

Agrotourism: A Catalyst for Rural Revitalization and Sustainable Tourism in Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Agrotourism, Rural Tourism Practice, Sustainable Development, Local Communities, Nigeria

Received : 12, December
Revised : 16, January
Accepted: 25, February

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ABSTRACT

Agrotourism in Nigeria has shown to be a workable strategy for both rural rehabilitation and sustainable tourism expansion. This study examines how agrotourism might support environmentally conscious travel practices and assist rural communities in addressing socio-economic challenges. Using empirical data and previous research, the paper examines the key components of agrotourism in the Nigerian setting, including farm stays, agritourism activities, and culinary tourism. The report emphasizes how important agrotourism is to diversifying the rural economy, generating jobs, and enhancing residents' quality of life. Agrotourism projects can raise rural incomes, lower poverty, and stop the movement of people from rural to urban areas by utilizing Nigeria's rich agricultural legacy and cultural variety. Agrotourism also encourages community involvement, cultural interaction, and the preservation of customs, all of which support rural communities' sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Growing as a subset of sustainable tourism, agrotourism has attracted a lot of interest from throughout the world as a driver of sustainable development and rural rehabilitation (Zvavahera & Chigora, 2023). Agrotourism appears to be a viable way to harness the socio-economic potential of rural communities in Nigeria, a nation blessed with a broad range of agricultural landscapes and a rich cultural legacy, all while preserving natural resources (Ezenagu, 2020). Using current research and empirical data, this thorough introduction seeks to clarify the complex aspects of agrotourism and its function as a transformational force in rural communities in Nigeria.

Agrotourism comprises a range of endeavours that merge agriculture, tourism, and hospitality experiences, providing guests with intimate experiences with rural living, farming methods, and regional customs (Al-Khaled, 2023). Agrotourism projects provide genuine and significant interactions between visitors and rural communities through a range of activities, including farm stays, agricultural tours, farmers' markets, and culinary experiences that highlight local food (Pehin Dato Musa & Chin, 2022). In addition to promoting cultural awareness and interchange, this participatory strategy creates jobs and diversifies revenue streams, which strengthens rural economies and reduces poverty (Wasudawan et al., 2021).

Agrotourism in Nigeria confronts a number of obstacles despite its potential advantages, such as poor infrastructure, restricted funding options, and regulatory limitations (Ighodaro & Adegboye, 2020). Nonetheless, recent legislative measures by the Nigerian government to support the expansion of agribusiness and rural tourism indicate a growing understanding of the role that agrotourism plays in supporting equitable growth and sustainable rural lifestyles. The National Tourism Master Plan (NTMP) and the National Agribusiness Promotion Policy (NAPP) are two examples of coordinated initiatives to use the benefits of agriculture and tourism for rural economic transformation and regeneration (Przezbórska-Skobiej & Eyang, 2024).

In Nigeria, agrotourism seems to be a potent tool for promoting sustainable tourism growth and rural resurgence. Agrotourism programmes have the ability to create new possibilities for rural communities, encourage environmental stewardship, and boost the tourism industry's overall competitiveness by utilizing the nation's abundant agricultural resources, cultural legacy, and natural assets (Ezenagu, 2020). Nigeria may use the transformational potential of agrotourism to construct more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable rural economies in the future by means of cooperative endeavours including government agencies, private sector players, and local communities (Ukah et al., 2023).

Success Stories from Other Countries

There are several examples of success that demonstrate the potential of agrotourism. Examples of agrotourism include homestays, farm tours, and culinary experiences in Thailand; agrotourism initiatives like those in Tuscany, Italy; farm stay programmes in rural villages in Japan; eco-agritourism in sustainable farming practices in Costa Rica; agritourism and Maori cultural

experiences in New Zealand; the Songhai Center in Port Novo, Benin Republic; and Odua Agrivest Agrotourism Park in Oyo State, Nigeria.

With millions of visitors each year drawn by its stunning scenery, vineyards, and olive groves, Tuscany Agrotourism in Italy stands out as a pioneer in the field. In Italy, agriturismo, or farm stays, is a type of agrotourism where guests may experience real rural life while savouring regional food and taking part in agricultural activities. Strong agricultural traditions, forward-thinking government policies promoting rural development, and successful marketing tactics aimed at drawing both local and foreign visitors are all contributing factors to Tuscany's agriturismo industry's success (Germanier & Moricciani, 2023).

In Japan, farm stay programmes are becoming more and more popular as a way to encourage sustainable agriculture and breathe new life into abandoned rural villages. Through these programmes, tourists can participate in agricultural labour, stay with local farming families, and learn about traditional Japanese culture. In addition to offering genuine rural experiences that appeal to both domestic and foreign visitors, farm stay programmes in Japan are successful because they enable significant cultural exchanges between visitors and local populations (Weldon, 2023).

Sustainable agricultural Practices in Costa Rica: The country has welcomed eco-agritourism as a means of advancing sustainable agricultural methods, protecting biodiversity, and bolstering rural development. Agro-ecotourism experiences like organic coffee excursions, trips to chocolate plantations, and wildlife observation tours are provided by several farms around the nation. These programmes not only help farmers make more money but also educate tourists about sustainable agriculture and environmental preservation (Miller et al., 2023).

In New Zealand, agritourism and Maori cultural experiences have been combined to provide visitors with a distinctive perspective on the customs and farming methods of the indigenous people. Maori-owned cultural facilities and farms invite guests to take part in traditional crafts including weaving, storytelling, and food preparation. Initiatives in the field of agritourism that include aspects of Maori culture have served to both create economic possibilities for Maori communities and preserve and revitalize indigenous knowledge and legacy (Tang & Xu, 2023).

The agrotourism industry in Thailand has grown thanks to programmes including farm tours, homestays, and culinary adventures. According to Srithong et al. (2019), the assimilation of customary agricultural methods with contemporary facilities has drawn visitors from both domestic and foreign markets, resulting in the advancement of rural economies and the mitigation of poverty.

One famous agrotourism success story in West Africa is the Songhai Centre in Port Novo, Benin Republic. The Center is a comprehensive programme for agricultural development with the goals of advancing economically empowered communities, capacity building, and sustainable farming methods. Within a setting that is both instructive and welcoming to

tourists, the center incorporates a variety of agricultural operations, including crop production, animal husbandry, aquaculture, and agro-processing (Dagogo, 2022).

Odua Agrivest Agrotourism Park's agrotourism initiatives provide a range of agrotourism experiences and activities, including farm tours, cultural events, cooking demos, and lodging choices. To produce a comprehensive tourist experience, it integrates agriculture production, processing, and tourism operations (Madandola & Boussaa, 2023).

Agrotourism success stories from Italy, Japan, Costa Rica, and New Zealand show the variety of strategies and possibilities available in this expanding field of rural tourism. Agrotourism has the potential to make a substantial global contribution to rural development, environmental protection, and cultural preservation by utilizing regional resources, cultural heritage, and sustainable practices. Agrotourism is expected to become more significant in the travel industry as the desire for genuine and sustainable vacation experiences grows worldwide.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Potential for Agrotourism in Nigeria

Nigeria has a diversified agricultural economy that includes a large variety of natural resources, animals, and crops. Nevertheless, despite the agricultural sector's promise, a number of obstacles must be overcome, such as poor infrastructure, insufficient funding, and low production (Woodhill et al., 2022). These difficulties have impeded the growth of agrotourism projects around the nation. In Nigeria, agrotourism is still in its infancy, with few well-established farms and travel businesses providing guests with agro-based experiences (Przezbórska-Skobiej & Eyang, 2024). Nonetheless, communities, businesses, and legislators are becoming more interested in utilizing agrotourism's potential to spur rural development and establish sustainable lives (Jemirade, 2021).

Nigerian agrotourism is facing several obstacles in its progress. The formation and functioning of agrotourism businesses in rural areas are hampered by deficiencies in the infrastructure, such as inadequate road networks and restricted access to water and power (Odeku, 2020). Furthermore, there are major obstacles to the growth of agrotourism efforts, including a lack of supporting legislation, insufficient finance, and low technical ability (Nomishan et al., 2020). Additionally, potential tourists are discouraged from visiting agricultural areas due to security concerns, which include insurgency and communal conflicts in some regions, which is hindering the expansion of agrotourism in Nigeria (Oladeji et al., 2019).

Nigeria has enormous potential for the growth of agrotourism, notwithstanding its difficulties. Both domestic and foreign tourists can have unique experiences because of the nation's rich agricultural legacy, varied cultural landscapes, and traditional farming methods (Okpoko et al., 2021). Furthermore, agrotourism businesses have the chance to embrace ecologically beneficial methods and support conservation efforts due to the rising interest in sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly travel (Obaji et al., 2023). Nigeria can

fully realize the promise of agrotourism as a driver of rural development and economic progress by utilizing partnerships between the public and private sectors, investing in the development of infrastructure, and supporting local people in improving their capacity (Nwangwu, 2019).

In Nigeria, a number of prosperous agrotourism projects act as role models for sustainable development. An example of an integrated approach to agrotourism is the Songhai Centre in Port Novo, Benin Republic, which combines organic farming, job training, and tourism activities to support sustainable development (Dagogo, 2022). Similar to this, the Odua Agrivest Agrotourism Park in Oyo State draws tourists from all over the nation by showcasing Nigeria's agricultural legacy through farm tours, theatrical productions, and gastronomic experiences (Madandola & Boussaa, 2023). Nigerian authorities, businesses, and communities may duplicate successful ideas and tailor them to local circumstances to support the growth of agrotourism by examining these case studies and implementing best practices.

In Nigeria, agrotourism has enormous potential to spur employment growth, rural development, and environmentally friendly travel (Khidir, 2020). The nation's vast agricultural resources and cultural variety offer a strong platform for the expansion of agrotourism ventures while confronting obstacles such as governmental limits, security concerns, and infrastructural shortages (Owoade, 2019). Nigeria can leverage the potential of agrotourism to create economic opportunities, protect cultural heritage, and advance environmental conservation for the benefit of current and future generations by cultivating partnerships, investing in infrastructure, and advocating for sustainable practices (Ijose & Ayodele, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

According to recent studies, agrotourism in Nigeria has the potential to revitalize rural economies and lessen the negative effects of urban migration. Lawal-Adebowale (2022) states that in many parts of the nation, including agrotourism into rural development initiatives has improved livelihoods, boosted infrastructure, and empowered communities. Furthermore, as Olawuyi and Alabi (2018) point out, agrotourism endeavours have been demonstrated to strengthen market ties, encourage entrepreneurship among nearby farmers, and extend the value chain of agricultural goods.

In addition, agrotourism in Nigeria has potential as a technique for sustainable land management and environmental protection (Przezbórska-Skobiej & Eyang, 2024). Agrotourism efforts that support wildlife conservation, agroecological practices, and eco-friendly tourism infrastructures might help preserve natural resources and biodiversity hotspots in light of mounting worries about climate change and biodiversity loss (Weyland et al., 2021). Agrotourism's ability to balance agricultural expansion with ecosystem conservation goals is one of the ways that a recent study by Susila et al. (2024) highlights the significance of including agrotourism into conservation initiatives.

RESULTS

Implications for Nigeria

The fusion of tourism with agriculture, or agrotourism, has become more popular across the world as a sustainable method of rural development. The prosperous agrotourism endeavours in several nations offer significant insights for those seeking to leverage their ecological assets and cultural legacies (Jemirade, 2021). Understanding and putting to use lessons from successful agrotourism models globally can provide essential insights for supporting rural development and economic progress in Nigeria, where tourism offers immense promise and agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy (James & Essien, 2019). Nigeria may be affected in several ways by agrotourism success stories from other nations, especially when considering the country's agricultural and tourism sectors (Quang et al., 2022). Here are some potential implications:

1. **Diversification of Farm Activities:** Nigerian farmers can expand the range of services they provide by adding components such as farm stays, eco-tours, and culinary experiences. By doing so, they can generate income in rural areas, create jobs, and encourage local communities to start their own businesses (Saner et al., 2023).
2. **Policy Support and Infrastructure Development:** By offering incentives, infrastructure, and regulatory support to agrotourism efforts, the Nigerian government may model itself after other nations' successful policy frameworks. Tax benefits, financial accessibility, and investments in rural infrastructure such as roads, power, and lodging can all be examples of this (Adamgbe et al., 2020).
3. **Environmental Conservation and Community Engagement:** Nigeria's natural resources may be protected while encouraging community engagement and cultural preservation through the adoption of sustainable agricultural techniques and environmental stewardship. Agrotourism areas can become more appealing through programmes like organic farming, biodiversity protection, and history tourism (Omodero, 2021).
4. **Economic Gain:** Promising agrotourism projects abroad can bring very large financial gains. These include generating more income, generating jobs, and promoting local development. Nigeria may gain economically from agrotourism in a similar way, given its abundance of agricultural resources and expanding tourism sector. In rural areas where agriculture is the main source of income, this might be especially beneficial (Jean et al., 2023).
5. **Diversification of Income:** In addition to traditional agricultural methods, agrotourism may provide farmers with new revenue streams. Farmers can increase their income by inviting tourists to stay on their property and engage in activities like direct product sales to guests and farm tours. This can offer a steadier source of revenue and lessen reliance on erratic agricultural markets (Grillini et al., 2023).
6. **Education and Cultural Exchange:** Agrotourism frequently incorporates educational opportunities and cultural exchanges for visitors as well as

residents. In addition to learning about regional cuisines, traditional agricultural methods, and rural lives, visitors may also get insight into other cultures and perspectives. Promoting agrotourism in Nigeria can increase tourist awareness and appreciation while assisting in the preservation and display of the country's rich cultural legacy (Clement, 2020).

7. **Sustainable Development:** Environmental preservation and sustainability are given top priority in a lot of prosperous agrotourism projects. They support eco-friendly travel options, biodiversity preservation, and organic agricultural methods. Similar measures might be taken in Nigeria to support sustainable development, protect the environment, and lessen the negative effects of tourism and agriculture (Ammirato et al., 2020).
8. **Infrastructure Development:** Investments in transportation, lodging, and tourist amenities are frequently necessary for agrotourism to succeed. By boosting connection and availability of necessary services, infrastructure improvements in rural areas can help local communities as well as agrotourism efforts (Zulgani et al., 2023).
9. **Policy and Regulatory Framework:** Researching other nations' agrotourism success stories might give important insights into efficient policy and regulatory frameworks. Incentives for farmers, tourism marketing, and regulatory frameworks guaranteeing safety and quality standards are just a few of the policies that governments may customize to encourage the expansion of agrotourism in Nigeria by taking cues from best practices (Zvavahera & Chigora, 2023).
10. **Market Linkages and Value Addition:** Through the creation of direct market connections between farmers and customers, agrotourism may help producers take a bigger chunk of the value chain. Farmers may generate larger profits and lessen their reliance on middlemen by selling agricultural products to tourists directly or through on-site marketplaces and stores. This may encourage agricultural goods to be more valuable and of higher quality (Welteji & Zerihun, 2018)

Success stories in agrotourism from other nations provide insightful and instructive lessons that can guide and motivate the growth of agrotourism in Nigeria. Nigeria may capitalize on the advantages of agrotourism for economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability by utilizing its wealth of agricultural resources, rich cultural legacy, and expanding tourism sector.

DISCUSSION

This part allows you to elaborate on your results findings academically. You must not put numbers related to your statistical tests here; instead, you have to explain that numbers here. You have to compile your discussion with academic supports to your study and a good explanation according to the specific area you are investigating.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Nigeria, agrotourism appears to be a potential way to support sustainable tourism growth and rural rehabilitation. Agrotourism is the blending of agricultural pursuits with tourism experiences to promote the natural beauty and rich cultural legacy of rural communities while simultaneously fostering economic development, employment creation, and environmental preservation. Discovering Nigeria's varied agricultural terrain provides visitors with a genuine and immersive experience that fosters a greater comprehension of regional customs and practices. Moreover, by offering other revenue streams and improving livelihood possibilities, agrotourism holds promise for empowering rural people. Nigeria has the potential to become a competitive agrotourism destination on a regional and international scale by using its current agricultural resources and harnessing the increasing interest in environmentally conscious travel. However, to fully use agrotourism, a number of parties must work together, including local communities, government agencies, businesses in the private sector, and civil society groups. However, several issues, such as inadequate investment, low stakeholder knowledge, and limited infrastructure, must be resolved before agrotourism can be successfully implemented in Nigeria. In conclusion, agrotourism in Nigeria has the potential to support sustainable tourism and rural rehabilitation.

FURTHER STUDY

Agrotourism may support inclusive growth, environmental protection, and cultural preservation by utilizing the synergies between agriculture, tourism, and local communities, thereby promoting holistic development in rural areas.

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