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## *PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF RURAL TOURISM ON DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED FARM SETTLEMENTS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA*

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### **Abstract**

The study assessed the perceived influence of rural tourism on farmers (staff) in selected farm settlements in Oyo State, Nigeria. Five farm settlements were purposively selected for their large scale of Agricultural production. The population for the study comprised staff in the farm settlements. Twenty (26) farmers were randomly selected from each settlement making 130 respondents in all. Structured and unstructured interview guides were employed to elicit information from the respondents. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages while inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) to test the hypotheses generated for the study. The findings revealed that the identified perceived impetus of rural tourism by farmers were; Low price option (86.9%), Solace in health-friendly tourism assets (94.6%), Desire for peace and tranquillity (63.8%), Interest in natural environment (71.6%), Nostalgia for their roots on the farm (69.2%), Educational value of Agri-tourism (93.1%), Enjoyment of safe and serene ambience (94.6%). A test of significance between the central relationship of Agri-tourism and development showed significant correlation with Value addition ( $r = 0.198$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), Alternative agriculture ( $r = 0.183$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), Community development ( $r = 0.198$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and Direct farm marketing ( $r = 0.188$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The study recommended that government should form synergy among farmers to equip them with all that it takes to venture into rural tourism and awareness programme should begin in annex to educate individuals and corporate bodies of essentials of Agri-tourism in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Rural tourism, Farmers, Agri-tourism, Tourism, Value addition, Community development.

## Introduction

Despite the echelon of development in the era of globalisation across the globe, Nigeria as a developing nation is still characterised with a high number of rural community. According to Adebisi-Adelani and Olowu (2007) several studies have asserted that up to 70-80% of Nigeria population makes up rural areas. Ladele (2005) averred that rural tourism surfaced from combination of series of activities generated by creative human actions backed up by available natural resources for the purpose of development. Tourism as an eye opener has liberated the rural population hence; the dwellers especially farmers are now aware of living other than just existing. Agba, Ikoh, Bassey, and Ushie (2010) adduced that tourism is a business entity that provides places and events to occupy people while they are on holidays. Tourism in rural areas is growing partly because economic developers are gradually embracing tourism and cottage industries as viable means for diversifying their investment and increasing wealth of farmers. According to Countryside Agency, self-employment has been identified as a crucial driver of rural economies, both in terms of entrepreneurial activity and as a source of income and employment for a significant proportion of the rural workforce (Atterton & Thompson, 2015) seizing tourism opportunities that abound in the rural areas. Rural areas also support disproportionately more small businesses, many established by middle-aged in-migrants (Bosworth & Glasgow, 2012). Community members are key stakeholders in any place undergoing development (Ijasan, 2011). The farmer is no longer oblivious of the significant difference between the prices of an agricultural commodity at its source and later in its final processed state at the point of consumption. Just think of the profit value lost in a tonne of cocoa and its final product, chocolate (beverages). Imagine the value difference between raw specialty wool and an exclusive garment.

According to World Tourism Organisation (WTO) tourism has a wide range of activities like: climbing, riding, adventure tourism, educational travel, sport and health tourism, arts and heritage tourism (Negrusa, Cosma, & Bota, 2007). Tourism in the rural areas occurs in non-urban settings where human activity is present (Beeton, 2006). It positions agriculture and farms as the foundation upon which the attraction is built (Knowd, 2001). Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for an enriching experience can be termed as rural tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like; it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in the natural environment, it networks with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions. Rural tourism can be an important source of jobs for local communities, provide extra income for farmers, encourage infrastructural development, halt undue migration of able – bodied youths, etc. Kareem (2008) opined that tourism has continued to drive itself onto the radar of developing countries' policy makers as an important foreign exchange earner.

Agri-tourism includes the human heritage and culture that is linked with growing of crops and rearing of animals. Under the process of agri-tourism the grower sells his or her produce to the final consumer at retail prices as opposed to entering the wholesale market and traditional distribution systems. Today's farmers are looking at a new cash crop to supplement their revenue

from agricultural commodities - tourism, the world's largest export industry and the third largest employer (Travel Industry Association of America (TIAA), 2002) is probably an option. Farm tourism, which is also known as "agri-tourism," has been defined as the opportunities for tourists to "reside and sometimes participate in the working activities of farms and ranches" (Smith & Long, 2000). Rural farms are becoming attractive tourist destinations hence; more tourists are nostalgic of nature bound scenery and adventure. They want to escape the hustling and bustling of city life and connect with natural and cultural heritage and enjoy a richer and authentic leisure experience. The reasons that attract people to the rural area have largely to do with the image of rurality, the traditional, romantic idea of a lifestyle that is both plain and simple, the search for peace and solitude, and the increasing interest in free outdoor activities. Thus, the nostalgia for one's origin, the appeal of the most basic aspects of life and the need to restore old ties with the nature of rural areas prove to be most appealing, especially for those who live urban lifestyle, one which is anonymous, congested, highly organized increasingly complex and inhuman (Krippendorf, 1987). Nigeria, being characterised as generally rural has many potentials in development of tourism especially rural tourism. However, development of rural tourism in Nigeria is still in its formative stage. There is the need to investigate the perception of farmers on conception of rural tourism in the rural areas of Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

Five farm settlements were purposively selected for their large scale of production. The population for the study comprised staff in the farm settlements. The farms were Terudee Farms (15), Ajanla Farms (37), Zartech Farms (32), Farm Support Farms (19), and Obasanjo Farms (27) randomly selected from each settlement making 130 respondents in all. Structured and unstructured interview guides were employed to elucidate information from the respondents. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents; an author constructed questionnaire of 20 items was used along with interview guide to elicit relevant information from the respondents. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages while inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) to test the hypothesis formulated for the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Personal Characteristics of Respondents**

Table 1 showed the data on selected personal characteristics of respondents. The results revealed that majority (63.85%) of the respondents fell within the age range of 20 and 60 years.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Personal Characteristics

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age:	below 20 years	16	12.30
	20 – 60years	83	63.85
	61years – and above	31	23.85
Sex:	Male	92	70.77
	Female	38	29.23
Education:	None	25	19.23
	Primary	22	16.92
	Secondary	31	23.85
	Tertiary	11	08.46
	Professional	41	31.54
Marital Status:	Single	17	13.08
	Married	81	62.31
	Others	32	24.61

*Source: Field Survey, 2015.*

This indicated that economically active individuals dominated the group of farmers in farm settlements. This is expected to influence their quest for development via rural tourism / agri-tourism and subsequent harnessing of farm economy for improved farm settlement livelihood. Table 1 further revealed that majority (70.77%) of the respondents were male while (29.23%) were female. This implied male domination of the farmers group in farm settlements. However, one-third of the male percentage and one-quarter of the entire respondents is an assurance that the various empowerment programmes are impacting positively on gender marginalization of farming. It is therefore expected that more women should be encouraged and empowered to engage in farming related occupation.

Results in table 1 also revealed that majority (80.77%) had one form of education or the other (Primary, Secondary, tertiary, and or Professional/Certificate course). This indicated that the population of farmers in farm settlements is of literate status and this will be an asset to rural tourism development in farm settlement as effective communication and understanding will be promoted between tourists and farm settlers. This is expected to have influence on their

understanding of the perceived influence of agri-tourism on the prospective tourists and how this can translate on the farm settlement economy and farmers' livelihood. Majority (86.92%) of the respondents were either married, or once married. This implied that majority of the farmers in farm settlements were individuals with family responsibilities. This may probably influence their desire and urge for agri-tourism that may expose their farm families to other economic activities through engagement in value addition.

Table 2: Distribution of contribution of functional facilities / assets for rural tourism development

**Contribution of Functional Facilities / Assets for Rural Tourism Development**

	Strong	Moderate	Low		
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Mean	Rank
Vegetation	56(43.08)	72(55.38)	02(01.54)	4.1	10 <sup>th</sup>
Animal husbandry	36(27.70)	47(36.15)	47(36.15)	2.7	17 <sup>th</sup>
Plantations	82(63.08)	21(16.15)	27(20.77)	3.5	14 <sup>th</sup>
Streams	39(30.00)	71(54.62)	20(15.38)	3.1	16 <sup>th</sup>
Spring	75(57.69)	42(32.31)	13(10.00)	4.0	11 <sup>th</sup>
Waterfalls	63(48.46)	49(37.69)	18(13.85)	4.3	7 <sup>th</sup>
Crop fields	51(39.23)	43(33.08)	36(27.69)	3.7	12 <sup>th</sup>
Jungles	63(48.46)	31(23.85)	36(27.69)	4.2	8 <sup>th</sup>
Processing workshop	68(52.31)	26(20.00)	36(27.69)	4.2	8 <sup>th</sup>
Horizons	72(55.38)	46(35.39)	12(09.23)	4.4	5 <sup>th</sup>
Bird viewing	74(56.92)	53(40.77)	03(02.31)	4.7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Village environment	77(59.23)	21(16.15)	32(24.62)	4.6	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Culture and folklores	62(47.69)	61(46.92)	07(05.39)	4.8	1 <sup>st</sup>
Hunting expedition	54(41.54)	22(16.92)	54(41.54)	3.2	15 <sup>th</sup>
Rocky outcrop	58(44.62)	13(10.00)	59(45.38)	3.7	12 <sup>th</sup>
Mountains/hills	73(56.15)	21(16.15)	36(27.69)	4.5	4 <sup>th</sup>
Indigenous cuisine	79(60.77)	19(14.62)	32(24.62)	4.4	5 <sup>th</sup>

*Source: Field Survey, 2015.*

Table 2 showed the list of functional facilities / assets functional facilities / assets for rural tourism development that are available in farm settlements for rural tourism development for rural tourism development. From the table it observed that culture and folklore, bird viewing, village scenery, mountain/hills, indigenous cuisines & horizon view ranked first to fifth respectively. The result is in line with Agba *et al*, (2010) that tourism is a business entity that provides places and events to occupy people.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Perceived Relative Benefits of Rural Tourism on Farm Settlement

Inherent Benefits in Rural tourism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low Price Option	113	86.9
Solace in healthy-friendly Tourism assets	123	94.6
Desire for Peace and tranquillity	83	63.8
Interest in Natural Environment	93	71.5
Nostalgia for their roots on the farm	90	69.2
Educational Value of Agric-tourism	121	93.1
Enjoyment of Safe and Serene Ambience	123	94.6

*Source: Field Survey, 2015.*

Table 3 showed the distribution of respondents based on perceived relative benefits of rural tourism on farm settlement. Low Price Option (87.6%); Solace in healthy-friendly Tourism assets (94.6%); Desire for Peace and tranquillity (63.8%); Interest in Natural Environment (71.6%); Nostalgia for their roots on the farm (69.2%); Educational Value of Agric-tourism (93.1%); and Enjoyment of Safe and Serene Ambience (94.6%). This implied that rural tourism is capable of bringing with it additional benefits that may be very rare with conventional tourism.

### Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between agri-tourism and selected development derivatives.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between Agri-tourism derivatives and development

Variable Remark	r	Coefficient of Determination	Probability	
Value Addition	0.198	0.0392	0.04	S
Alternative Agriculture	0.183	0.0335	0.03	S
Community development	1.981	3.9204	0.001	S
Direct farm marketing	1.881	3.5344	0.02	S

*Source: Field Survey, 2015.*

From table 4 above, the PPMC analysis showed that Value addition ( $r= 0.198$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), Alternative agriculture ( $r= 0.183$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), Community development ( $r= 1.981$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), and Direct farm marketing ( $r= 1.881$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) were significantly related to rural tourism in farm settlements. This implied that rural tourism significantly influenced the development variables. The low coefficient of determination shows that a weak relationship exists between development and agri-tourism. The finding is in agreement with Knowd (2001) and Beeton (2006) that emphasized agriculture as the foundation for agri-tourism. The result is further corroborated by Ladele (2005) that rural tourism surfaced from combination of series of activities generated by creative human actions backed up by available natural resources for the purpose of development. Value addition, direct farm marketing, alternative agriculture, and community development are all human action on natural resources.

## Conclusion

The study revealed the perceived inherent benefits of agri-tourism to include; low price option, solace in health-friendly tourism assets, desire for peace and tranquillity, interest in natural environment, nostalgia for tourists' roots on the farm, educational value of agri-tourism enjoyment of safe and serene ambience, and improved infrastructure for farm settlements. The perceived development derivatives identified for agri-tourism around farm settlements were value addition, alternative agriculture, community development, and direct farm marketing. Rural areas nevertheless have a number of important functions in society. This implied that agri-tourism can serve a multifaceted benefit for prospective tourists, who care for natural and serene environment and are bored of regular regimented sites, and farmers who can generate more development opportunities. Based on the finding, it is recommended that sensitisation begins to launch tourists and farm settlers to the possibility and reality of rural tourism.

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