence with the advent of the camera in the 1830s (Rubini, 2016), serves as a powerful tool for documenting and preserving cultural history (Martin 2002). By reflecting on historical events, we can foster a better future. Preserving cultural activities is essential for promoting cultural re-awakening. The Omuo festival in Isiokolo, Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State, faces extinction due to the influence of Western culture. Younger generations will forget its significance and the cultural benefits will disappear if we don't address this issue. Art, particularly photography, can help preserve and revive these cultural memories (Taylor 2015). The study uses artistic photographic narration to document and showcase the Omuo festival in a visual essay format, preserving the cultural heritage of the Isiokolo community.

## Conceptual Framework

The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1971) Figures 1–3 spurred interest in documenting the Omuo festival. Decades after the war, the events remain vivid in collective memory,



**Figure 1.** Biafra Troops (1967-1970). Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl>



**Figure 2.** Connell Yakubu Gowon – Nigeria Head of State (1967-1970). Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl>

highlighting photography's power in capturing and preserving cultural heritage. Photography captures tangible evidence of cultural practices, emphasizing the role of culture in defining national identity (Oyairo, 2010). In "Photography: the Language of Light," Khanfar (2013) describes photographers as seekers of visual surprises, using imagination to communicate emotions and capture moods from multiple perspectives. Understanding photography's evolution and critiques reveals its significance and transformation into a ubiquitous medium.

Language constantly evolves, and words may become outdated (Paul 2015). However, images transcend these changes, offering a universal language that can profoundly impact viewers. Gleason (2008) noted that photography, like other communication forms, involves interaction. Modern rituals include digital platforms where each image conveys a powerful message. This led me to consider the advantages of documentary photography over oral or written narratives. Visual communication has become integral to daily life, with an increasing reliance



**Figure 3.** Connell Odumagu Ojukwu – Leader of Biafra (1967-1970)  
<https://www.google.com>

on photographs, videos, and animations for knowledge dissemination. Equipped with photographic tools, people's participation in image-making has surged, reflecting a world heavily dependent on visual media. Photography, as a social practice, fosters connections and promotes understanding. Szto (2008) observed that despite extensive documentation of photography's history, its role in social welfare receives less attention. The works of Kellogg, Hine, and Stryker demonstrate photography's capacity for social change through the cumulative impact of multiple images. Before photography, written texts were the primary means of documentation. Photography provided a direct, visual representation of reality. Orwell (2012; Elif et al., 2023) emphasised the challenge for photographers to accurately represent a subject in a single moment, relying on the image's immediacy. Photojournalism, as Alton (2007) described it, captures moments and aims to alter perceptions. Ozanne et al. (2013) explained that photography documents social issues, raises awareness, and inspires action. "Transformative Photography" suggests that participant photography allows for expressive and independent data collection. Photography enhances learning, community engagement, and environmental awareness. Despite debates over its status as fine art, photography remains revolutionary and widely accepted. Ketchum (2013) noted that in a digital world, visual imagery transcends language barriers, underscoring the growing need for this visual language in social networks.

### Documentary photography

Documentary photography chronicles significant historical events, aiming for truthful and candid depictions, often of people (Douglas, 2010). It harnesses the emotional power of images to positively influence society. Social documentary photography, like that of the Omuo festival in Isiokolo, Delta State, raises awareness of valuable social practices. Historically, photography offered more visual accuracy than written or pictorial accounts. In 1905, sociologist Lewis Hine documented workers' lives during early 20th-century industrialization (Sandler and Murray 2002). Documentary photography, described by Gleason as "the creative treatment of actuality," aims to enlighten culturally and educationally, involving citizens in social processes (Puke and Shaibu 2001). While technological advancements challenge photography's ability to represent reality, documentary photography remains a compelling storytelling medium due to its immediacy and truth. Notable photographers like Paul Strand and Edward Weston emphasised simplicity, directness, and capturing life's essence (Sandler and Murray 2002). Photography preserves cultural heritage by documenting tangible evidence of practices and traditions. Visual aids significantly enhance communication and memory retention (Holzknecht, 2004). By preserving photographs of cultural practices, we ensure their survival and potential revival. Photography bridges gaps between physical realities and



**Figure 4.** Crowd of people watching the Edjenu masquerade (2018)  
<https://www.google.com>

their effects, educating the public about cultures (Simonds et al., 2012).

### Photography as a Preservative Medium

Photography is an ideal tool for documenting and preserving cultural heritage, such as Nigerian festivals, by providing tangible evidence of peoples, practices, and traditions (Iriwieri 2009). It enhances written records with images of religious practices, utilitarian objects, architecture, and art. Holzknicht (2004) discovered that speakers using visual aids at the University of Pennsylvania were twice as successful in communication (67% vs. 33%), and audience retention increased fivefold (from 10% to 50%). These findings highlight the significance of visual aids in learning and memory retention, guaranteeing the preservation and memory of cultural heritage, like traditional Nigerian festivals.

### Photography and culture

Photographs help researchers understand community experiences and can educate the public about cultures. As Spradley (1980) noted, ethnography is about learning from people. Documenting environments with images

bridges the gap between physical realities and their effects (Simonds et al., 2012).

### Edjenu Festival of the People of Okpara

The Edjenu Festival in Okpara, Delta State, Nigeria, celebrates the rare 'Ladder to Heaven' masquerade. Originally occurring every 50 years, now every 20, it's integral to Okpara's cultural pride, originating in Agbarha-Otor and embodying significant religious and historical symbolism (Folaranmi S (2003); Ojaide, 2012) Figure 4-5.

### Vietnam War of the 1960s

The Vietnam War of the 1960s marked the escalation of another cold war conflict halfway around the world. The struggle for control of Vietnam, which had been a French colony since 1887, lasted for three decades. The first part of the war was between the French and the Vietminh. Ho Chi Minh, a communist, led the Vietnamese nationalists from 1946 until 1954. The second part of the conflict pitted the United States and South Vietnam against North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, culminating in the latter's victory in 1975. The communist side, strongly



**Figure 5.** Edjenu masquerade (2018)  
<https://www.google.com>

backed by the Soviet Union and mainland China, sought to increase the number of those who lived behind the bamboo curtain. Both the United States and the Soviet Union regarded the conflict not as a civil war between North and South Vietnam, but as a consequential engagement of the Cold War in a strategic region. American leaders endorsed the domino theory, first enunciated by President Eisenhower, that if South Vietnam fell to the communists, other nations in the region, such as Laos and Cambodia, would also fall. Figure 6: Vietnamese soldiers in combat. (1960). The information was retrieved from <https://www.historyonthenet.com>, specifically focusing on the Chinese Civil War (1927–1951) Figure 6 and Figure 7: Vietnam Civilian Protests. (1960). Retrieved from <https://www.historyonthenet.com> Figure 8: Chinese Soldiers in Combat (1927–1951). Retrieved from <https://www.simple.m.wikipedia.org>, Figure 9: Territory destroyed by the Chinese Army (1927–1951). Retrieved from <https://www.simple.m.wikipedia.org>.

## MATERIALS

Materials used in the conduct of this research include the following:

**Personal Computer System:** The personal computer system is complete with the CPU and all the peripheral devices connected to it and its operating system.

**Digital camera:** A digital camera is used to record and store photographic images in digital form. Many current models are also able to capture sound or video in addition to still images.

**Printer:** A printer is a device that accepts text and graphic output from a computer and transfers the information to paper, usually standard-size sheets of paper.

**Scanner:** A scanner is a device that captures images from photographic prints, posters, magazine pages, and similar sources for computer editing and display. Adobe Systems Inc. develops and manufactures.

**Adobe Photoshop CS6:** is an image editing software.

**Corel Draw:** Group that develops and manufactures Corel Draw, an image and text editing software.

**Digital Recorder:** is a device that records sound, recording process that converts audio or analogue signals into a series of pulses that correspond to the voltage level. You can store these on tape or any other memory system. **Photographs:** Photographs of scenes showcasing various stages of the festival.

## Procedure for creating the storyboard of pre-festival activities, main festival activities, and post-festival activities (using CorelDraw):

Start or load CorelDraw from the start menu. On the CorelDraw environment, click File menu and select New (to create a blank page), as shown below in the next page. Figure 10: The researcher uses CorelDraw to create a storyboard of pre-festival activities, main festival activities, and post-festival activities (Photo: Ovie Akpobaro). Figure 11. Corel draw workspace showcasing the empty boxes edited with the shape tool to smoothing the edges of the screen. Figure 12: The Corel Draw workspace displays the completed rectangle. To create a rectangle in the toolbox, click the rectangle tool and drag it. Figure 13: Corel Draw workspace showcasing the resized rectangle. Resize the rectangle above to fit the page as shown: Figure 14: Corel Draw workspace showcasing the resized rectangle filled with desired colour using the fountain fill tool on the toolbox. Fill the rectangle with any desired colour using the fountain fill tool on the toolbox to achieve the background below for the storyboard. Figure 15 shows the Corel Draw workspace with the title filled in. Select the text tool, type the text "PHOTO STORY BOARD ON OMUO FESTIVAL," change the color to blue, and then move it to the storyboard, as shown in Figure 15. Figure 16: The Corel Draw workspace displays the picture's container, which is shaped by the four corners using the shape tool. Use the rectangle tool and drag to create small rectangles for the picture grid in the storyboard. Figure 17: The Corel Draw workspace displays a duplicate of the picture container. Select the small rectangle, navigate to the edit menu, and then select "Duplicate" to create additional copies of the small rectangles, as illustrated in Figure 17. Figure 18: Corel Draw workspace showcasing the



**Figure 6.** Vietnam Soldiers in Combat. (1960). Retrieved from <https://www.historyonthenet.com>



**Figure 7.** Vietnam Civilian Protests. (1960). Retrieved from <https://www.historyonthenet.com>

insertion of pictures on the picture container. To insert the pictures into the small container, click the File menu at the top and choose Import. Then, clip the pictures

properly with a power clip. Figure 19: Corel Draw workspace with pictures. Select the picture you want and click import, and it will appear as shown in Figure 19.



**Figure 8.** Chinese Soldiers in Combat (1927-1950). Retrieved from <https://www.simple.m.wikipedia.org>



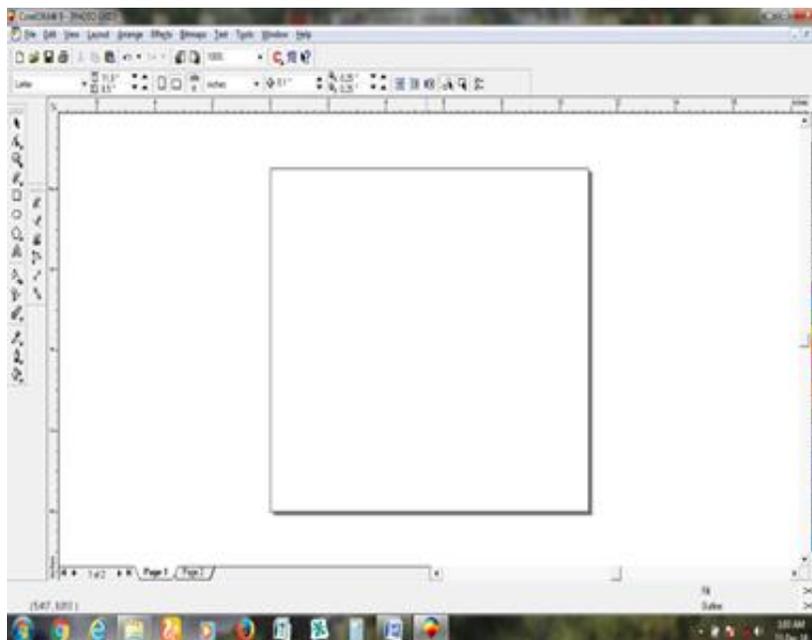
**Figure 9.** Territory destroyed by the Chinese Army (1927-1950). Retrieved from <https://www.simple.m.wikipedia.org>

Figure 20: The Core Draw workspace illustrates how to insert pictures into a picture container using Power Clip (Finn 1994). To place the picture in the container, click picture, click Effect menu, click Powerclip, then click Place inside container. Figure 21: Corel Draw workspace showcasing inserted pictures. As shown above, place the picture inside the shaped rectangle. Figure 22: Corel

Draw workspace showcasing completed inserted pictures. Repeat steps 10 to 11 to insert and place the pictures in the corresponding rectangles to create the storyboard shown in Figure 22. From the menu bar, navigate to Effect, then select the Power Chip tool, which unlocks three areas for picture editing. These are placing the image in the container, which is closely followed by



**Figure 10.** The researcher creating the storyboard of pre-festival activities, main festival activities and post festival activities (using CorelDraw) (Photo: Ovie Akpobaro)



**Figure 11.** Corel draw workspace showcasing the empty boxes edited with the shape tool to smoothing the edges of the screen.

editing the container and then finishing the editing. These procedures ensure that the pictures are positioned in a

well-proportioned manner. Below are some of the photographs and samples of the photo story board

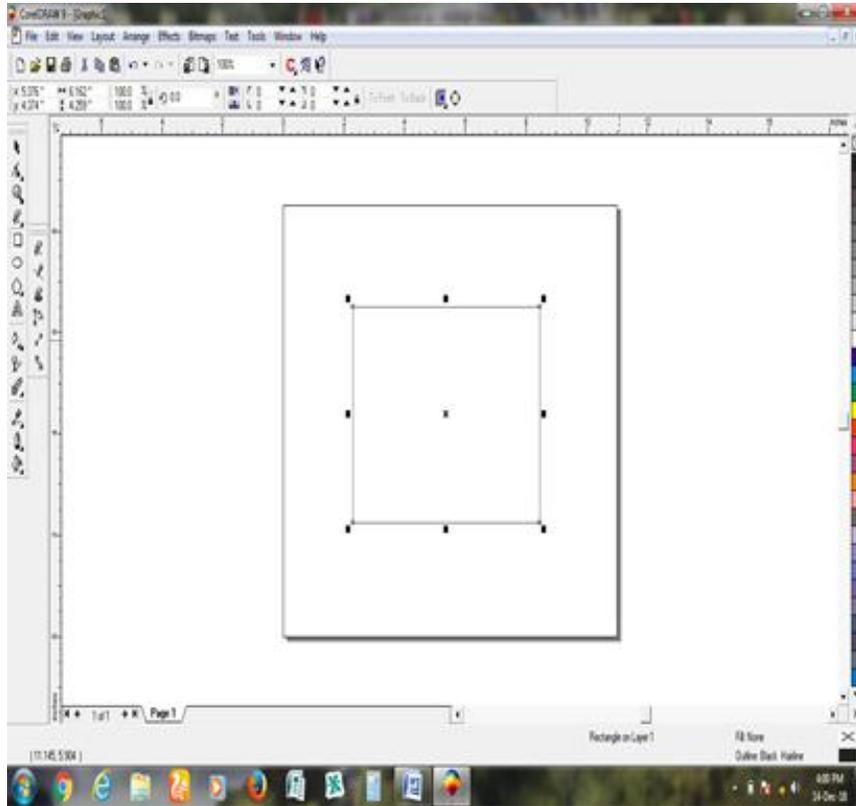


Figure 12. Corel draw workspace showcasing the created rectangle.

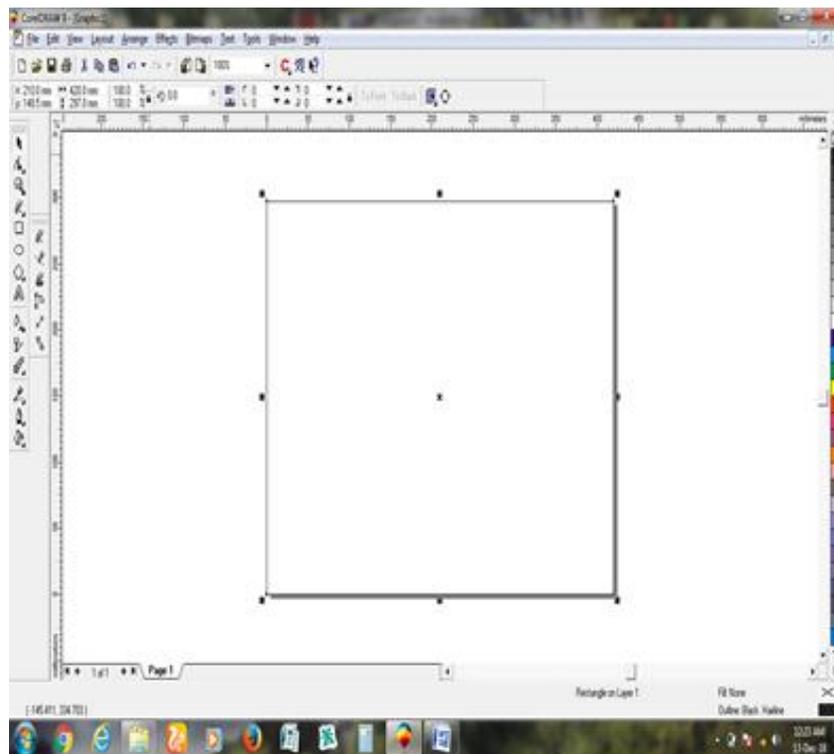


Figure 13: Corel draw workspace showcasing the resized rectangle. Resize the rectangle above to fit the page as shown:

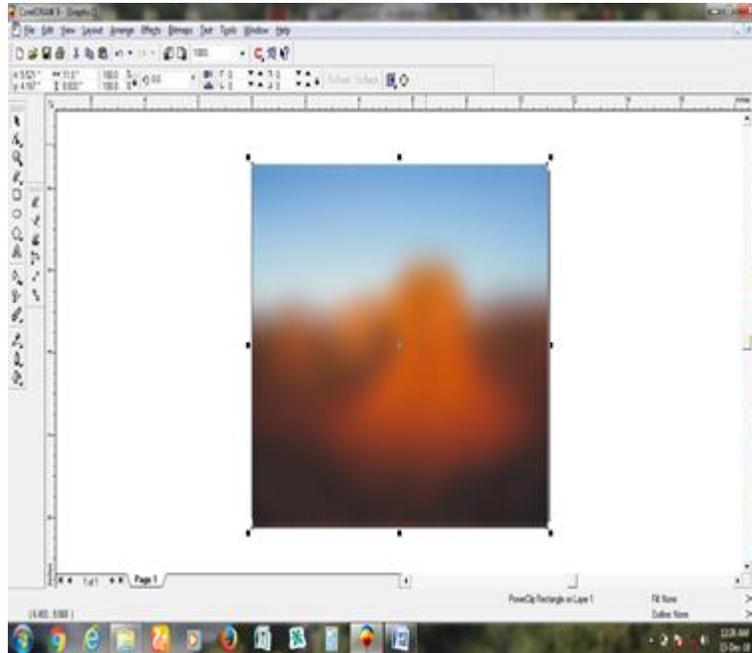


Figure 14. Core draw workspace showcasing the resized rectangle filled with desired colour using the fountain fill tool on the toolbox.

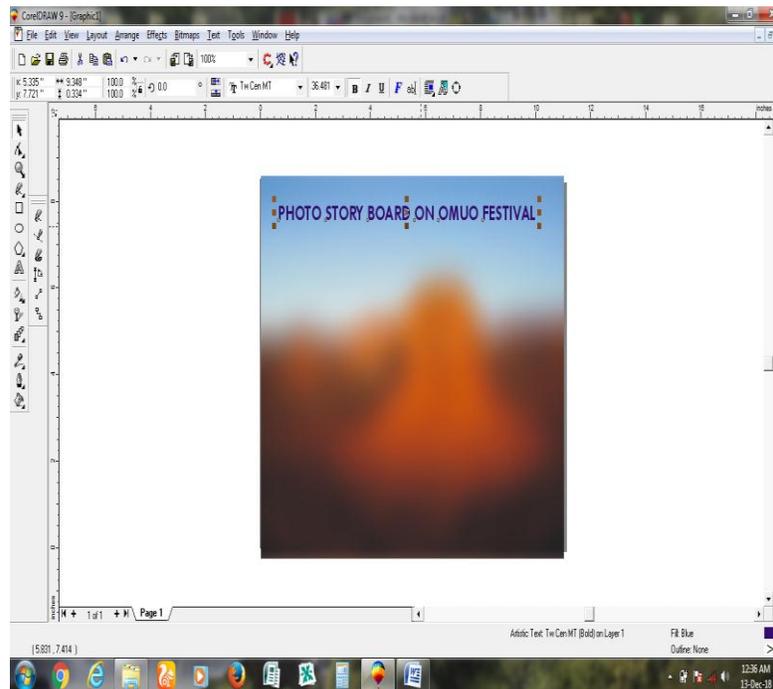
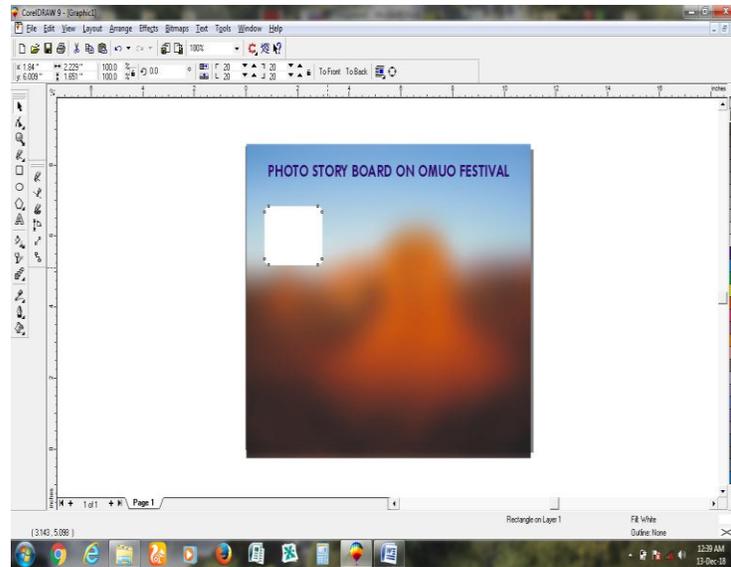


Figure 15. Core draw workspace showcasing filling of title.

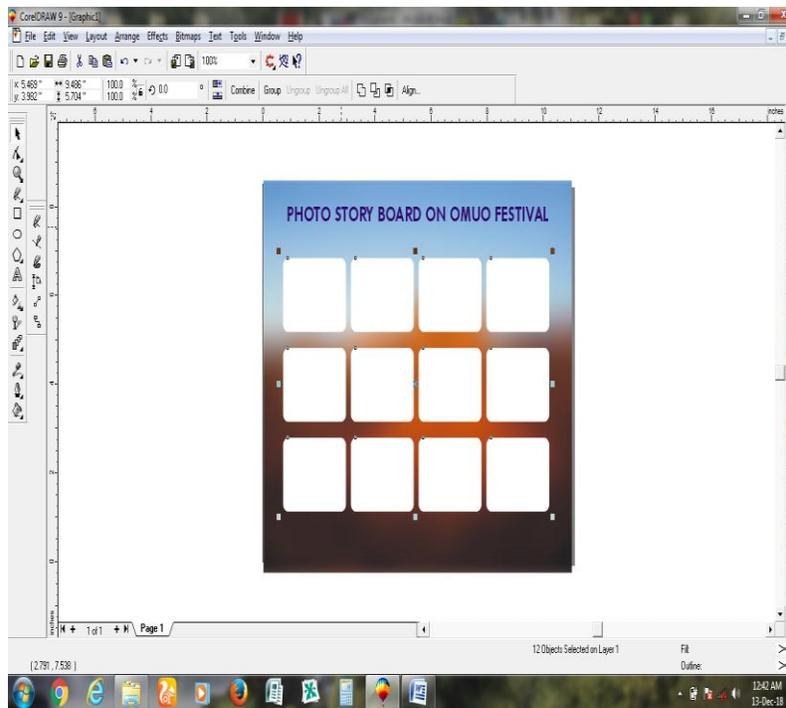
format, sequentially placed in accordance with the activities as they unfold and well labeled. Figure 23: Core Draw workspace showcasing inserted pictures for main festival activities; Figure 24: Core Draw workspace showcasing inserted pictures for post-festival activities.

## METHODS

This study is essentially studio-based. The camera helped capture the major scenery, which we later uploaded to the computer and edited using the Coreldraw



**Figure 16.** Corel draw workspace showcasing the container of the picture well shaped of the four corners using the shape tool.



**Figure 17.** Corel draw workspace showcasing the duplicate of the picture container.

and Photoshop programs. We also gathered data through library research, utilising journal articles, books, and internet sources. We arranged an interview with community elders who had extensive knowledge of the Omuo festival to extract information, which we then further analysed to form generalizations. We produced a photo album serialising the various activities of the Omuo

festival in the form of visual essays and a photo storyboard format. This visual essay comprises photographs depicting the various activities, starting from the beginning to the end of the festival. We sequentially place these pictures in boxes to tell the festival's story. We analyse these pictures from both technical and thematic perspectives. Below are pictures of scenes

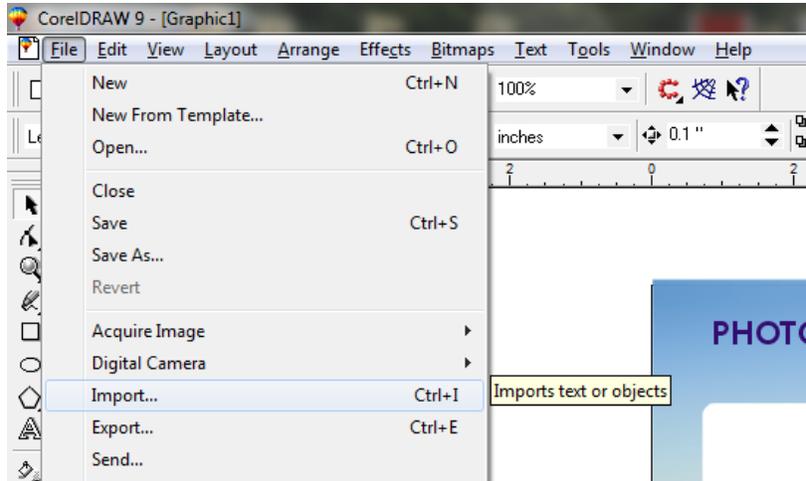


Figure 18. Corel draw workspace showcasing insertion of pictures on the picture container.

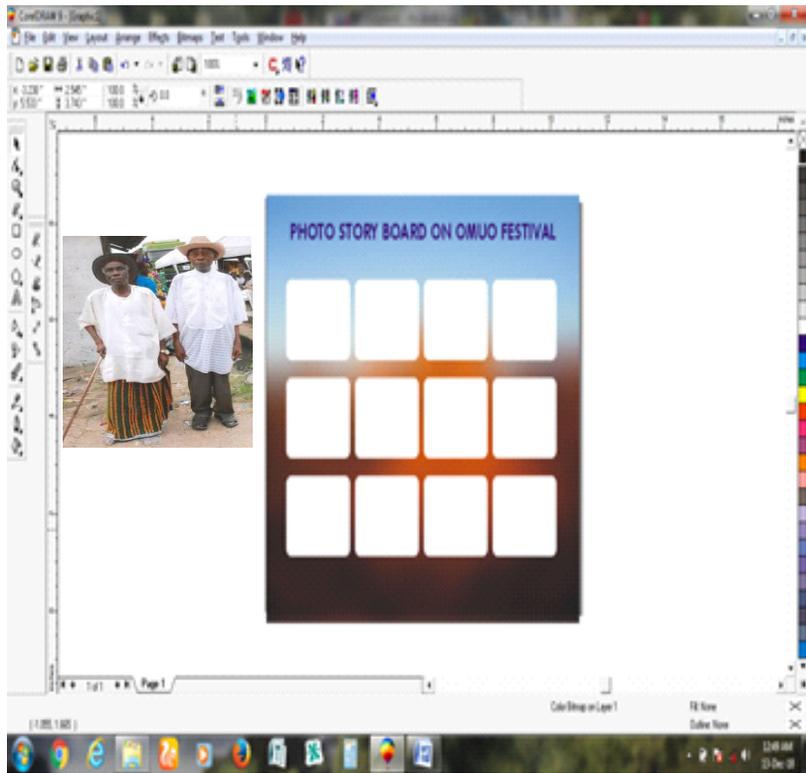
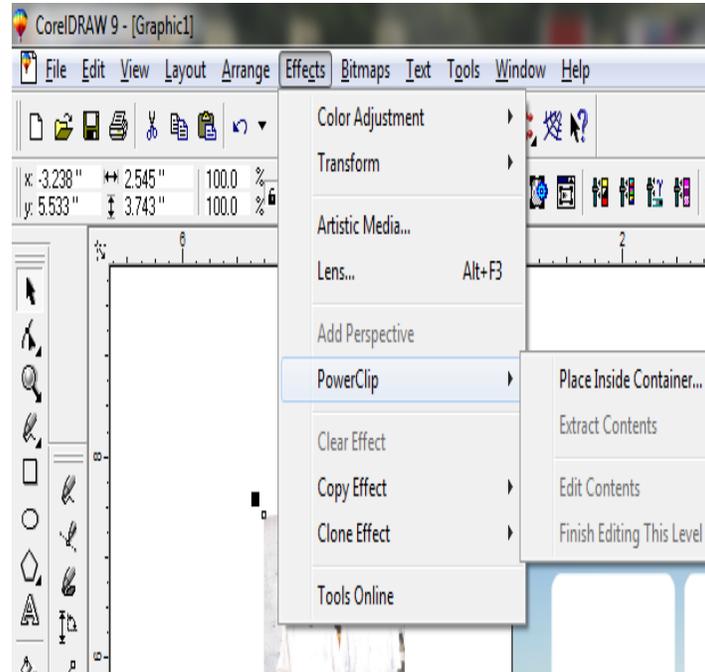


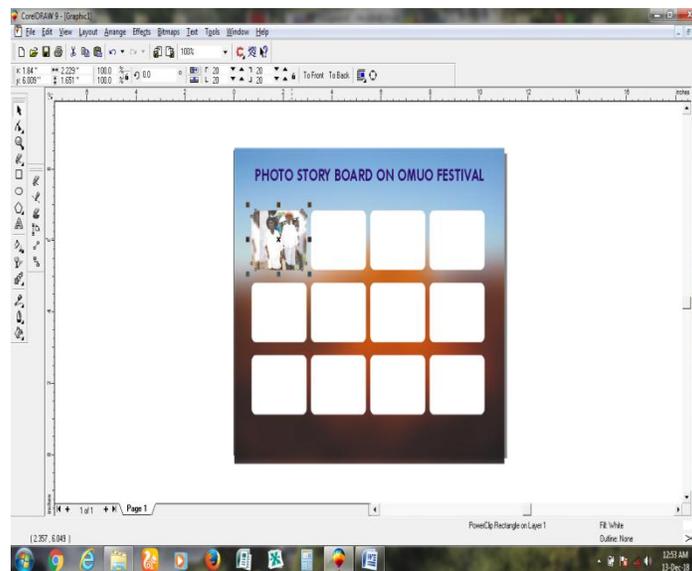
Figure 19. Corel draw workspace showcasing pictures.

captured showcasing different Omuo festival activities. Figure 25: The Isiokolo community's eldest man (Okarorho) and his deputy (Akoroda). Figure 26: Community town crier (Oruaghwoghwo) in Isiokolo community. (Picture taken by Obodo-Ovie O., January 14, 2018) Figure 27: Types of guns branded by community Idugbo on the day of the festival. (Picture

taken by Obodo-Ovie O., January 14, 2018) Figure 28: Community Idugbo. (Picture taken by Obodo-Ovie O., January 14, 2018) Figure 29: Old widows posing for a group photograph on the way dancing to the community town hall. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O. Figure 30: Gifts and food items sent by kinsmen of the groom to the bride's family. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O. Figure 31: Drinks being



**Figure 20.** Corel draw workspace showcasing insertion of pictures on the picture container using Power clip.



**Figure 21.** Corel draw workspace showcasing inserted pictures.

presented and served to the wife during the Omuo festival activities. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo. Figure 32: Girls gather to dance on both sides of the town. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo. Figure 33: The Idugbu clearing at the side road. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo. Figure 34: The Omuo festival starts amid singing and jubilation. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018,

Isiokolo. Figure 35: Odjagbon (from the left) and Otomi (2nd left) go to the Omuo shrine. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O. (2018), Isiokolo. Figure 36 depicts the Odjagbon offering a libation to the deity at the shrine. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo. Figure 37: Ram (Egibo) killed at the front of the Omuo shrine. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo. Figure 38: Aged women blocking roads Photo:

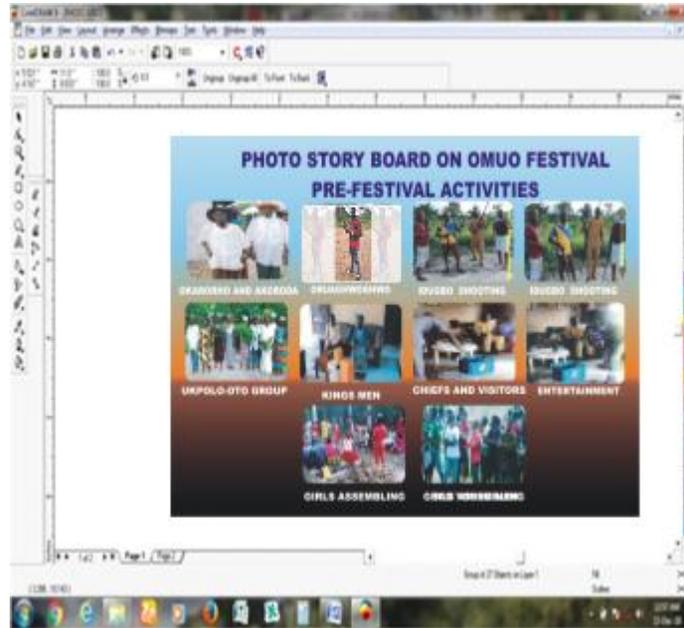


Figure 22. Corel draw workspace showcasing completed inserted pictures.

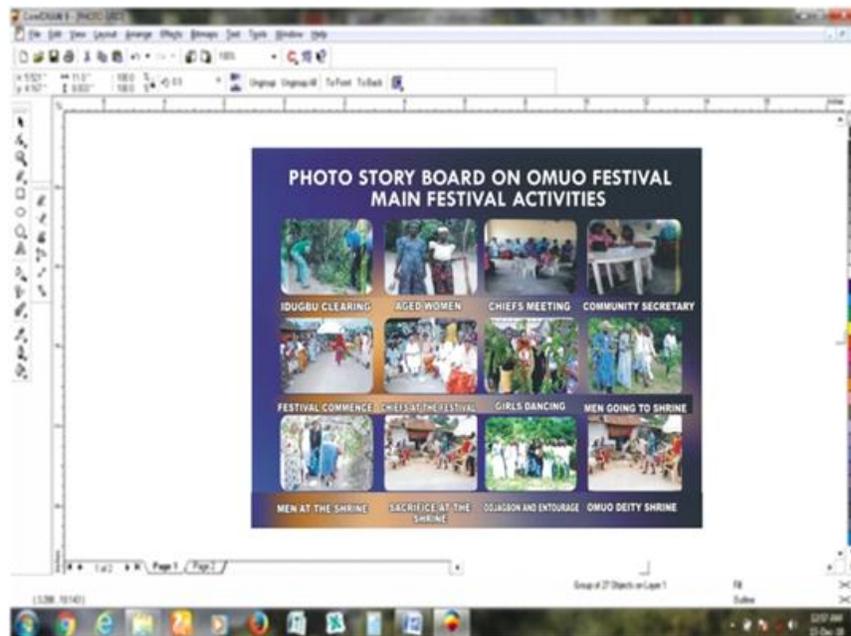
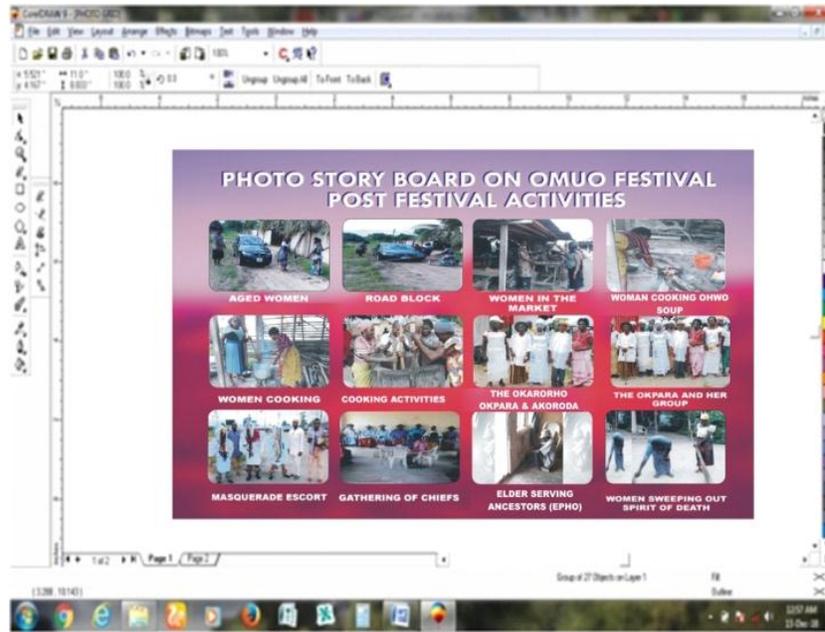


Figure 23. Corel draw workspace showcasing inserted pictures for main festival activities

Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018, Isiokolo. Figure 39: Women purchase dried fish to prepare ohwo soup for the Omuo festival. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018 Figure 40: Women preparing food for the Omuo festival. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O. (2018) Figure 41: Okpara (4th from left) and her group. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O. (2018) (Figure 42: Escort of the Masquerade to the Omuoshrine) Photo: Obodo-

Ovie, O. (2018) Figure 43: An Elder before an Ancestors Shrine (Epho) Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018 Figure 44: Spirits of the dead driven away from the town. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019 Figure 45: People waiting for prayers. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019 Figure 46: Presentation of drinks to the Okpara. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019 Figure 47: A community member kneeling down



**Figure 24.** Corel draw workspace showcasing inserted pictures for Post-festival activities.



**Figure 25.** The Eldest man in Isiokolo community (Okarorho) and his deputy (Akoroda).



**Figure 26.** Community town crier (Oruaghwohwo) in Isiokolo community. (Picture taken by Obodo-Ovie O., 14 January, 2018)



**Figure 27.** Types of guns branded by community Idugbo on the day of the festival. (Picture taken by Obodo-Ovie O., 14 January, 2018)



**Figure 28.** Community Idugbo. (Picture taken by Obodo-Ovie O., 14 January, 2018)



**Figure 29.** Old widows posing for a group photograph on the way dancing to the community town hall. (Photo: Obodo-Ovie O).



**Figure 31.** Drinks being presented and served to the wife to be during the Omuo festival activities. (Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo).



**Figure 32.** Girls assembling to dance to both sides of the town. (Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo).



Figure 33. The Idugbu clearing at the side road. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo.



Figure 34. The Omuo festival starts amid singing and jubilation. (Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo).

for prayers. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019 Figure 48: Prayer by the Okpara. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019. The Corel Draw workspace organizes these pictures into a story board format. During this process, we import the captured images from the picture document, edit and

save them in the boxes, often duplicating them to showcase the diverse activities of the Omuo festival. We first highlight the pictures in this Corel Draw work space to ensure their proportional placement in the boxes. We follow the guide, drawing and duplicating boxes to meet



**Figure 35.** *Odjagbon* (from the left) and the *Otomi* (2nd left) going to the *Omuo* shrine. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018, Isiokolo.



**Figure 36.** Pouring of libation to the deity at the shrine by the *Odjagbon*. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo



Figure 37. Ram (*Egibo*) killed at the front of the *Omuoshrine*. Photo: Obodo-Ovie O., 2018, Isiokolo.



Figure 38. Aged women blocking road. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018, Isiokolo.

the necessary number for showcasing the scenes.

## ANALYSES OF THE WORKS PRODUCED

### *Omuo Festival*

#### *Pre-Festival Activities*

The Isiokolo community cultural festival, traditionally held

in February, honors the deity *Omuo*. The eldest man (*Okaorho*) and his chiefs announce the festival's date at the *Omuo* shrine. The festival lasts forty days: sixteen days each for men and women, with the final eight days allowing for the tide to go down. On the announcement evening, chiefs from both town sides (*Uno* and *Otoro*) paraded with dancing and gunfire. After the men's sixteen days, old widows inform the chiefs of the festival's approach by dancing through the community. Before the



**Figure 39.** Women purchasing dried fish to prepare *ohwo* soup for the *Omuo* festival. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018



**Figure 40.** Women preparing food for the *Omuo* festival. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018

festival, prospective husbands send food items to their intended brides. Three days before the festival, girls from both sides dance with raised sticks and sing bitter songs, which the targets must accept.

### **Main Festival Activities**

Typically, the festival begins on a market day (Edewor). The Idugbu, or local police, clear the festival path,



**Figure 41.** *Okpara* (4<sup>th</sup> from left) and her group. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018



**Figure 42.** Escort of the masquerade to the *Omu* shrine. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018

symbolising *Omuo's* presence both in the bush and town. Men begin the festival with dancing and singing, accompanied by gunfire. On the first day, people make sexual jokes, but repeated jokes about married women result in penalties. Two days later, the Chief Priest (*Odjagbon*) sacrifices a cow to *Omuo*, and the *Otomi*, dressed for battle, performs ritualistic actions to secure the deity's acceptance. The community then distributes the cow among its eight mega-families. If a cow is unavailable, the community sacrifices a ram instead. After the festival, elderly widows gather funds to cook

soup for the women's deity (*Enoo*). The first eight days are devoid of any musical instruments. People make sacrifices and libations, and women perform a dance known as *Oje*. The festival culminates with rituals performed by elders and the community's eldest man, driving away spirits and preparing for the coming year's blessings. This analyses the festival's photo album and storyboards, showcasing pre-festival, main festival, and post-festival activities from technical and thematic perspectives Figure 49. A storyboard of pre-festival activities.



**Figure 43.** An Elder before an Ancestors Shrine (*Epho*). Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2018



**Figure 44.** Spirits of the dead driven away from the town. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019



**Figure 45.** People waiting for prayers Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019



**Figure 46.** Presentation of drinks to the Okpara. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019



Figure 47. A community member kneeling down for prayersPhoto: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019



Figure 48. Prayer by the Okpara. Photo: Obodo-Ovie, O., 2019.

### Pre-Festival Activities

The storyboard (Figure 49) outlines the festival's stages. Okarorho and his chiefs announce the festival date at the Omuo shrine. That evening, chiefs danced and fired guns along the main road to celebrate. A week after men's activities, old widows dance through the community at 9 p.m. to inform the chiefs that the festival is near. The

chiefs welcome them with drinks and money. Three days prior to the festival, girls perform the Ukpono dance while singing provocative songs.

### Main Festival Activities

The festival coincides with a market day (Edewor). On this day, the local police (Idugbu) clear Omuo's side



Figure 49. Storyboard of pre-festival activities.

streets. Men and women joke about their sexual characteristics during the celebration. Two days after the announcement of the festival, the chief priest (Odjagbon) and Otomi sacrifice a large domestic cattle to the deity (Omuo), with Otomi slaughtering the cow. The Otomi, dressed like a warrior, arrives at the deity's shrine with his entourage. The Odjagbon performs preliminary rituals and incantations, culminating in the slaughter of the cow at noon. Only locals have access to the slaughter site. If there's no cow available, Omuo's shrine performs the sacrifice of a ram (Egbo) instead (Figure 50).

### Post-Festival Activities

Following the initial four days of the festival, elderly widows will obstruct the road during the community market days, gathering funds from drivers to prepare a specific indigenous dish known as Owho (oil soup). The female deity, known as Enoo, receives this soup. The eldest woman in the community, Okpara, leads the ceremony. Two days prior to the festival's conclusion, the women of each megafamily organize a dance known as "Oje," which they perform alongside the masquerade dance "Edjo." Following their dance along the main road, each megafamily woman presents her dance to their respective chiefs, who then provide entertainment. At the festival's climax, the elders of each family will serve their ancestors, culminating in the community's eldest man performing the rituals for the founding fathers, known as erivwiride. At about 6 a.m. on the final day of the festival, the town drives the spirits of the dead away. Woods

kindled with fire are thrown at a distance, "shouting Erivwi-kpo" (which means the dead should go home). Thereafter, on the next market day, interested members of the community will gather in the evening about 4 p.m. at the Omuo shrine to take blessings for the coming year (Mr. Sunday Irorobeje, personal communication, February 23, 2020) (Figure 51).

### Findings

The visual narration clearly demonstrates that the documentary photography of the Omuo festival serves as a unique template for the preservation and future study of our traditional festivals. A storyboard, as previously defined, is a plan for visualizing a story or an event. We used Corel Draw and Photoshop software to create a visual narrative of the Omuo festival using the storyboard format. The storyboard captures and preserves the various stages of the festival, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the Isiokolo people of Delta State. Documentary photography combines storyboards with digital-based techniques to create photographic illustrations. Documentary photography uses the storyboard to showcase its creative strength as an art form. Storyboards distinguish themselves as an art form, unlike the conventional photographs commonly found in homes. The prints are superb and solid, thanks to the art of storytelling. We have used the storyboards to commentate on the Omuo festival, uncovering significant activities. In our society, the majority of festivals remain undocumented, merely handed down as stories from one



Figure 51. Storyboard of Post-festival activities.

generation to the next, devoid of any form of reference or study over time. However, this visual documentation preserves this festival for future generations.

**CONCLUSION**

Documentary photography plays a crucial role in history, serving as a major medium to transmit present and past events to future generations while maintaining their uniqueness. The works produced in this research via storyboard illustrations, documentary photography, and storyboard format are viable forms of art for recording strategic and important events of our cultural festivals that will otherwise be forgotten.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the detailed recording of aspects of the people's culture, we recommend pursuing further research. We should use photographic mediums to showcase and document the Omuo festival in a visual essay format, preserving the memory of the community's cultural life. The government should, as a matter of urgency, make the festival a state affair, as it can serve as a source of revenue to further bolster the state's income and also serve as a medium for job creation for the teeming population.

**Contributions to Knowledge**

Documentary photography stands out as a unique form of art. This research work has immensely added to the volume of literature in documentary photography. The

following, therefore, are the contributions to knowledge: the study provided thirty-six (36), hitherto inexistent, photographic prints on the Omuo festival of the Isiokolo people. The study also produced a comprehensive photo album and three (3) detailed photo storyboards that effectively document the Omuo deity's pre-festival, main-festival, and post-festival activities. We used a photo storyboard to capture the essence of the Omuo festival through a direct and social documentary. The different stages of the Omuo festival, from the pre-festival stage to the post-festival stage, clearly showcased the creative strength of documentary photography as an art form. The Omuo festival produced and constructed thirty-six photographic prints in storyboard format as a visual documentary. This research work provides a platform for proper documentation and a basis for further research on the culture and other aspects of Isiokolo and Orhoakpor communal life. This research work provides on-the field visual documentation perhaps not seen or found anywhere. This research work provides a template for further and deeper research on the culture, history, and civilisation of the Isiokolo people in particular and the Agbon clan of the Urhobo nation in Delta State, Nigeria.

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