

**CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIAN  
THEATRE: A CASE STUDY OF THE SEIDE-OTU CULTURAL TROUPE, BAYELSA STATE**

**Fred Mayford**

08036696019

Department of public relations  
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education

**Weridonghan, Ernest Jackson**

Department of Theatre Arts

Niger Delta University

0009-0000-3672-2302

[ernestw4all@gmail.com](mailto:ernestw4all@gmail.com) 08140062088

&

**Banabo, Ekankumo Alexander**

Department of Marketing

Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education

Sagbama, Bayelsa State

07066980905, [banaboalex@yahoo.com](mailto:banaboalex@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

This study looks at how creative entrepreneurship supports cultural practice and livelihoods in Nigerian theatre, using a case study of the Seide-otu Cultural Troupe in Bayelsa State. The research, which uses a qualitative methodology of purposeful interviews and participant observation and is based on cultural entrepreneurship theory, documents the troupe's entrepreneurial strategies: diversified revenue streams (sponsorships, merchandise, workshops), community-centred programming, cost management through local networks, and digital marketing via social media platforms. The findings reveal that these strategies allow the group to retain and reinterpret Ijaw performing traditions while increasing audience reach, generating revenue, and giving youth training and employment. The study also finds structural barriers to growth and sustainability, such as insufficient finance, inadequate infrastructure, minimal policy protection, and heavy rivalry from mainstream entertainment. It concludes with policy and practice recommendations, including targeted public funding and infrastructure investment, strengthened regulatory protections for performance contracts, capacity-building partnerships between universities and troupes, and increased corporate sponsorship to support cultural tourism and local development. According to the study, these approaches will increase theatre's role in Nigeria's creative economy while also promoting cultural sustainability in the Niger Delta.

***Keywords: Creative entrepreneurship, theatre entrepreneurship, cultural sustainability, marketing strategies, Seide-otu cultural troupe.***

**Introduction**

Creative entrepreneurship refers to the application of entrepreneurial principles within artistic and cultural enterprises in order to achieve both artistic and economic sustainability. It is an important framework for understanding how artists and cultural practitioners sustain their creative activities through innovation, resource mobilisation, audience engagement, and strategic marketing. Its study in Nigeria's academic space is very relevant as the creative sector has continued to expand significantly, particularly through Nollywood, popular music, comedy, and digital media production.

Also, the emergence of independent theatre companies across Nigeria demonstrates the increasing integration of entrepreneurship into theatre practice.

Independent theatre companies combine artistic creativity with business strategies in order to survive within Nigeria's highly competitive and economically unstable environment. One of such independent theatre troupe is the Seide-otu cultural troupe, founded by Yemmoh, Charles Kaynus in 2015 in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The Seide-otu cultural troupe engages in stage performances, dance productions, social media content creation, and community-based cultural activities. Through its productions and entrepreneurial strategies, the company has sought to create economic opportunities for theatre practitioners while simultaneously preserving local cultural traditions. The company's activities, therefore, provide an important case study for understanding the intersection of theatre, entrepreneurship, marketing, and cultural sustainability within the Nigerian creative economy. Despite the increasing visibility of cultural troupes in Nigeria, the sector's entrepreneurial impact and challenges remain relatively underexplored within academic and policy discussions. Existing literature prioritises the commercial behemoths of film and music, often treating theatre as a nostalgic precursor or an "endangered art" (Ododo, 2014). This bias is particularly pronounced for theatre companies operating outside the Lagos-Ibadan creative corridor. The Niger Delta, a region synonymous with oil extraction, environmental degradation, and militancy, is rarely conceptualised as a site of cultural enterprise. This study challenges that omission and addresses this gap by examining the entrepreneurial and marketing strategies of the Seide-otu cultural troupe in Bayelsa State. The study investigates how the company combines artistic production with entrepreneurial innovation to sustain its operations and contribute to cultural development within the Niger Delta region.

### **Theatre Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

Theatre entrepreneurship in Nigeria has historical roots in the travelling theatre traditions pioneered by Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, and Kola Ogunmola. These practitioners combined artistic performance with managerial and commercial activities in order to sustain their productions and theatre companies. Ogunde's theatre practice in particular demonstrated an early integration of entrepreneurship into Nigerian theatre practise. Ododo (2014) notes that Nigerian theatre practitioners often function simultaneously as directors, producers, managers, and marketers due to the absence of institutional support systems. This multifunctional approach reflects the entrepreneurial nature of theatre practice in Nigeria. Even the Nigerian government understands the value of creativity, culture and art; therefore, it established the Nigerian Cultural Policy document in 1988.

The cultural policy for Nigeria highlights that the consumption of cultural activities in Nigeria can become income-generating. This is because Nigeria's prosperity in the future is a function of producing youths who are well prepared and equipped to take their place in tomorrow's society. The policy attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment and give order to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours. In other words, there is a need for entrepreneurship education, arts such as Performing Arts, Fine Arts, and crafts education, etc., geared towards the production of potential entrepreneurs through creativity. With the establishment of the cultural policy for Nigeria, every state and arm of government has a framework with which to tackle the diverse challenges faced relating to cultural activities in the country. This policy is a legal document which was reviewed by people with knowledge of the Arts and presented to the government of the federation and passed into law by the Senate. However, as years passed, state-sponsored theatres declined.

The decline in the state-owned theatres never diminished the increasing commercialisation of entertainment, forcing theatre practitioners to develop alternative survival strategies. According to

Balogun (2017), theatre entrepreneurship in Nigeria now includes event production, digital performance distribution, merchandising, workshops, sponsorship acquisition, and social media marketing. With these activities emerged creative entrepreneurship within theatre, involving both artistic innovation and business management. Theatre entrepreneurs must balance aesthetic goals with economic realities in order to sustain production activities. Marketing has become increasingly important within the performing arts sector due to changing audience behaviour, technological transformation, and increasing competition within the entertainment industry. Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue that arts organisations must adopt strategic marketing approaches in order to build audiences and maintain financial sustainability.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have transformed the marketing landscape for theatre organisations. Digital technologies enable theatre companies to reach wider audiences, promote productions, engage patrons, and generate revenue through online content distribution. According to Hoyer et al. (2010), audience engagement has become central to contemporary cultural marketing. Audiences no longer function merely as passive spectators but as active participants within cultural production processes. This shift has encouraged theatre organisations to develop interactive marketing strategies, community partnerships, and co-creative experiences. The rise of crowdfunding, sponsorship models, and digital ticketing has further expanded entrepreneurial opportunities within the theatre industry. Mollick (2014) explains that crowdfunding enables creative entrepreneurs to secure funding while simultaneously building audience loyalty and stakeholder investment.

The concept of creative economy has gained significant scholarly and policy attention over the past two decades. The creative economy refers to economic activities that derive value from creativity, cultural production, intellectual property, and artistic innovation (Throsby, 2010). Creative industries include theatre, film, music, publishing, visual arts, advertising, fashion, gaming, and digital media. According to Throsby (2010), cultural industries contribute to economic development through employment generation, tourism promotion, innovation, and cultural identity formation. The creative industries are characterised by the integration of artistic creativity and commercial enterprise. In many developing countries like Nigeria, creative industries have become important alternatives for youth employment and entrepreneurship. Nigeria's creative economy has expanded rapidly over the last two decades, particularly through the global success of Nollywood and Afrobeats music. However, theatre practice has not experienced the same level of institutional investment and international visibility. Despite this challenge, theatre remains an important cultural institution that contributes to education, social commentary, and heritage preservation.

### **Importance of Theatre Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

Theatre entrepreneurship has contributed significantly to cultural and economic development in Nigeria in several ways.

1. **Employment Generation:** actors, dancers, directors, technicians, scriptwriters, managers and technologists all get employed as they are needed to add value to the theatre companies they work for.
2. **Cultural Preservation:** theatre companies or troupes from the time of Hubert Ogunde to date contribute to cultural development and preservation.
3. **Tourism and Cultural Visibility:** Theatre productions and cultural festivals contribute to tourism development by attracting audiences, visitors, and cultural stakeholders.
4. **Youth Empowerment:** Workshops and mentorship programs organised by theatre companies contribute to youth development and creative capacity building. As such, theatre companies function not only as an artistic institution but also as a platform for social empowerment and entrepreneurship.

### **Cultural Entrepreneurship Theory**

This study is hinged on cultural entrepreneurship theory, which focuses on the processes through which cultural actors create, institutionalise, and sustain enterprises that possess both commercial and socio-cultural value. According to Paul DiMaggio (1998), cultural entrepreneurship involves the classification, legitimisation, and institutionalisation of cultural organisations within broader social and economic systems. It explains how artists and cultural practitioners move beyond artistic production into entrepreneurial action by transforming cultural ideas, traditions, and performances into organised ventures capable of generating profit, social value, or both.

In this regard, cultural entrepreneurs are not merely business owners; they are cultural mediators who preserve heritage while simultaneously innovating within contemporary economic environments. They combine creativity, organisational management, audience engagement, and market adaptation to sustain artistic enterprises. As Van der Rheede (2013) observes, cultural entrepreneurship contributes socially to the development of identity and collective self-esteem within communities. It challenges perceptions that indigenous cultural practices are outdated, while encouraging creativity, originality, and innovation rooted in local traditions. Educationally, it contextualises indigenous knowledge systems within modern learning environments, and entrepreneurially, it stimulates the development of micro-enterprises and creative industries.

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to the study of the Seide-otu cultural troupe because the company exemplifies the integration of cultural preservation and entrepreneurial innovation within the Nigerian theatre industry. The company transforms Ijaw cultural heritage, dance traditions, storytelling practices, and theatrical expressions into structured creative enterprises that generate both artistic and economic value. Through stage productions, digital performances, cultural festivals, and social media engagement, the company demonstrates how indigenous performance traditions can be adapted for contemporary audiences while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Cultural entrepreneurship theory further emphasises the importance of cultural identity and community participation in entrepreneurial development. According to O'Connor (2016), cultural enterprises thrive when they are deeply connected to local narratives, communal values, and indigenous identities. The Seide-otu cultural troupe's productions frequently draw from Ijaw social realities, folklore, music, dance, and environmental experiences within the Niger Delta region. This approach strengthens communal identity while simultaneously making cultural performance economically productive. The company, therefore, functions not only as an entertainment organisation but also as a cultural institution that reinforces social cohesion and cultural continuity. The theory also highlights the role of innovation in sustaining cultural enterprises. Cultural entrepreneurs continuously reinterpret traditional forms in response to changing audience expectations and technological developments. Hjalager (2010) argues that innovation within cultural sectors leads to the development of new artistic products and experiences capable of attracting wider audiences and increasing economic sustainability. The Seide-otu cultural troupe reflects this innovative tendency through its integration of digital media, online skits, social media marketing, multimedia performances, and contemporary storytelling techniques. By combining traditional Ijaw performance aesthetics with modern theatrical and digital strategies, the company expands its audience reach beyond Bayelsa State to national and global spectatorship.

Furthermore, cultural entrepreneurship theory recognises the economic significance of cultural tourism and performance-based enterprises. Richards (2011) notes that cultural tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global tourism industry, as audiences increasingly seek authentic cultural experiences. Theatre companies and cultural festivals, therefore, function as platforms for attracting visitors, stimulating local economies, and promoting cultural visibility. Within this context, the Seide-otu cultural troupe contributes to the promotion of Bayelsa State's cultural

identity through performances, workshops, and touring productions that showcase the richness of Niger Delta artistic traditions.

Similarly, Throsby (2010) argues that cultural assets can stimulate economic development through job creation, tourism, local business expansion, and creative innovation. The activities of the Seide-otu cultural troupe align with this perspective because the organisation creates opportunities for actors, dancers, choreographers, costume designers, technicians, and emerging theatre practitioners. The company's entrepreneurial structure demonstrates how theatre can function as both a cultural and economic enterprise capable of supporting livelihoods within the creative economy.

The collaborative nature of the company also reflects another important aspect of cultural entrepreneurship theory: resource mobilisation through networks and partnerships. Cultural entrepreneurs frequently rely on community support, sponsorships, institutional collaborations, and digital platforms to sustain creative activities. The Seide-otu cultural troupe's partnerships with educational institutions, cultural practitioners, media organisations, and sponsors illustrate how entrepreneurial networks contribute to organisational sustainability and audience development.

Moreover, cultural entrepreneurship theory helps explain the company's emphasis on youth empowerment and talent development. Through workshops, mentorship programs, and performance opportunities, the company creates pathways for young people to participate in the creative industries. This reflects the broader developmental function of cultural entrepreneurship, which extends beyond profit-making to include social transformation, community development, and creative capacity building.

In relation to this study, cultural entrepreneurship theory therefore provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the Seide-otu cultural troupe negotiates the intersection of culture, creativity, entrepreneurship, and sustainability within Nigeria's evolving creative economy. The theory demonstrates that theatre organisations are not merely artistic institutions but also entrepreneurial entities capable of generating economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, promoting tourism, and fostering social development. By applying cultural entrepreneurship theory, this study situates the Seide-otu cultural troupe within broader global discussions on creative industries, cultural sustainability, and entrepreneurial innovation in the performing arts sector.

## **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research method. The qualitative approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of entrepreneurial practices, marketing strategies, and cultural activities within the Seide-otu cultural troupe. The study focuses on members and collaborators of the Seide-otu cultural troupe in Bayelsa State. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, such as Mr Yemmoh, Charles Kaynus (Mr Aesthetics), who is the founder and artistic director, Meshack Shedrack, a choreographer, and Farida Kadiri, a performer, because they possess relevant knowledge of the company's operations.

Data for the study were collected through oral interviews and Participant observation. Interviews were conducted with selected participants in order to obtain information regarding the company's entrepreneurial activities, funding structures, audience engagement strategies, and operational challenges. Participant observation enabled the researcher to observe rehearsals, performances, workshops, and audience interactions.

## **The Seide-otu Cultural Troupe: Background and Organisational Structure**

The Seide-otu cultural troupe is an independent entertainment and performance troupe based in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Founded in 2020 by Yemmoh Charlse Kaynus, the company was established with the objective of promoting theatre arts, Ijaw cultural heritage, and youth development through performance.

The organisation focuses primarily on theatrical productions, dance performances, cultural presentations, workshops, and digital content creation. The company draws performers mainly from the Theatre Arts departments of Niger Delta University, youths from Amassoma and within Bayelsa state who have flair and passion for culture and performance. The company combines professional theatre practitioners with emerging artists, thereby creating opportunities for mentorship and talent development. This structure enables younger performers to acquire practical experience in acting, dance, directing, choreography, and stage management. In addition to performances within Bayelsa State, the company also engages in touring productions that address social and cultural issues affecting communities within the Niger Delta region.

### **Entrepreneurial Strategies of the Seide-otu Cultural Troupe**

The Seide-otu cultural troupe has set up financial strategies to ensure its long-term sustainability. Some of these strategies include:

1. **Diversified Revenue Streams:** One of the major entrepreneurial strategies adopted by the troupe is revenue diversification. Rather than depending solely on bookings from organisers of shows and ticket sales, the company generates income through multiple channels, which include: Sponsorships from multinationals, merchandise sales, grants from government and well-meaning individuals, and partnerships.
2. **Organising Workshops:** The troupe organises acting, dance, and scriptwriting workshops targeted at young performers and theatre enthusiasts. These workshops generate income while simultaneously promoting talent development. Additionally, the company produces branded merchandise connected to theatrical productions and cultural events. Merchandise sales provide supplementary revenue while enhancing brand visibility.
3. **Sponsorship and Partnership Structures:** The troupe pursues sponsorships from corporate organisations, government agencies, and private individuals. Sponsorship packages are structured according to levels of visibility and promotional benefits. Sponsors are rewarded with cultural performances during periods they have/organize ceremonies, media visibility, event publicity and audience engagement opportunities. The company also collaborates with educational institutions like Niger Delta University, Department of Theatre Arts, to contribute manpower during workshops and lectures.
4. **Effective Cost Management:** to manage cost, the troupe sometimes uses volunteers and Theatre Arts students and culture lovers from Niger Delta University for performances; in return, the volunteers and students are given publicity and connections through their performance. Another proactive approach to cost management is leveraging of community resources. Also, the students and volunteers are mentored and get professional development for they work alongside experienced theatre practitioners, enabling knowledge transfer and artistic growth.
5. **Social Media Marketing:** Social media constitutes one of the most important marketing tools utilised by the Seide-otu cultural troupe. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, WhatsApp, and YouTube are used to promote performances, share performance clips, engage audiences and distribute digital content. Digital visibility has enabled the company to reach audiences beyond Bayelsa State while simultaneously generating revenue through monetized content.
6. **Audience and community-based performances:** the troupe engages in performances that are community-centred. Often, whenever the troupe is to perform somewhere, the director makes research about the people and weaves his stories around the people's experiences and social realities affecting them, so that the performance can be audience-engaging, as well as foster participation and a sense of cultural ownership among the community people (audience). This approach makes the people/community most likely to call them for future

performance. Some community engagement strategies include: interactive performances, post-performance discussions, workshops and collaborative cultural events.

### **Challenges Facing Seide-otu Cultural Troupe Entrepreneurship**

The seide-otu cultural troupe is faced with a lot of pressing challenges such as:

1. **Inadequate Funding:** since the troupe is owned and run by a private individual, there is no government financial support. Anyone who supports the troupe is either asking for branding deals, publicity, or a performance for their occasion (event). Since the troupe is in relatively new, adequate finance for the day to day running needs to be readily available, but, it is missing in this case. Thus, the absence of stable government or multinational support affects: production quality, audience expansion, logistics and infrastructure availability and artist remuneration.
2. **Infrastructure Deficiency:** the troupe uses a house of the founder's relative (uncle) for her rehearsals because she faces infrastructural challenges. Some infrastructural challenges the troupe faces include limited rehearsal spaces, inadequate performance venues, poor technical equipment and inconsistent electricity supply which prevent the troupe from rehearsing and performing at will. Thus, these limitations affect production efficiency and artistic experimentation.
3. **Competition within the Entertainment Industry:** Though theatre is a family, the troupe is fighting for survival and growth as it competes with the Bayelsa State Council for Arts and Culture and other sister troupes based in Yenagoa. Also, Nollywood, streaming platforms, comedy entertainment, and social media content have intensified competition for audience attention.
4. **Poor Policy Support:** sometimes, after preparing for performance, by engaging in rigorous rehearsals, buyers of theatre performances call and cancel performance impromptu, citing different reasons. If there were policies to regulate such things, the impromptu cancellation of the performance would not have happened. Theatre companies in Nigeria do not have good policies if there are policies even. The customers/consumers of the theatre abuse the rights of performers and theatre companies, and after abuse, they go free with such abuse because no strong regulatory policies.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that theatre entrepreneurship within Nigeria's creative economy requires strategic integration of artistic creativity and entrepreneurial innovation. The study illustrates how independent theatre organisations can survive through diversified revenue structures, digital marketing, partnerships, and audience-centered programming. The troupe's social media engagement and reach reflect the transformations within global creative industries. Digital technologies have become essential tools for audience engagement, visibility, and revenue generation.

The study also reveals the importance of cultural sustainability within theatre entrepreneurship. By promoting Ijaw cultural traditions through performance, the study contributes to heritage preservation while simultaneously creating economic opportunities for performers and cultural practitioners. The study also reveals structural challenges confronting creative entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and limited policy support hinders the growth of theatre organizations. Despite these challenges, the study shows that resilience and adaptability through innovative programming and entrepreneurial resource management is key to creative entrepreneurship.

## Conclusion

This study looked at the entrepreneurial and marketing tactics of the Seide-otu cultural troupe, a theatre performance organisation, in the context of Nigeria's growing creative economy. The study shows that creative entrepreneurship requires the strategic integration of artistic creation, resource management, audience engagement, and digital innovation. The troupe has successfully sustained its operations through a variety of financial streams, sponsorships, the social media market, and community participation. Through these strategies, the troupe supports cultural preservation, youth empowerment, job creation, and creative development in Bayelsa State and the larger Niger Delta region.

The study also finds that creative entrepreneurship in Nigeria continues to confront significant hurdles such as insufficient funding, poor infrastructure, limited government backing, and rising rivalry in the entertainment sector. Nonetheless, independent theatres continue to show resilience via creativity and entrepreneurial adaptability. The study indicates that theatre entrepreneurship has a high potential for contributing to Nigeria's cultural and economic development. However, realising this potential would necessitate improved institutional support, smart cultural policies, investment in creative infrastructure, and greater collaboration among government agencies, corporate organisations, and theatrical practitioners.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government agencies should establish sustainable funding schemes and grants for theatrical businesses.
2. Cultural policies should prioritise the creation of theatre infrastructure, such as rehearsal spaces, performance venues, and technical facilities.
3. Theatre organisations should include modern technologies and social media in their audience engagement and marketing initiatives.
4. Universities and cultural organisations should collaborate with independent theatrical groups to promote research, training, and talent development.
5. Corporate organisations should invest more in theatrical sponsorship to promote cultural growth and corporate social responsibility.

## References

- Adebayo, A. (2021). "The Rise of Performing Arts Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Trufesta International Dance Festival". *Journal of Creative Economy*, 7(2), 45-62.
- Akinyemi, O. (2020). "Organisational Structures and Management Strategies for Sustainable Arts Festivals in Nigeria". *International Journal of Event Management*, 11(1), 23-37.
- Balogun, T. (2022). The Role of Community Partnerships in Strengthening the Impact of Performing Arts Festivals. *Nigerian Journal of Arts and Culture*, 14(2), 92-109.
- Barney, J. (1991). "Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage". *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Art worlds*. University of California Press.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language* (pp. 128–138).

- Hoyer, W. D., Chandy, R., Dorotic, M., Krafft, M., & Singh, S. S. (2010). "Consumer cocreation in new product development". *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 283–296.
- Kotler, P., & Scheff, J. (1997). *Standing room only: Strategies for marketing the performing arts*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Mollick, E. (2014). "The dynamics of crowdfunding: An exploratory study". *Journal of Business Venturing*, 29(1), 1–16.
- Ododo, S. (2014). *Theatre management and entrepreneurship in Nigeria*. Kraft Books.
- Penrose, E. T. (2009). *The theory of the growth of the firm*. Oxford University Press.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). *The future of competition: Co-creating unique value with customers*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Throsby, D. (2010). *The economics of cultural policy*. Cambridge University Press.