

## Rural Tourism Entrepreneurship as Strategy for Economic Development in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Rural tourism entrepreneurship is a tourist industry which revolutionizes businesses and prompting economic development across the globe. It encompasses huge range activities, natural or man-made attractions, amenities and facilities, transportation, marketing and information systems. It is also an important export for 83% of the developing countries and the main export for one third of them. In 2000, developing countries recorded 142.6 million international arrivals an increase of 95% compared to the figures of 1990. However, only developing countries with effective natural and man-made tourism supporting and enhancing infrastructure have been able to develop their tourism sector and seize the attendance advantages. Rural areas of Nigeria possess some distinctive peculiarities which can be transformed into attractive tourist centers.

In spite of all these, rural tourism areas are still faced with myriad problems which include poor finance inadequate awareness and education, lack of progress in developing the rural of progress in developing the rural tourism potentials inadequate legislation, insecurity, entrepreneurial inertness, over-dependent on oil among others. This paper focuses on the impact and challenges of rural tourism entrepreneurship as strategy for economic development in Nigeria. It reviews literature rural tourism, tourism entrepreneurship potentials and classifications of Nigerians tourism potential's destinations. The paper concludes that Nigeria Government should encourage rural based tourism entrepreneurship development by addressing the challenges facing rural tourism entrepreneurship in the country.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Economic Development, Rural Tourism, Tourism Destinations Tourism Potentials.

### Introduction

In some of the developing countries with effective natural and man-made tourism supporting and enhancing infrastructure have been able to develop their tourism sector and seize the attendant advantages. Nigeria as a country has numerous business and investment potentials with vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources. Tapping these resources require the ability to identify potentiality useful and economically viable fields of endeavours. The need for economic diversification in most developing countries is overwhelming due to their mono-cultural economic characteristics where only one commodity exchange from which these countries could reconcile their internal and external balances. Nigeria is one of such a country seeking to diversity its economy away from crude oil production to maximize employment and income generating are often marginalized despites, their idyllic tourism assets.

Adebayo et al. (2010) posit that for Nigeria to diversify her oil revenue base with greater emphasis on oil revenue sources and further increase entrepreneurial capability of the citizenry which the government had taken into cognizance since 2003, tourism as an aggregate of businesses stands the chance to fill the gap.

World Tourism Organization (2002) asserts that sustainable tourism can be a tool for economic development and poverty reduction. It also adduces that tourism provides opportunities for selling additional goods and service, create opportunities for local economic diversification of personal and marginal areas (World Tourism Organization, 2002).

Nigeria has huge tourism entrepreneurship potentials which can benefit economies of rural and urban areas, if Nigeria gets its tourism sector right; it will serve as an employer of labour aside agriculture through innovative entrepreneurship development.

Nevertheless, rural tourism entrepreneurship in Nigeria is bedeviled by poor finance inadequate awareness and education, lack of progress in developing the rural tourism potentials, inadequate legislation insecurity among others.

It is against this backdrop that this paper assesses the impact and challenges of tourism entrepreneurship as a strategy for socio economic Development in Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are to

- i. review existing literature on concept of rural tourism
- ii. examine the rural potentials for tourism entrepreneurship.
- iii. classify Nigeria's tourism potentials destinations.
- iv. assess the impacts and benefits of rural tourism entrepreneurship

- v. identify the challenges facing rural tourism entrepreneurship in Nigeria; and
- vi. suggest some ameliorative measures towards improving rural tourism entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Rural Tourism**

Rural Tourism encompasses a huge range of activities, natural or man-made attractions, amenities and facilities, transportation, marketing and information system. It has been a major driver of socio-economic development in western society: it is an alternative strategy for sustainability and diversification of economy for important policy of a good government (Lane, 1994).

Kostas (2004) defines rural tourism as a multi-faced activity that takes place in an environment outside urbanized areas. He states further that it is an industry sector characterized by small scale tourism business which includes rural attractions, rural adventure, tours, nature based tours, ecotourism tours, country-style accommodation and farm holidays, rural resorts, together with festivals even and agricultural education.

According to Oruonye and Abdullahi (2010), rural tourism is a touristic activity, which provides accommodation, catering and programs from the point of view of the hosts and it may be a cheap and active holiday for the guest. Rural tourism encompasses all tourist activities and recreational experiences that occur in non-urban populated areas.

Humaira (2010) regards rural tourism as the country experience which encompasses a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural or non-urban areas. Its essential characteristics include wide-open spaces, low levels of tourism development and opportunities for visitors to directly experience agricultural or natural environments.

Consequently, rural tourism in its purest form should be:

1. Located in rural areas.
2. Functionally rural-built upon the rural world's special features of small-scale enterprises.
3. Rural in scale-both in terms of building and settlement.
4. Traditional in character growing slowly and connected with local families.

### **Rural Potentials for Tourism Entrepreneurship**

The significance of entrepreneurship and the need for people to develop and build their entrepreneurial skills by engaging in meaningful productive ventures that will add values to economic development and create more wealth and improved livelihood for the rural dwellers

cannot be over-emphasized (Olayemi & Iwaloye , 2008).Ogundele (2011) posit that without entrepreneurship (which involves the conceptualization, birth, growth and development of new concerns or entrepreneurs) there would be no serious business development in any economy. Involvement of business peripherals to interface entrepreneurship for livelihood improvement of rural communities is then a right step in the right direction.

Rural tourism development can act as an agent for the transformation of rural areas, allowing an inflow of resources and liquidity into communities through the expenditure of tourists and the creation of new small businesses and employment (Polo & Frias, 2010).

The country side is a valuable resource for tourists because rural tourism utilizes indigenous resources which increase its importance and uniqueness in the industry. Most rural areas attract tourists because of their inherent, exhibited cultural value, historical significance and natural beauty or amusement opportunities.

Oredegbe and Fadeyibi (2009) maintain that rural tourism constitutes non-agricultural practices on the farm which provide attractive business opportunities to augment farm income. They state further that the development of tourism in rural areas can change unusable rural resources such as archaeological works, forests and mountains and give them economic work that can create employment and reduce the impact of poverty.

Moreover, rural areas still maintain paradise which offer a variety of attractions including scenic beauty, diverse wild life, a Kaleidoscope of traditions, cultures, and an array of opportunities to explore the out-doors through sporting and adventural activities.

The past two decades have been characterized by the appearance of an entirely new generation of tourists who prefer to spend their spare time in more natural and rural environments. This is one of the reasons why the rural tourism has shown a fascinating resilience in positive economic and social changes (Mthembu, 2011).

In Nigeria, rural areas are faced with a myriad of problems, which includes among others, dilapidated infrastructure, lack of basic amenities (Power, water and schools) and poor access areas roads which compel youth rural-urban migration.This has had adverse effects on the growth anddevelopment of rural tourism entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Conclusively, rural tourism entrepreneurs calls for serious policy attention and requires empirical evaluation in order for the country to gain its full potentials.

### **Classification of Nigeria Tourism Potential's Destinations**

Nigeria has a variety of tourism potentials destinations that are spread across the thirty-six states of the country.

Expolo&Okpolo (2002) classify Nigeria's tourist resources into two main categories: namely; Natural Features and Cultural Historic Attractions. Below are the classifications:

**A.North Eastern Circuit (Yobe, Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Taraba State)**

**1. Natural Attractions:**

- i. Lake Alau
- ii. Lake Njakira
- iii. Lake Chad Sanctuary
- iv. Kyarimi Park
- v. Yakari National Park
- vi. Wikki Warm Spring
- vii. Lame Burra Game Reserve
- viii. Manbila Plateau
- ix. Hotspring at Lamale
- x. Zanda Hills
- xi. Kamale Peaks of Mubi
- xii. Three Sisters Rocks at Sorg
- xiii. Rolling Uplands of Muri
- xiv. Jangani Mountain Renge of Ganye

**2. Cultural / Historic Attractions:**

- i. Birnim Nzazargamu
- ii. Kukas (Tombs of the Shehus)
- iii. Rabeh Fort at Dikwa
- iv. Maliki Dance of the Kanuris
- v. The Legend Snake at Guwo
- vi. Shami-Menwala Festival
- vii. Bade Fishing Festival
- viii. Shira Rocking Painting
- ix. Gere Masquerade Festival
- x. Keffin Madaki Historic Monument
- xi. Lamido Palace at Yola

- xii. Grayeyard of Modibbo
- xiii. Mat Weaving, Calabash Carving and Painting Markings People of Gwozai.
- B. North Western Circuit** (Kaduna, Kastina, Kano, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger including Abuja)

**1 Natural Attractions**

- i. The River Garden in Kaduna with its Historic Lugard Bridge.
- ii. Camping Grounds at River Wudil
- iii. Kusugu Well in Daura
- iv. Buguadu /Rock Castle Area Game Reserve
- v. Wana Fabi and Kuruju Rocks
- vi. Tigan Dam, Eurara Falls
- vii. Zuma Rock and Shiroro Gorge

**2. Cultural /Historic Attractions**

- i. Kastina City Walls
- ii. The Regimental Museum of Nigerian army at Zaria City
- iii. National Museum at Kaduna
- iv. Lugard Hall at Kaduna
- v. Yan Awaki Camel Market
- vi. Groundnut Pyramids
- vii. Gobarau Minaret in Katsina
- viii. Koba Mata Dye Pits, Kano
- ix. Makama Museum
- x. Kanta Museum
- xi. Sultan's Palace
- xii. Argungu Fishing Festival
- xiii. Ohota Festival
- xiv. Bida-Glass and Bead Works
- xv. Abuja Pottery

**C. Middle Belt Circuit** (Plateau, Benue, Eastern Area of Kogi including Lokoja)

**1. Natural Attractions**

- i. Jos Wildlife Sabari Park
- ii. Shere Hills

- iii. Wase Rock
- iv. Assop Falls
- v. Karang Volcanic Mountain
- vi. Karafalls
- vii. Niger Benue Confluence zone at Lokoja

**2. Cultural /Historic Attractions**

- i. Ogani Fishing Festival
- ii. Fishing Festivals at Kastina Ala
- iii. Kwagh-hir Theatre
- iv. National Museum Jos

**D. South Western Circuit (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Kwara, Western Part of Kogi State).**

**1. Natural Attractions**

- i. Badagry Beach
- ii. Lagos Bar Beach
- iii. Tarkwa Bay
- iv. Erin Ijesa Water Falls
- v. Ikogusi Warm Spring
- vi. Ebonmi Lake at Ipesi Akoko
- vii. Borgu Game Reserve
- viii. Olumo Rock
- xiv. Idanre Hills

**2. Cultural / Historic Attractions**

- i. Eyo Festival
- ii. Osun Osogbo Festival
- iii. Oranmiyan Festival in Oyo
- iv. Ogun Festival in Ondo
- v. Olojo and Olokun Festival in Ile-Ife
- vi. Ede-Iyan, Odokorosoyin and Osanyin-Isinbode Festivals in Ekiti
- vii. Osun Osogbo Shrine
- viii. Ife Museum of Antiquities
- ix. Owo Museum
- x. Palaces of various Obas

- xi. Shrine of Brikisu Sungbo
- xii. Okebadan Festival xvi.
- xiii. Igogo Festival in Owo
- xiv. Agemo and Egungun / Masquerade festivals
- xv. Old City Walls of Benin
- xvi. Wreckage of Mungo Parks Boats at Jebba
- E. South Eastern Circuit** (Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River and Delta States)
- 1. Natural Attractions**
- i. The Wonder Tree at Ikpot Ekpene
- ii. Ogbusike Cave
- iii. Agulu Lake
- iv. Amaokpilla Lake
- v. The Coal Mines at Enugu
- vi. Agulu Nanka Erosion
- vii. River Niger resort at Patani
- viii. Oguta Lake at Patani
- ix. Arochukwu Cave
- x. Obudu Cattle Ranch
- 2. Cultural / Historic Attractions**
- i. Iwaji Festival in Delta
- ii. Adane Okpe Festival in Delta
- iii. Ukwata and Ore-Uku Festival in Delta
- iv. Adane-Okpe Festival in Delta
- v. Iyeri & Edjenu Festival in Delta
- vii. Leboku & Atumbi Festival in Cross Rivers
- viii. Mbre Festival in Akwa Ibom State
- ix. Oki & Nwaotan Festivals in River State
- x. Eremutoru Festival in Bayelsa State
- xi. Ogbuberi, Ikpai-kpail & Ogbuberi Festivals in Bayelsa State.
- xii. Igbo New Yam Festivals in Igboland
- xiii. Masquerade Festivals in all Igboland



- xiv. Ofala Festival in Anambra State
- xv. Nkwa Umugbogho of Afikpo Dances
- xvi. Mmonwu Festival
- xvii. Mkpokiti Aerobatic Dance
- xviii. Slave Ports at Brass and Benny
- xix. Amadioha Ozuzu Shrine
- xx. Grave of Mary Slessor in Calabar
- xxi. The Gigantic Ikoru Drums in Bende
- xxii. Uzoiyi Cultural Festival at Umuoji
- xxiii. King Jaja of Opob's Grave, Monument and Palace (Field Survey, 2015)

All these natural and cultural historic sites can be used to generate employment, reduce poverty and contribute meaningfully to the economic development of Nigeria.

#### **Impact and Benefits of Rural Tourism Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

The impact and benefits of rural tourism are numerous. It has economic, social and cultural benefits to man and the environment of attractions. It reduces rural-urban migration and it ensures the conservation of the biotic element of the environment as well as the preservation of the biodiversity (Chris, 2006).

Moreover, rural tourism entrepreneurship reduces the hurdles and puzzles of the city and it creates the opportunities to seek for peace and tranquility as well as change in everyday routine at the country side (Ibimilua, 2009).

It also serves as catalyst to economic development and a source of income generation for the rural communities and the nation (Adora, 2010). According to Hall (2000), he submits that impacts and the benefits of rural tourism entrepreneurship can be summarized as:

- i. Sustain and create local incomes, employment and economic development.
- ii. Contribute to the cost of providing economic and social infrastructure.
- iii. Enhance the development of other industries sectors.
- iv. Contribute to local residents, amenities and services.
- v. Facilitate the conservation of environment and cultural resources.
- vi. Provide opportunity for cross-cultural exchange between – tourist and villagers who learn about and come to respects one another's cultures.
- vii. Help develop and maintain rural festivals and other natural and historical attracts.

- viii. Serve as vehicle for bringing dialogue among rural communities and reinforcing the sense of rural national identity.
- ix. Generate tax for further development of rural facilities.

### **Challenges to Rural Tourism Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

There are a number of obstacles that have been associated with tourism development in rural areas such as lack of capacity and tourism development related skills. Rural tourism in Nigeria is also hampered by illiteracy rates, unemployment, underdevelopment, poverty, lack of infrastructure, lack of information among others.

Ibimilua and Ibimilua (2005) argue that many barriers to rural tourism entrepreneurship are inadequate resources, insufficient facility development, other constraints are inefficient publicity, political instability, illegal harvesting of resources and deforestation. They also observe that rural tourism is faced with constraints like weak administration, slash and burn agricultural practices, poor hospitality destination etc.

In order to put the rural tourism in a better pedestal, Oruonye (2013) lists factors suppressing rural tourism entrepreneurship in Nigeria as thus:

- i. Negative Image
- ii. Lack of Skilled Manpower
- iii. Over Staffed
- iv. Lack of Public / Private Marketing Partnership
- v. Entrepreneurial Inertness; and
- vi. Cultural Barriers
- vii. Environmental Threat; and
- viii. Insecurity and Environmental Pollution

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that rural tourism entrepreneurship has rich potentials for economic development of Nigeria. The review of existing literature show clearly that rural tourism entrepreneurship has a significant role to play in the development of incomes and generational of employment opportunities for the rural inhabitants of Nigeria.

Finally, all the three tiers of government in Nigeria should encourage rural base tourism entrepreneurship development by addressing the challenges facing them holistically.

### **Recommendations**

From the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is the need for public / private sector partnership to foster visible rural tourism entrepreneurship development.
2. Government should facilitate rural based tourism seminars, conferences and workshops in order to create awareness on the relevance of rural tourism entrepreneurship attractions in rural areas
3. Government must encourage rural base tourism entrepreneurship development since much of these historic and natural sites are abundant in the rural areas.
4. Rural communities should participate on tourism policy formation and execution.
5. Private investors should partner with all levels of government to foster visible rural tourism development since government cannot meet all the yearnings of people.
6. Government needs to diversify revenue base in order to encourage socio-economic development of the rural areas.
7. There is need for the improvement of transportation system in the area to enable tourists to satisfactory move to tourist sites because this encourages more tourists' migration to the area.
8. Moral ethics and culture of the rural areas should be closely guided and spelt out to tourists in the areas.
9. Local communities need to acquire certain skills necessary to identify business opportunities, initiate and nurture them.

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