



Perception and Determinants of Cultural Preservation of the International Gurna Festival

Nanche Billa Robert¹ and Maidanse Hortance²

Associate Professor, University of Maroua, Cameroon. E-mail: nanchebile@yahoo.co.uk

²Master Degree holder in Sociology, University of Maroua - Cameroon

Abstract: This study analyses the socio-cultural and economic significance of the International Gurna Wina Toupouri Kera Festival for local development in the communities of Doukoula in Cameroon and Fianga in Chad. The research employed a mixed-method explanatory sequential design. The quota and systematic sampling methods were used to administer 300 questionnaires and 25 semi-structured interviews were carried out using the purposive sampling method. The quantitative results demonstrate that education and ethnicity and not age determine dance participation. Qualitative findings highlight the festival's role as a crucial platform for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, the reinforcement of cultural identity, and the fostering of social cohesion. The festival is a powerful instrument for sustainable rural development, effectively leveraging cultural heritage to stimulate social capital and community empowerment amidst socio-economic challenges.

Keywords: Festival, Local development, Cultural heritage, sociocultural animation, Social Capital

Received : 05 October 2025

Revised : 10 November 2025

Accepted : 15 November 2025

Published : 30 December 2025

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Nanche Billa Robert & Maidanse Hortance (2025). Perception and Determinants of Cultural Preservation of the International Gurna Festival, *Society and Culture Development in India*, 5: 2, pp. 325-345. <https://doi.org/10.47509/SCDI.2025.v05i02.09>

Introduction

The International Gurna Wina Toupouri Kera Festival, celebrated in Cameroon's Far North Region and in Chad, is a major cultural event that brings together local communities, artists, and development actors. Initially rooted in the celebration of Tupuri customs and traditions, the festival has evolved into a space of cultural affirmation, social cohesion, and economic revitalisation. It highlights key aspects of Tupuri identity – including dance, music, rituals, and the sharing of millet beer (bil-bil) – while fostering solidarity and intergenerational exchange among the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera peoples. The relevance of this event is heightened by the socio-

economic challenges facing the Far North, such as poverty, underdevelopment, and food insecurity. Reports from the United Nations Development Programme (2020) rank the region among the lowest globally in human development indicators, making it urgent to consider how cultural initiatives can contribute to sustainable development. As argued by the World Commission on Culture and Development (1995), culture is a key factor in reducing poverty and improving quality of life. In this perspective, the Gurna Festival emerges as both a cultural safeguard and a potential driver of local development. Existing research (Belga, 2005; Kolyang, 2010; Fokou, 2018) has underlined the cultural and socio-economic impact of the festival, particularly in terms of heritage preservation, community cohesion, and local economic stimulation through tourism and trade. Yet, studies often privilege areas near the Chadian border, leaving regions such as Doukoula and Kar-Hay underexplored. Moreover, questions remain about how the festival balances authenticity with the pressures of modernisation, globalisation, and youth participation.

This paper therefore analyses the socio-cultural and economic significance of the Gurna Wina Toupouri Kera Festival, with particular attention to its role in fostering social capital, preserving cultural identity, and supporting local development. By focusing on understudied localities and examining contemporary practices, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics of Tupuri society and the potential of cultural festivals as instruments of sustainable rural development.

The Importance of Cultural Festivals

Festivals are not merely cultural events but also dynamic catalysts for economic activity, social integration, and heritage preservation. Florida (2002), through his concept of the 'creative class', argues that festivals attract creative individuals and stimulate regional investment. Similarly, Lantermann (2018) as well as Getz and Page (2016) demonstrate that festivals can revitalise local economies by stimulating local consumption, creating jobs, and supporting businesses, while also fostering social cohesion. Malraux's (1959) cultural policy, which promoted the establishment of 'maisons de la culture,' further illustrates how cultural initiatives serve as levers for development in rural areas. From an anthropological standpoint, festivals are also recognised as spaces for the valorisation of heritage and the consolidation of cultural identity (Barbara, 1998; Hall, 1990; Trouillot, 1995). However, these processes may involve paradoxes, particularly the risk of 'museumification,' where traditions are preserved but simultaneously commodified for external consumption. The social dimension of festivals has been

particularly emphasised by classical and contemporary sociologists. Durkheim (1912) conceptualised communal gatherings such as festivals as vital mechanisms for reinforcing collective values and cohesion. Turner (1969) further develops this idea by highlighting the notion of liminality, whereby social hierarchies are temporarily suspended, allowing participants to experience unity and equality. In the same vein, Duvignaud (1977) underscores the role of festivals as spaces of generosity, conviviality, and encounter, reinforcing sociability and the sense of belonging within communities.

From an economic perspective, festivals represent both opportunities and risks. On one hand, they promote trade, tourism, and the circulation of capital within rural regions. On the other hand, Gibson and Connell (2005) caution against the commodification of culture, where traditions risk being reduced to marketable products. Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural and symbolic capital provides a useful framework for analysing how cultural practices within festivals can be both valorised and exploited, often reproducing social inequalities. In a similar critical stance, Boorstin (1961) introduces the notion of 'pseudo-events,' highlighting cases in which festivals are organized primarily to attract tourists and media attention, rather than to preserve authentic traditions. This raises concerns about the balance between cultural preservation and commercial spectacle. The intersection of festivals and tourism further complicates the question of cultural authenticity. MacCannell (1976) argues that tourism frequently induces 'staged authenticity,' whereby cultural practices are reshaped to meet visitors' expectations. Graburn (1989) similarly contends that tourism can transform symbolic traditions into consumer goods, diminishing their cultural value for the community itself. Thus, while festivals contribute significantly to economic and cultural vitality, they also face the challenge of maintaining authenticity in the face of global tourism and commercialisation pressures.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives to analyse the impact of the International Festival of Gurna, Wina Toupouri, and Kera on local development. The theory of local development (Fontan, 2019) emphasises the ability of communities to mobilise their own resources for sustainable development. It highlights participation, endogenous resource management, and the reappropriation of decision-making capacities by local actors. Applied to festivals, this framework allows the analysis of how such events stimulate local economies, valorise cultural resources, and strengthen community cohesion through collective initiatives. The theory of

sociocultural animation (Desroche, 1976) conceives cultural activities as tools for participation, communication, and integration. It underscores the role of events in fostering networks, facilitating skills transfer, and encouraging civic engagement. In the festival context, this theory frames the event as a platform for social interaction, knowledge exchange, and the reinforcement of cultural identity, particularly through workshops, youth involvement, and the creation of intergroup networks.

The theory of social capital (Bourdieu, 1980) defines social capital as the resources embedded in networks of durable relationships. Festivals can be understood as arenas where new ties are created and existing networks are strengthened, thus enhancing solidarity, intercultural exchanges, and collective engagement. By mobilising volunteers, attracting visitors, and connecting stakeholders, festivals contribute to both bonding and bridging social capital, which in turn support broader economic and social development. These three theories position festivals not merely as cultural celebrations but as instruments of local empowerment, social integration, and capital formation. They provide analytical tools to evaluate the festivals' economic, social, and cultural impacts while accounting for their role in strengthening identities and collective agencies.

Methodology

A multistage sampling method was used to carry out this study. As the name suggests, this approach is implemented in several stages. The first stage is quota sampling, which helped us to determine the quota or number of questionnaires to be administered in the different villages. The second stage was the cluster sampling, which enabled us to select the large groups – called clusters – where the questionnaires were administered according to the chosen quotas. The final stage was the systematic sampling, which consists in determining the procedure by which the individuals who responded to the questionnaires were selected.

Table 1: Quota of Questionnaires Administered

<i>Study population</i>	<i>Population size</i>	<i>Administered quota</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Fianga	17, 000	117	39%
Doukoula	26, 624	183	61%
Total	43, 624	300	100%

Source: Field Data, April 2025

We administered, 136 questionnaires in the Mont d'Illi division in Fianga in Chad representing 38.85% and 214 questionnaires in the Mayo-Danay division in Cameroon,

accounting for 61.14% of the total questionnaire administered. The interval sampling or *n*th-order sampling, systematic sampling which refers to the existence of a gap or interval between each selected unit included in the sample was used to administered the questionnaires. The use of this sampling method allowed us to account for the spacing between each respondent. In the context of our study, we opted for an interval of $n = 2$, that is, selecting every second individual after the initial choice ($n_0 = 1$). Thus, the sequence followed was: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15.

When administering the questionnaire, the respondents were asked questions in their own language due to the linguistic barriers observed in the field/ The respondents often have difficulties expressing themselves in the official languages – French and English. The interviewer then fills in the questionnaire according to the responses obtained. In our study, this technique was adopted due to. To literate respondents, the questionnaires were directly handed to them, who answered the questions provided themselves. At the end of the survey, we expressed our gratitude to the respondents for their availability, trust, and the time they devoted to us, as well as for the valuable information they shared. As for qualitative data, the semi-structured interview method was employed. It is described as semi-structured because we approached our key informants with an interview guide containing open-ended questions, without strictly adhering to the order in which the questions had been designed. They were given the freedom to express themselves, while redirecting the discussion toward the research objectives whenever they digressed.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this section, we present the qualitative data that illustrates how participants think, perceive, and construct social representations regarding the cultural impact of the Gurna Festival on local development in Doukoula and Fianga. The data presented here are drawn from interviews conducted with respondents who took part in the Gurna Festival. From this perspective, our discussion is organised around two main themes: the learning of cultural values and the necessity of preserving the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera cultural heritage.

The Perception and determinants Learning of Cultural Values

In general terms, learning refers to the act of acquiring knowledge or the state of being a learner. The verb to learn derives from the Latin *apprehended*, meaning to take or to grasp. A learner is thus one who acquires or discovers something. Learning can therefore

be defined as the set of voluntary and conscious activities explicitly aimed at acquiring a skill, knowledge, or information (Cuq, 2003). It is characterised by its conscious and deliberate nature, which is its most distinctive feature. This process is usually carried out in institutional contexts, referred to as formal learning. It may also occur in non-institutional contexts, known as informal or non-formal learning. In this regard, Piaget (1970) conceives of learning as the construction, creation, invention, and development of knowledge. It is within this perspective that the field data reveal that participants in the Gurna International Festival acquired cultural values that were previously unfamiliar to them. According to their accounts, the organisation of the festival contributed both to the enrichment of traditional knowledge and to the development of new skills related to culture. One respondent expressed this view as follows:

For me, with regard to cultural learning, I want to tell you right away that I learned a lot about our tradition during the festival. It had been a very long time since I had been so close and in direct contact with culture and its diversity. There were traditional dances, storytelling sessions, traditional music, the Gurna anthem, traditional wrestling, exhibitions of art objects, traditional dishes – in short, many practices handed down by our grandparents were presented. I was amazed throughout the event, and I believe I left with many memories. I did not regret my participation.’(Interview with E6, Teacher, 46 years old, Doukoula, May 2025)

In this opinion expressed by the respondent, a number of elements can be identified that explain the learning of cultural values during the International Gurna Festival in Doukoula and Fianga. Firstly, it is observed that the participant acknowledges having acquired significant knowledge about culture. Secondly, it emerges that the Gurna Festival provided an opportunity to connect with traditions that are not taught on a regular basis. Thirdly, access was granted to a variety of cultural values such as traditional dance, cultural artefacts, traditional wrestling, and so forth. To gain a deeper understanding of the issue of learning cultural values during the Gurna Festival, another respondent explained that the event also enabled him to reconnect with certain traditional activities and to understand how the ancestors lived in comparison to contemporary times, which are characterised by modernity, globalisation, and technological innovation. According to his reasoning, given the constant evolution of our societies, it is important to learn cultural values in order to ensure their continuity. He clarified by stating:

The International Gurna Festival was, for me, a grand and important event. I say this not only because of the large crowd that was present but also because of the performances that were offered and presented by our brothers and fellow

participants. I was both enthusiastic and moved to see that we possess such a rich and immense culture. During the festival, I particularly sought to attend every event on the program, such as the opening ceremony, the exhibition workshops, the dances, and others. For me, these were occasions not to be missed, because they do not occur often, and above all, there is no guarantee that I will be present at the next edition. I decided to take part in this one, and I must say that I learned a great deal about our culture. To witness how three ethnic groups – Toupouri, Wina, and Kera – share the same culture is truly remarkable. Had I not participated, it would have been difficult for me to easily accept that two, three, or even several ethnic groups could be so close and fraternal in terms of culture. I carry with me fond memories of the moments shared.’ (Interview with E7, Religious Leader, 49 years old, Fianga, May 2025).

In this verbatim account, one clearly perceives the importance that participants attach to the International Gurna Festival. It emerges that through this event, they were able to acquire new knowledge and further deepen their understanding of Toupouri, Wina, and Kera culture. Through a related opinion, another respondent explained that the organisation of the festival provided an opportunity to return to the cultural source and to learn about the customs and traditions of his tribe. He stated:

‘This is not the first time I have participated in the Gurna Festival. I live in the village, so whenever something is organised locally, I attend because I am already on site, unlike some of our brothers who live far away and must spend money to travel. And each time I attend the festival, I always come back with something new in mind about our culture. Even though it is the same Gurna Festival being organised, the way it is conducted changes, and that is why sometimes new activities and cultural practices are added, which allows us to learn more and more about our culture. We see the traditional dances, the art workshops, the attire of certain participants the atmosphere, the songs, the presence of elites alongside a large crowd – truly, all of this is wonderful to see, and I am delighted by it.’ (Interview with E8, Housewife, 32 years old, Fianga, May 2025).

Based on these interview responses, we understand that the festival contributes not only to local development on the economic and social levels, but also on the cultural level. Thus, we may assert that learning from tradition involves studying and understanding the knowledge, practices, and values transmitted from generation to generation within a particular culture or community. This process enables a deeper comprehension of cultural identity and strengthens the sense of belonging. For many respondents, learning from tradition serves as a way of connecting the past, the present,

and the future by integrating the knowledge and practices that have shaped culture over time.

The below images depict some of the cultural activities practised during the Gurna International Festival. These clearly include traditional wrestling and traditional dance. They involve competitive movements in which participants receive prizes or rewards based on their performance.



Image 1: Selected images illustrating the cultural activities of the Gurna

Source: Gurna Facebook page, May 2025

Preservation of Cultural Heritage

The preservation of cultural heritage encompasses all actions aimed at protecting and valorising cultural assets, whether tangible (objects, monuments, sites) or intangible (traditions, rituals, folktales, proverbs, skills). This is an essential process for transmitting knowledge of culture to future generations. In other words, the conservation of cultural heritage seeks to prolong the lifespan of cultural assets while ensuring their transmission. It involves taking measures to safeguard cultural assets against various types of damage, whether natural or human-induced. Generally, the preservation of cultural heritage combines conservation, protection, and transmission of cultural inheritance from generation to generation. Following our field visit to Doukoula and Fianga, the findings indicate that the Gurna International Festival primarily aims to promote the conservation, continuity, and development of the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera cultural heritage over time. Indeed, the festival is not merely a gathering, reunion, or entertainment activity for members of the community. It is far from being an originally political event; its focus is cultural. Considering the necessity of preserving cultural heritage, one participant explained:

The Gurna Festival is a historic event. It is a way for us to revive and update our history. You know, before our current time, our grandparents fought to preserve customs, traditions, and traditional values that they had inherited and learned from our ancestors. We, in turn, must do the same to make our children and the youth aware of these cultural realities. That is why, when we organise the festival, we highlight and showcase for everyone the traces and roots of the past, so that people understand where we come from and how life used to be in earlier times. We celebrate, we dance, we share meals, we exchange knowledge, and we share many joyful moments; but in reality, through our actions, we primarily aim at transmitting the culture of the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera peoples. (Interview with E9, Member of the Organizing Committee, 49 years old, Doukoula, May 2025).

From this perspective, it emerges that the Gurna International Festival serves as a source of cultural development, in the sense that its impact goes beyond what is immediately visible to the public. According to the respondent, the festival is not organised merely to bring people together to share joyful moments, but primarily to contribute to the intergenerational transmission of heritage and to reinforce collective memory. In other words, it is a cultural event aimed at strengthening, consolidating, learning, and preserving cultural practices. Along the same lines, another respondent offers insights that help delineate the ultimate objective of the Gurna International Festival:

During the festival, many joyful moments took place. We were all gathered around a single culture. You see, three peoples, namely the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera, were united around the same culture. This demonstrates that the festival is more than a mere event, as some may think. Regarding the main objective of the Gurna Festival, there are many, but the most important is, first and foremost, the transmission of ancestral values. As you know, the world is evolving, things are changing, and especially with the modernity that has permeated our societies, if we are not careful – or, I would say, if we do not act responsibly – we risk losing many of the traditional elements left to us by our ancestors. For this reason, I tell you that behind this grand ceremony lies the idea of transmitting and reminding everyone of our roots. That is why people from the village, those living abroad, and those in other regions of the country participated in the festival. For me, as a custodian of tradition, it is our obligation to develop and protect our culture. (Interview with E10, Traditional Leader, 67 years old, Fianga, May 2025).

This verbatim highlights the necessity of preserving cultural heritage through the Gurna International Festival, and the analysis is based on several elements. First, it is crucial to preserve cultural heritage to ensure the survival and continuity of culture over

time. This task is particularly important in a society undergoing rapid change, and if conservation measures are not implemented, as the respondent affirms, culture may face degradation, fragmentation, or even disappearance. Indeed, perpetuating and protecting culture is essentially working to safeguard the identity of a people, an ethnic group, a clan, or a tribe. The Gurna International Festival seeks to uphold this principle of conservation. Second, the verbatim indicates that the preservation of cultural heritage is a collective responsibility, and each member of the culture is expected to contribute to this endeavour. According to the respondent, it is an obligation incumbent upon every member of the community. Ultimately, we observe that the Gurna International Festival contributes culturally to local development in Doukoula and Fianga by fostering the acquisition of new cultural knowledge and the preservation of Toupouri, Wina, and Kera heritage.



Image 2: Images related to the cultural centre

Source: Gurna Facebook page, 2025

In these images, we can observe the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera cultural centre. The elements depicted include a household, a hut, a shed, a granary, a cooking area, some canaries and calabashes, and a traditional mill. This cultural cosmogony thus reflects the housing and culinary practices of the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera peoples in the communes of Doukoula and Fianga. This cultural heritage is part of an ongoing process of conservation and preservation.

Determinants of Cultural Heritage Preservation

The quantitative data presented here stem from the cross-tabulation of respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and the cultural sub-variables of the Gurna Festival.

Gender and Cultural Heritage Preservation Initiatives

This figure examines the relationship between respondents' gender and cultural heritage preservation initiatives during the Gurna Festival in Doukoula and Fianga. Men participate more actively in these initiatives as both active participants and members of committees or teams than women. Some men and women engage in these initiatives as volunteers. Furthermore, a small number of men and women do not participate at all. Based on these observations, we can conclude that there is a strong correlation between respondents' gender and participation in cultural heritage preservation initiatives during the organisation of the Gurna International Festival in Doukoula and Fianga.

Age as a Determinant of Cultural Heritage Preservation Initiatives

In this study, we have shown that participants belong to a variety of age groups. This demographic determinant allows us to describe the characteristics of a study population within a given territory. From this perspective, the table below cross-tabulates respondents' age groups with cultural heritage preservation initiatives to examine how each sub-variable influences the other.

Table 2: Age as a Determinant of Cultural Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Age	Culture preservation initiative					Total
	active participant	a committee or team member	a volunteer	informed about the initiatives	not informed about the initiatives	
Less than 25	51	10	2	0	0	63
	25.1%	15.2%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	21.0%
25–35	58	18	4	4	1	85
	28.6%	27.3%	20.0%	50.0%	33.3%	28.3%
36–46	57	24	9	2	1	93
	28.1%	36.4%	45.0%	25.0%	33.3%	31.0%
47–57	27	12	4	2	1	46
	13.3%	18.2%	20.0%	25.0%	33.3%	15.3%
More than 57	10	2	1	0	0	13
	4.9%	3.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Total	203	66	20	8	3	300
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field data, May 2025

This cross-tabulation examines the relationship between respondents' age and their involvement in cultural heritage preservation initiatives. According to the observations,

participants under 25 years old engage in these initiatives primarily as active participants (80.95%), unlike those aged 25–35, who participate as active participants (68.23%), but some do not participate despite being informed (4.70%) or not informed (1.17%) about the initiatives. Similarly, individuals aged 36–46 report engaging in these initiatives as committee or team members (25.80%) and as volunteers (9.67%), although a few acknowledge not being informed about the initiatives (1.07%).

Furthermore, respondents aged 47–57 approach cultural heritage preservation initiatives in four ways: as committee or team members (26.08%), as volunteers (8.69%), not participating but being informed (4.34%), and not participating and not being informed (2.17%). For those over 57 years old, the table shows participation as active participants (76.92%) and as volunteers (7.69%). Specifically, the table indicates that active participants are primarily in the following age groups: under 25 years (80.95%), 25–35 years (68.23%), and over 57 years (76.92%). Those participating as committee or team members fall within the 36–46 years (25.80%) and 47–57 years (26.08%) brackets. Volunteers are distributed among the 36–46 years (9.67%), 47–57 years (8.69%), and over 57 years (7.69%) groups. Non-participants who were informed are aged 25–35 years (4.70%) and 47–57 years (4.34%), while non-participants who were not informed are aged 25–35 years (1.17%), 36–46 years (1.07%), and 47–57 years (2.17%).

Based on the percentages calculated in this cross-tabulation, there is no significant correlation between respondents' age and their participation in cultural heritage preservation initiatives. Indeed, the alternative hypothesis is not confirmed, as the obtained chi-square value is lower than the critical value for the given degrees of freedom. This indicates that, although participation in cultural heritage preservation initiatives is important for local development, it does not appear to be age-dependent; rather, it is influenced by other factors beyond age. The chi-square test results are as follows: Value = 13,809; DF = 16; Asymptotic significance = 0.613.

Educational Level and Participation in Different Types of Dance during the Festival

The Gurna International Festival is a major cultural event that showcases the ancestral heritage of the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera peoples, among which traditional dance occupies a central role. Traditional dance is characterised by collective movements accompanied by sonic, rhythmic, and physical practices that enable participants to highlight and transmit local culture. This practice attracts a diverse audience, including indigenous participants as well as foreign visitors, motivated by a desire to demonstrate their attachment to traditional

values and their cultural enculturation. Among these participants are individuals with varying levels of education, ranging from the illiterate to highly educated. To analyse the influence of educational level on participation in different types of dance, a cross-tabulation was constructed correlating these two variables. This table allows us to assess whether educational attainment is a determining factor in participants' engagement with the various traditional dance forms offered during the festival.

Table 3: Educational Level and Participation in Different Types of Dance

Educational level	Participation to the different types of dances		Total
	Participated	Didn't participate	
First School	39	8	47
	18.1%	9.5%	15.7%
Ordinary	47	5	52
	21.8%	6.0%	17.3%
Probatoire	18	3	21
	8.3%	3.6%	7.0%
Advanced Level	34	9	43
	15.7%	10.7%	14.3%
Bachelor degree	17	2	19
	7.9%	2.4%	6.3%
Masters	7	4	11
	3.2%	4.8%	3.7%
Doctorate	1	1	2
	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%
No level	53	52	105
	24.5%	61.9%	35.0%
Total	216	84	300
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field data, May 2025

This table shows that individuals who actively participated in the various dance groups are First School holders (82.97%), Ordinary level holders (90.38%), Probatoire holders (85.71%), Advanced level holders (79.06%), and Bachelor degree (89.47%). The same table also indicates that some individuals did not participate in the different types of dance during the festival. These are respondents who didn't participate First School holders (82.97%), individuals who actively participated in the various dance groups are First School holders (82.97%), Ordinary level holders (90.38%), Probatoire (85.71%), Advanced level holder (79.06%), and Bachelor degree holders (89.47%). The same table also indicates that some individuals did not participate in the different types of dance

during the festival. These are respondents who answered ‘no’ and hold the following qualifications: Master (36.36%), Doctorate (50%), and no diploma (49.52%). Based on the variability observed in this cross-tabulation, we can assert with confidence that a statistically significant relationship exists between respondents’ educational level and their participation in the different types of dance at the Gurna International Festival. According to the calculated percentages, the more educated the individuals are, the more likely they are to participate in traditional dances during the festival. In this regard, chi-square tests provide supporting evidence for this research hypothesis (Value: 42,422; dF: 7; Asymptotic Significance: 0.000).

Ethnic Affiliation as a Determinant of Dance Participation during the Festival

The Gurna International Festival primarily involves the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera peoples. These three ethnic groups historically share the same culture, particularly in terms of ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and performing. However, during the festival, several other ethnic groups from Cameroon and Chad also participate to express fraternity and social cohesion. This section aims to establish the relationship between ethnic affiliation and dance participation during the festival.

Table 4: Relationship between Ethnic Affiliation and Dance Participation during the Festival

Ethnic Groups	Dance practice during festival								Total
	Lele	Kaaran	Kwaisa	Dalinga	Mbagadjao	Dilna	Waywa	others	
Massa	14	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	21
	18.9%	8.8%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%
Toupouri	37	30	9	13	5	4	19	0	117
	50.0%	52.6%	34.6%	54.2%	23.8%	11.1%	35.2%	0.0%	39.0%
Marba	4	2	1	5	6	1	0	0	19
	5.4%	3.5%	3.8%	20.8%	28.6%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%
Moundang	9	10	3	1	5	14	0	0	42
	12.2%	17.5%	11.5%	4.2%	23.8%	38.9%	0.0%	0.0%	14.0%
Lele	1	2	0	1	0	11	0	0	15
	1.4%	3.5%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	30.6%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%
Kera	5	7	8	4	3	4	31	0	62
	6.8%	12.3%	30.8%	16.7%	14.3%	11.1%	57.4%	0.0%	20.7%
Autre	4	1	3	0	2	2	4	8	24
	5.4%	1.8%	11.5%	0.0%	9.5%	5.6%	7.4%	100.0%	8.0%
Total	74	57	26	24	21	36	54	8	300
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field data, May 2025

The cross-tabulation presented above aims to statistically examine the correlation between respondents' ethnic affiliation and dance participation during the festival. A horizontal reading of this table shows that the Massa performed the Lele (66.66%), Ka'aran (23.80%), and Kwaisa (9.52%) dances. The Toupouri communities practised the Lele (31.62%), Ka'aran (25.64%), and Dalinga (11.11%). The Marba performed two types of dances, namely the Dalinga (26.31%) and Mbagadjao (31.57%). The Moundang danced the Ka'aran (23.80%), Mbagadjao (11.90%), and Dilna (33.33%). The Lele primarily performed the Dilna (73.33%), while the Kera showcased the Kwaisa (12.90%) and Waywa (50%) dances. Other ethnic groups performed the Kwaisa (12.5%), Mbagadjao (8.33%), and various other dances (33.33%). We can also interpret the cross-tabulation vertically. At this level, we observe that the ethnic groups performing the Lele are Massa (66.66%) and Toupouri (31.62%), while those performing the Ka'aran are Massa (23.80%), Toupouri (25.64%), and Moundang (23.80%). Furthermore, the Kwaisa dance is performed by Massa (9.52%), Kera (12.90%), and other groups (12.5%), while the Dalinga is practised by Toupouri (11.11%) and Marba (26.31%). Furthermore, the Kwaisa dance is performed by Massa (9.52%), Kera (12.90%), and other groups (12.5%), while the Dalinga is practised by Toupouri (11.11%) and Marba (26.31%). The Mbagadjao is performed by Marba (31.57%), Moundang (11.90%), and other ethnicities (8.33%), whereas the Dilna is performed by Moundang (33.33%) and Lele (73.33%). Additionally, the Waywa dance is predominantly performed by the Kera (50%), and other dances are performed by other ethnic groups (33.33%).

Based on these data highlighted in the table, we can deduce that there is a very strong scientific relationship between ethnicity and dance practices during the Gurna Festival. Both horizontal and vertical readings of this table show that the more individuals belong to specific ethnic communities, the more they express dances that reflect their cultural attachment. In this regard, the chi-square table provides evidence that allows us to precisely test the research hypothesis, which posits that the respondent's ethnicity determines their dance practices during the festival (Value: 296,914; dF: 42; Asymptotic significance: 0.000).

Marital Status as a Determinant of Learning New Cultural Knowledge

Learning is a process through which an individual acquires or internalises knowledge about a given subject. In the context of this study, it is perceived as a means for festival participants to access cultural or ancestral values. The objective of this section is to demonstrate how marital status facilitates the learning of new aspects of Toupouri,

Wina, and Kera culture. A cross-tabulation table is presented in this perspective to verify this scientific relationship.

Table 5: Respondents' Marital Status and the Acquisition of New Cultural Knowledge

<i>Matrimonial Status</i>	<i>Learned new cultural values</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>learned</i>	<i>Didn't learned</i>	
Married	70	16	86
	29.7%	25.0%	28.7%
Single	123	28	151
	52.1%	43.8%	50.3%
Widower/ Widow	9	5	14
	3.8%	7.8%	4.7%
Divorced	16	5	21
	6.8%	7.8%	7.0%
Remarried	12	7	19
	5.1%	10.9%	6.3%
Concubinage	6	3	9
	2.5%	4.7%	3.0%
Total	236	64	300
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Data, May 2025

The cross-tabulation above correlates respondents' marital status with the acquisition of new cultural knowledge. It aims to assess the extent to which learning may be influenced by marital status. This table is read vertically. It is observed that respondents who reported having learned new aspects of culture are predominantly married individuals (81.39%) and singles (81.45%). Conversely, the marital statuses associated with not acquiring new cultural knowledge include widows/widowers (35.71%), divorced individuals (23.80%), remarried individuals (36.84%), and cohabitants (33.33%). Despite these percentages, the chi-square test results reveal that there is no significant relationship between respondents' marital status and the acquisition of new cultural knowledge. According to these findings, learning about culture is not necessarily determined by an individual's marital situation. Other variables, not accounted for in this cross-tabulation, may influence this process. For this reason, the chi-square test provides evidence supporting the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no relationship between respondents' marital status and the acquisition of new cultural knowledge (Value: 6,379; dF: 5; Asymptotic Significance: 0.000).

Marital Regime as a Determinant of Satisfaction with Cultural Events

As demonstrated in the previous sections, the Gurna International Festival is a cultural event that can elicit emotional responses or social representations among participants. Therefore, this section seeks to examine how respondents' marital regime affects their level of satisfaction with cultural events.

Table 6: Marital Regime and Participants' Level of Satisfaction With Cultural Events

<i>Respondent Matrimonial regime</i>	<i>Frequency of cultural event satisfaction</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Very satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Unsatisfied</i>	
Monogamy	61	41	4	3	109
	45.5%	40.6%	12.5%	9.1%	36.3%
Polygamy	9	13	0	2	24
	6.7%	12.9%	0.0%	6.1%	8.0%
Others	64	47	28	28	167
	47.8%	46.5%	87.5%	84.8%	55.7%
Total	134	101	32	33	300
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Data, May 2025

In this table, which examines the relationship between respondents' marital regime and their level of satisfaction with cultural events, it appears that individuals in a monogamous regime are predominantly very satisfied (55.96%) or satisfied (37.61%). Individuals in a polygamous regime are mostly satisfied (54.16%). Other respondents, particularly those who did not specify a marital regime, report being neutral (16.76%) or dissatisfied (16.76%). Vertically, the breakdown shows that those very satisfied with cultural events are monogamous (55.96%), satisfied are monogamous (37.61%) and polygamous (54.16%), neutral are 'others' (16.76%), and dissatisfied are also 'others' (16.76%). Based on these calculated frequencies, we observe a relationship between marital regime and individuals' satisfaction with cultural events. According to the chi-square test results, this relationship is significant: the clearer participants indicate a marital regime, the more likely they are to display satisfaction, neutrality, or dissatisfaction during the Gurna International Festival held in Doukoula and Fianga. This is confirmed by the chi-square results (Value: 35,240; dF: 6; Asymptotic Significance: 0.000).

Discussion

According to Kadandji and Astouin (2023), the world is changing, and so are communities. In this wave of increased globalisation, compounded by the indelible traces of colonial influence on African cultures, urgent actions are necessary to preserve what can still be saved.. Beyond the colonial educational system and cohabitation with dominant peoples, acculturation emerged at points of social interaction. Thus, it becomes essential to preserve and safeguard cultural heritage. The recurrent organisation of forums, festivals, and cultural gatherings aims to breathe new life into affected cultures and communities. In this regard, the Kera people, residing across Cameroon and Chad, have, for years, focused on the preservation and safeguarding of their cultural heritage in order to resist anonymity and assimilation.

Furthermore, Mahamat Abba (2022) reports that festivals constitute cultural gatherings during which populations perform a range of activities, including traditional music, dance, artistic exhibitions, gastronomy, beliefs, and rituals. These festivals serve as genuine laboratories for reflection on the preservation and valorisation of culture. They also provide a framework for expressing cultural identity and demonstrating cultural richness in local contexts often marked by ethnic conflicts (Mahamat Abba, 2017). They also provide a framework for expressing cultural identity and demonstrating cultural richness in local contexts often marked by ethnic conflicts (Mahamat Abba, 2017). With decentralisation, certain competencies have been transferred to municipalities to support communities in organising cultural festivals. Accordingly, decentralised local authorities increasingly facilitate and supervise these community initiatives to enhance cultural tourism. This finding confirm the Gurna Festival's profound role as a catalyst for cultural learning and heritage preservation across age, gender, and educational levels. Quantitative data reveals that while participation in preservation initiatives is strong and not age-dependent, active dance participation is significantly influenced by ethnic affiliation and higher educational attainment. Furthermore, the festival successfully facilitates the acquisition of new cultural knowledge for the vast majority of participants, regardless of their religion, though marital status showed a nuanced relationship with satisfaction levels. Qualitatively, participants overwhelmingly reported the event as a vital space for intergenerational transmission of values, reconnection with ancestral roots, and the strengthening of a shared cultural identity among the Toupouri, Wina, and Kera peoples.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the International Gurna Wina Toupouri Kera Festival is far more than a periodic celebration; it is a fundamental pillar for cultural sustainability and a strategic engine for local development in the Far North Region of Cameroon. By bridging the theoretical frameworks of local development, sociocultural animation, and social capital, the research illuminates the multifaceted ways in which the festival operates. It successfully mobilises endogenous cultural resources, stimulates economic activity through tourism and local commerce, and, most importantly, strengthens the social fabric by reinforcing collective identity and intergenerational bonds. The empirical findings from Doukoula and Fianga provide robust evidence. Qualitatively, participants consistently articulated the festival's profound role in cultural learning and the conscious preservation of their heritage against the pressures of modernisation and globalisation. Quantitatively, the widespread participation across demographics underscores its inclusivity, while the specific correlations with ethnicity and education highlight the complex ways cultural practices are engaged with.

Therefore, the Gurna Festival stands as a compelling testament to the argument that culture is not a mere backdrop to development but is its very core. It exemplifies how cultural initiatives can serve as effective tools for community empowerment, social cohesion, and sustainable development, particularly in regions facing significant socio-economic challenges. For policymakers and development actors, this study underscores the imperative to support, fund, and institutionalise such cultural events not as peripheral activities, but as central strategies for fostering resilient and self-determined communities. Future research could further explore the long-term economic impacts and the evolving negotiation between cultural authenticity and the growing influence of tourism.

References

- Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Belga Jean-Pierre, 2005, *Le festival Gurna : Célébration et revitalisation de la culture Tupuri*, Éditions Universitaires Africaines, Yaoundé.
- Certeau Michel De, 1975, *La culture au pluriel*, Paris : UGE.
- Chris Gibson et JOHN Connell, 2005, *Music and Tourism: On the Road Again*, Channel View Publications, Clevedon

- Cuq Jean-Pierre, 2003 : Dictionnaire de Didactique. CLE International
- Daniel Joseph Boorstin, 1961, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, Harper & Row, New York.
- Dean MacCannell, 1976, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Schocken Books, New York.
- Desroche Henri, 1976: The theory of sociocultural animation.
- Duvignaud Jean, 1977, *Le Don du rien*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris.
- Émile Durkheim, 1912, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Alcan, Paris.
- Fokou Michel, 2012, « Community Solidarity and Cultural Festivals in Cameroon. », *African Sociological Review*, Afrique du Sud.
- Fontan Jean-Marc, 2019: Theory of Local Development. The University of Montreal
- Getz David et PAGE Stephen, 2016, *Events Industry: A Comparative Approach*, Routledge, London.
- Jean Piaget (1970). Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child. Trans. D. Coltman. Orion
- Kadandji André et AMATKREO Astouin Justin, 2023, « Entrepreneuriat et préservation du patrimoine culturel du peuple Kera », L'Harmattan.
- Kolyang Emmanuel, 2010, *Les Tupuri du Cameroun et du Tchad : Pratiques culturelles et enjeux sociaux*, Presses Africaines, Douala.
- Leclerc Yvon, 2017, 'Le développement local par la culture : cinq propositions pour les villes culturelles', Vol. 14, n°2, pp. 72–89
- Mahamat Abba (2022) KHOI Lê Thank, 1994, 'Culture et développement', In *Tiers-Monde*, Tome 25, n°97, pp. 9–28.
- Mahamat Abba Ousman, 2017, « Les industries culturelles à l'ère de la décentralisation dans la région de l'Extrême-Nord (Cameroun) : défis et enjeux », In *African Humanities*, les volumes II et III.
- Malraux André, 1959, *Les Voix du Silence*, Gallimard, Paris.
- Nelson Graburn, 1989, *Tourism: The Sacred Journey*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Njoh Mouelle Ebénézer, 2011, *De la médiocrité à l'excellence*, Yaoundé : Éditions Clé
- Pierre Bourdieu, 1984, *La Distinction : Critique sociale du jugement*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris.
- Richard Florida, 2002, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Basic Books, New York.

- Sainsaulieu Renaud, 1987, *Sociologie de l'organisation et de l'entreprise*, Paris : Dalloz/FNSP.
- Sanchez-Arnau J.-C. et DESJEUX D., 1994, *La culture, clé du développement*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 195 p.
- Stuart Hall, 1990, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Lawrence & Wishart, London.
- Teisserenc Pierre, 1994, *Les politiques de développement local. Approche sociologique*, Paris : Economica.
- Tidjani Alou Mahaman, 2007, 'J.C Sanchez-Arnau et D. Desjeux, la culture, clé du développement', In *Bulletin de l'APAD*, pp. 1-6 ;
- Trouillot Michel-Rolph, 1995, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- United Nations Programme for Development (UNDP), 2020, *Human Development Report 2020 : The Next Frontier – Human Development and the Anthropocene*, PNUD, New York.
- Ursula Lantermann, 2018, *Cultural Economy: A Critical Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995, *Our Creative Diversity*, UNESCO, Paris.