Agro-Tourism in North-Central Nigeria: Perceptions, Performance, Problems, and Prospects

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Abstract

Agrotourism is gaining increasing worldwide recognition as a veritable opportunity for enhancing rural household incomes, economy, and aggregate national development. Developing countries in need of avenues to escape poverty for majority of their people have abundant potentials for agrotourism supply because of their typically dominant agrarian populations. Available records however indicate low performance level in agrotourism in most developing countries, including Nigeria. With the ultimate aim of enhancing agrotourism practice, policy, and development, the focus of this study was to analyze agrotourism in north-central Nigeria vis-à-vis its perceptions, nature, challenges and potentials. Data for the study were collected from 337 respondents made of small, medium, and large scale farmers that were selected using the multi-stage cluster random sampling procedure. Descriptive and correlation statistics were used to analyze data. Results revealed that respondents exhibited generally poor understanding of the practice and potentials of agrotourism, despite having considerable potentials for income-generating agrotourism that included indigenous and exotic practices and objects in animal and plant husbandry. They also generally lacked the entrepreneurial skills needed to exploit the agrotourism potentials of their farms. While most communities where the study was conducted have a number of agriculture-related festivals that could attract foreign and local tourists, little or no income had been generated thereby, mainly due to poor organization. The paper concludes that it is imperative to devise virile agrotourism policy and programmes in order to effectively harness the abundant agrotourism potentials in Nigeria.

Keywords: tourism, diversification, agriculture, entrepreneurial agrotourism, competencies

Introduction

The multifunctionality of agriculture is increasingly recognized by policy makers and scholars worldwide. Agriculture transcends being just an avenue for producing food and raw material. It is immortally linked to national income, food security, employment, landscape preservation, environmental protection, and so on. However, according to Ohe (2007), the significance of multifunctionality issues is the opportunity to broaden the activity domain for farm diversification. Rural agrarian

communities need to make maximum use of their natural and cultural resources for palpable development.

The connection between agriculture and tourism as a parameter of multifunctionality and diversification is not a recent phenomenon (Carver, 2012; Fadebiyi and Oredegbe, 2009; Busby and Rendle, 2000). The significance of agrotourism (at both micro and macro levels) as a veritable source of additional income, employment, promotion of consumption local food products, education, rural urban integration, promotion of entrepreneurship and industrialization, and preservation of cultural heritage and rural landscape has also attracted ample recognition in literature (Busby and Rendle, 2000; Sonnino, 2004; Nnadi and Akwiwu, 2005; McGehee, 2007). Especially in developing countries, agrotourism is not, however, without its own weaknesses and threats – some of which include underdeveloped demand and supply sectors, danger of 'massification', little or no political will/support, and alteration of cultural authenticity (Lopez and Garcia, 2006). It is noteworthy however that developing countries are bracing up to the challenges and opportunities offered by agrotourism in recent times. Specifically in Africa, countries like Kenya, Namibia, Uganda and Tanzania have made notable progress in this regard.

Although agrotourism is not difficult to define, it is sometimes necessary to make a distinction between agrotourism and some other related concepts such as 'rural tourism', 'ecotourism', 'farm tourism' etc. For instance, it is easy to juxtapose 'rural tourism' for agrotourism in the way that 'rural development' was used synonymously with 'agricultural development'. In actual fact, it is impossible to completely divorce the two concepts as it is to do same between rural tourism and agrotourism. For instance, Dritsaki (2009) defines agrotourism as 'various means of tourist activity developed within *rural* areas by people who work as farmers and are harmonized with the *rural* life style' (emphasis mine). Agrotourism essentially connotes any form of recreational cum educative activities involving an agricultural site or paraphernalia, in which the farmer or farming family is financially remunerated by the visitors. According to Darau et al (2010), agrotourism is activity 'organized by farmers, usually as a secondary activity, agriculture remaining their main occupation and source of income'. Several other definitions have been put forward by scholars including Busby and Rendle (2000); Blacka et al. (2001); Kizos and Iosifides (2007) and Fadeyibi and Oredegbe (2009). The bottom-line of all definitions is agricultural diversification or multifunctionality.

As much as farming is a business that requires skill, so is agrotourism. Interestingly, the connection between entrepreneurship and agrotourism is increasingly studied by researchers, albeit from a general entrepreneurship perspective (Phelan and Sharpley, 2011). That farmers require additional skill in order to effectively diversify their enterprise has been noted in literature (Defra, 2007; Hill, 2007). However, some other researchers observed that the farm business acumen already possessed by farmers is enough for them to diversify into agrotourism (Butts et al., 2005). Yet others (Wilson, 2007; McGehee, 2007) noted that agrotourism farmers generally lack certain requisite competencies. It is however difficult to refrain from referring to the laconic elucidation by Getz et al. (2004), as quoted by Phelan and Shapley (2011), that "farming is supply-driven, tourism is market-led; farmers are cost-cutters, tourism businesses are revenue maximisers; farmers produce single standardized products at a given price, tourism businesses diversify into many products and offer a range of prices'. It is thus difficult to imagine a successful agrotourism business run with little or no skill or competencies in tourism business management.

In their well-referenced and illuminating work on farm tourism competency in UK, Phelan and Sharpley (2011) noted that the absence of consensus on the required entrepreneurial and management skills to operate an agrotourism outfit and whether the skills significantly differ from those already possessed through non-service based farm diversification, was suggestive of a need for strong theoretical and empirical basis for agrotourism research.

Literature is replete with studies on agrotourism. It is however evident from eclectic review of agrotourism literature that the need for further empirical and theoretical analyses remains compelling. For instance, Busby and Rendle (2000) noted the dearth of studies that focus on the place of entrepreneurship in modern day agrotourism. Similarly, Phelan and Sharpley (2011) observed that the 'farm tourism literature remains fragmented and somewhat limited', while Kunasekaran et al. (2011) also bemoaned the somewhat lopsidedness of agrotourism research to the detriment of analyses of stakeholders' (especially farmers) viewpoint.

The focus of this study was to analyze agrotourism in Nigeria from a stakeholder point of view. The study is important because, by providing empirical evidence on the current position of agrotourism in Nigeria, it would go a long way in influencing agrotourism policy in Nigeria and other countries with similar scenarios. The specific objectives of the research were to:

a. Analyze the personal and job-related characteristics of the farmers in the study area

b. Investigate awareness of the concept of agrotourism and the perception of its practice,

c. Study the rate and correlates of participation in agrotourism among farmers in the study area,

d. Determine the farmers' level of willingness to participate in entrepreneurial agrotourism, and

e. Analyze the farmers' competencies in entrepreneurial agrotourism.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the north-central geo-ecological zone of Nigeria, comprising of six states. Nigeria has six such of such zones which are demarcated for sociopolitical purposes. The zone used for the study comprises of some of the country's leading states in terms of agricultural production and tourism activities. Basically, the multi-stage cluster random sampling technique was used in collecting data for the study. Firstly, out of the six states in the zone, three (Kogi, Kwara, and Niger States) were randomly selected. In each selected state, two Local Government Areas (LGAs) noted for frontline agricultural production and tourism activities were purposively selected. Thirdly, five predominantly farming communities/villages were randomly selected in each LGA, while at the fourth stage each village/farming community was demarcated into clusters with assistance from local and farmers' union leaders. Finally respondents were randomly selected from the clusters, which were also randomly selected. A total of 337 respondents constituted the research sample.

The respondents generally spoke different languages, of which only one was understood by the researcher. The study was thus based mostly on the farmers' responses to trained enumerators' interpretations of the questions in the data collection instrument, because most of the respondents could not read and write in English

language. Furthermore, most of the respondents kept no proper production records but relied mostly on their memory and estimations. As such, questions were limited to the last one year to minimize the incidence of errors from the estimations.

Data for the study was collected between June and September, 2012. A reconnaissance survey of the study area was conducted in April 2012, after which the instrument for data collection was pretested among 40 respondents that did not form part of the research sample. The test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the final interviewer-administered questionnaire, yielding a coefficient r = 0.87 thereby attesting to its reliability. Appropriately trained enumerators and translators were used in data collection because most of the respondents could neither read nor write in English language.

The structured questionnaire consisted of items ranging from the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents to their job and agrotourism related issues. Specifically, some of the variables critical to the achievement of the study objectives that were measured include Agricultural Diversification Index (ADI), awareness and perceptions of agrotourism, agrotourism practice index (API), and self-ranked entrepreneurial agrotourism (EAT) competencies. ADI was measured using the Herfindahl-index as applied by Kassali et al. (2012) in which agricultural diversification of farmers was measured as follows

$$H_1 = \sum (S_{(ji)}/S_i)^2 \text{ with } I = 1 \ldots n; j = 1 \ldots .m$$

Whereby *Hi* = Diversification index of farmer *i*; *s*(*ji*) = size of enterprise *j* adopted by farmer *i*; *S i* = total farm size used by farmer *i*.

Awareness and perceptions of agrotourism were respectively measured for each respondent on separate 5-point Likert-type scales consisting of positively presented awareness and perceptions items. Self-ranked entrepreneurial agrotourism competency was similarly measured for each respondent using positively presented items that were adapted from Phelan and Sharpley (2011). Based on the observations from literature and the reconnaissance survey, agrotourism practice index (API) was operationalized as a function of income from, and years of experience in agrotourism, as well as farm size, number of aspects of agrotourism a respondent was involved in, type of visitors and estimated number of visitors per annum. That is:

$$API = f(Y, E, A, Tv, Nv, Fs),$$

Where Y= Estimated annual income from agrotourism (zero income, 0; below N20, 000, 1; N20,000 – N40, 000, 2; N11, 000 – N60, 000, 3; N61, 000 – N80, 000, 4; above N80,000, 5),

E = years of experience in agrotourism activities (also categorized into a scale of 0-5),

A = number of aspects of agrotourism a respondent was involved (direct farm sales/service, entertainment, outdoor recreation, educational experience, and accommodation. This also takes value from 0 - 5),

Tv = type of visitors (not applicable, 0; local, 1; West Africa, 2; Africa, 3; outside Africa, 4; mixed, 5)

Nv = estimated number of visitors (zero visitor=0, below 21 = 1; 21-40 = 2; 41-60 = 3; 61-80 = 4; and above 80 = 5). Farm size was measured and categorized as

contained in Table 1. Thus, the maximum possible points score by any respondent is 30 (expressed in ratio thereby making 1.00 the highest API and the minimum being 0.00). Furthermore, while awareness of agrotourism was measured using an adaptation of the model by Kunasekaran et al (2011), an adaptation of the list of agrotourism activities put forward by Bernardo et al (2004) was used in determining respondents' rate of participation in agrotourism,. Given that most of the activities listed are actually the ideals for established agrotourism centers, using an adaptation of the scale for the Nigerian scenario whose agrotourism subsector is at its infancy is expedient to engender the necessary policy and programme thrusts for the development of agrotourism in Nigeria. Descriptive and correlation statistics were used to analyze the data collected.

Results

Personal and Occupational Characteristics

Data analysis revealed that most farmers were in their middle ages and above. Indeed, about 60% of the respondents were between the ages of 41 and 80 years (Table 1). This suggests that younger people in the study area were not basically involved in agricultural production activities as means of livelihood. It was further revealed that the farming population was male dominated, although with a strong female presence. About two-thirds of the farmers had no formal education whatsoever, suggesting a largely illiterate farming population. Indeed, just about 40% went beyond primary education level (six years of formal education) – out of which those with post-secondary school education accounted for about 19% of the study sample. Large family size was revealed to be a feature of rural farming families in Nigeria as nearly 50% of the farmers in the study sample were heads of households consisting of between 11 and 20 members. Although this might mean that there would be easy supply of farm labour, but it also means 'more mouths to feed'. The results further showed that most of the farmers (about 66%) operated on small scale (≤ 5 Ha) either as crop or mixed farmers.

Table 1: Personal and job-related characteristics of farmers in north-central Nigeria, August 2012 (N=338)

Socioeconomic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 20	19	5.6
21-40	112	33.2
41-60	166	49.3
61-80	40	11.9
Sex		
Male	198	58.8
Female	139	41.2
Formal Education (years)		
0	108	32.0
1-6	92	27.3
7-12	72	21.4
12-17	65	19.3
Family size		
1-5	51	15.1
6-10	119	35.3
11-15	104	30.9
16-20	63	18.7
Farm size (Ha)		
< 1	77	22.8
1-5	146	43.3
6-10	61	18.2
10-15	31	9.2
16-20	22	6.5
Home-farm distance (Km)		
Less than 5	98	29.1
5-10	100	29.7
11-15	53	15.7
16-20	61	18.1
>20	25	7.4
Diversification Index		
0-0.25	126	37.4
0.26-0.50	84	24.9
0.51-0.75	73	21.7
0.76-1.00	54	16.0
Farm-city center distance		
<10	18	5.3
10-20	44	13.1
21-30	75	22.3
31-40	94	27.8
>40	106	31.5

The average home-to-farm distance was 9. 1 Km, just as the modal range was 5-10 Km. This means that famers would have to find means of transportation for the farm family, their inputs and outputs to and from their respective farms since, in about 70% of the cases, home-farm distance are beyond walking distance. Data on the Agricultural Diversification Index (ADI) of the farmers shows that most of them (about 62%) exhibited less than 0.5 ADI. This might not be surprising considering the fact that they mostly cultivated on small plots – which offers limited opportunities for diversification. This is also a pointer to the possible limited opportunity for entrepreneurial agrotourism among the farmers. The distance between the farm and the nearest city is important

because of the inadequacy of social infrastructure often associated with rural agrarian communities in Nigeria. Table 1 reveals an overwhelming preponderance of farms that were situated well outside city centers (>80%). However, the fact that the farms are relatively far from the city centers establishes the potential for the enhancement of agrotourism in the study area.

Awareness and Perceptions of Agrotourism

Owing to little or no institutional – cum – policy and general societal attention to agrotourism in Nigeria, it is appropriate to gauge the level of awareness of the *concept* among the principal stakeholders – the farmers. Furthermore, an investigation of how the farmers actually perceived the *practice* of agrotourism was also considered to be expedient in this study. Table 2 and 3 present the findings of these investigations. Interestingly, it was found that the farmers were much more aware of the concept of agrotourism, contrary to a priori expectation. Table 2 summarizes that on a 5-point Likert-type scale, respondents' general level of agreement with the five positively presented agrotourism awareness statements was 4.02 indicating that they virtually agreed with the statements on the concept of agrotourism. Basically, the farmers not only knew that there was 'something' called agrotourism; they knew what it means and considerably understood its definition and scope.

Table 2: Awareness of Agrotourism (AT) practice in among farmers in north-central Nigeria, August 2012 (N=338)

Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
AT is an activity where people visit farms	4.33	0.89
AT is a business based on agriculture	4.41	0.81
AT needs a natural environment	3.65	0.72
AT involves farm festivals	3.67	1.02
Developing the farm will enhance AT	4.26	0.95
Grand Mean Score	20.32	
Level of agreement the AT Awareness variables	4.06	

An establishment of their awareness of the concept leads to investigating how they perceive its practice vis-à-vis farming. Table 3 presents the summary of the results on the ten perception items presented to the farmers. Convincingly, data contained in Table 3 show that there was a marked difference in concept awareness and practice perceptions of agrotourism among the farmers. The overall agreement with the 10 perception statements was 2.40 meaning that the farmers did not have a favourable perception of the practice and importance of agrotourism. It is noteworthy, however that the farmers generally agreed with the statement that 'agrotourism would boost

agricultural production' (mean score = 4.04). The least mean score was recorded by the statement that 'agrotourism is practicable in Nigeria' (0.87) meaning that the farmers were generally in complete disagreement with the statement. This perception scenario does not offer a good signal for agrotourism development in Nigeria unless it is reversed.

Table 3: Farmers' Perceptions of Agrotourism (AT) in north-central Nigeria, August 2012 (N=338)

Perception	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
AT is practicable in Nigeria	0.87	0.87
AT could enhance farmers' living standards	2.85	1.01
AT would contribute to peaceful coexistence	2.42	1.02
AT would accelerate rural development	3.17	1.13
AT could enhance rural-urban interactions	2.13	0.94
AT would improve education in rural areas	1.86	1.07
AT enhances environmental sustainability	1.84	0.88
AT would boost rural employment	2.65	1.22
AT would check rural-urban migration	2.07	1.05
AT would boost agricultural production	4.04	0.89
Grand Mean Score	24.00	
Level of agreement with the Perception variables	2.40	

Agrotourism Performance

Data contained in Table 4 describe the findings in respect of participation in agrotourism activities among the farmers. As indicated in the previous section (Methodology), an agrotourism practice index (API) was computed for each respondent essentially to determine their level of involvement in entrepreneurial agrotourism. Farmers' participation was generally very low, considering the fact that the API for most of them (70%) was between 0.10 and 0.20. Indeed, only about 5% of the famers had API above 0.40 (but not more than 0.50), while about 25% of them had between 0.21 and 0.40 as their API. The implication of these findings is that the farmers

generally ranked very low in terms of income from agrotourism, years of experience, number and type of visitors, and the number of agrotourism activities carried out by them.

Table 4: Participation in selected agrotourism activities and Agrotourism Practice Index (API) among farmers in north-central Nigeria (N=338)

Enterprises/Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Direct farm sales/service		
On-farm sales	54	16.0
Road-side sales	49	14.5
Farm crafts/gifts	21	6.2
Value addition exhibition	19	5.6
Equipment services	11	3.3
Entertainment		
Concerts/ special events	25	7.4
Crop festivals	169	50.1
Animal shows	33	9.8
Hunting	41	12.2
Training	29	8.6
Outdoor recreation		
Horse riding (durbar)	31	9.2
Animal games viewing	20	5.9
Photographing	48	14.2
Educational experiences		
Indigenous crop farms	67	19.9
Exotic crop farms	28	8.3
Students excursions	103	30.6
Research visits	81	24.0
Historical farm exhibit	39	11.6
Technical tours	26	7.7
Ornamental exhibitions	29	8.6
Accommodation		
Camping/picnics	11	3.3
Farm vacations	32	9.5
Youth exchange	28	8.3
Bed and breakfast inn	19	5.6
Others		
Herbal/medicinal visits	48	14.2
Religious/spiritual visits	34	10.1
Sporting tours	21	6.2
Agrotourism Practice Index (%)		
1.00-0.20	238	70.6
0.21-0.40	83	24.6
0.41-0.60	16	4.8
0.61-0.80	-	-
0.81-1.00	-	-

As further discernible from Table 4, the farmers' generally low agrotourism performance is again reflected in the rate of their participation in selected agrotourism activities. Participation rate in each of the 28 agrotourism activities was below 20% among the farmers except for crop festivals (50%), student tours (30%), and research visits (24%). Indeed, more than half of the activities recorded less than 10% participation rates. These show that most of the farmers had not been able to harness the

abundant opportunities for income generation and other benefits available through participation in agrotourism activities. Respondents' rates of participation in outdoor and (tourist) accommodation agrotourism activities were particularly very low. Table 4 further shows that some of the farmers (10-14%) also have plants and other objects of religious/spiritual and health significance on their farms.

An investigation of the correlates of agrotourism participation index (API) of respondents revealed that some occupational and personal characteristics of the farmers had significant relationship with their participation in agrotourism. As shown in Table 5, four variables (age, city-center to farm distance, major road to farm distance and nearest hotel/guest hose to farm distance) were negatively but significantly correlated with agrotourism participation indices of the respondents. Farmers' API generally decreased with an increment in these factors, implying that an enhancement of the farmers' participation in agrotourism might need to be accompanied by a decline in these factors. Nine other variables were however revealed to have positive and significant correlations with API among the farmers. These are agricultural diversification index, farm size, farm income, farm labour expenditure, years of formal education, and hours spent on farm work per week. The other variables (farming experience, family size, number of alternative occupation, and home to farm distance) exhibited no significant correlations with the farmers' participation in agrotourism activities.

Table 5: Correlates of agrotourism practice among farmers in north-central Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Farm size	0.771	0.001*
Farming experience	0.322	0.133
Age	-0.631	0.001*
Diversification index	0.723	0.002*
Education	0.812	0.000*
Family size	0.235	0.016
Labour expenditure	0.801	0.001*
Alternative occupations	0.201	0.092
Farm income	0.684	0.000*
Home-farm distance	0.289	0.085
Weekly on-farm working hours	0.633	0.011*
City center-Farm distance	-0.346	0.066
Nearest hotel-farm distance	-0.659	0.000*
Major road-farm distance	-0.739	0.002*

*Significant at 0.05 a priori level of significance

Willingness to participate in entrepreneurial agrotourism

One of the aims of agrotourism is to enhance the standard of living of farmers through income generation from visits by prospective tourist. A cardinal objective of this study was to investigate the level of the farmers' willingness to participate in agrotourism in order to generate income and make profit. Are the farmers willing to engage in entrepreneurial agrotourism as farm tourism facility managers? Table 6 presents the summary of their responses to items that were used to measure their willingness. Generally, the respondents exhibited above average grand mean score of 3.9, which is effectively their level of agreement with the ten willingness variables. This indicates that they generally agreed with the EAT willingness measurement variables. However, three of the variables stood out, with the farmers recording mean scores equal to or greater than 4. These are 'I shall participate in EAT if given the incentives'; 'I wish to have the needed skills for EAT'; and 'I do not see EAT as a last resort'. Data contained in Table 6 further reveals the farmers' readiness to join groups or associations that would promote EAT, their preparedness to overcome the barriers to their participation in EAT, and that they generally agreed that EAT could bring prosperity to their household.

Table 6: Willingness to participate in entrepreneurial agrotourism (EAT)

Variable	Mean score	Standard Deviation
EAT will bring prosperity to me	3.93	1.11
I shall ultimately participate in EAT	3.82	0.82
I shall practice EAT if given the incentives to do so	4.14	0.79
I am willing to overcome the barriers to EAT	3.63	1.02
EAT is not as stressful as generally believed	3.65	0.93
I can join a farmers' group on EAT	3.71	1.03
I wish to possess the skill needed for EAT	4.32	1.16
I do not consider EAT as a last resort	4.00	0.86
EAT would enable me to utilize my farming skills	3.93	0.94
I can invest money on EAT if necessary	3.73	1.05
Grand Mean Score	38.86	

Level of agreement with the EAT variables	3.9

Entrepreneurial Agrotourism Competencies

Investigation of the competencies of the farmers to participate in entrepreneurial agrotourism yielded the data contained in Table 7. Convincingly, the data revealed that the farmers are basically lacking in the necessary competencies for economic engagement in agrotourism, their notable willingness notwithstanding. Indeed their level of agreement with the ten competency items was just 1.51 on a scale of 1 to 5. From customer-, problem-, time-, and financial managements to supervision, marketing, goal setting, and facility administration, the farmers expressed their lack of competence largely due to general lack of encouragement, little or no experience in EAT and perhaps low level of demand for agrotourism services.

Table 7: Entrepreneurial Agrotourism competencies among farmers in north-central Nigeria

Competency Variable	Mean Score	Standard Variation
Customer management	1.16	0.93
Problem management	1.08	0.86
Time management	1.22	0.91
Labour/staff issues	1.38	0.77
Facility administration	1.24	1.16
Negotiation	2.12	0.83
Networking	1.16	1.11
Risk management	1.14	1.05
Supervision	2.28	1.12
Marketing	1.94	0.61
Financial management	1.57	0.92
Business regulations	1.04	1.06
Goal setting	2.26	1.11
Grand Mean Score	19.59	
Level of agreement with the competency variables	1.51	

Discussion and Conclusion

Farmers' Socioeconomic Characteristics

Arable crop farming is still dominated by people who have passed the age of 40 years, thus giving credence to the observation that ageing farmer population is a serious agricultural production problem in Nigeria (Agbamu and Fabusoro, 2001; Kassali et al., 2012). In order to achieve sustainable development, it is expedient to device polices and programmes that would attract the younger generations to farming. The implication of the low level of education among farmers is that the largely uneducated farmers would produce less and adopt little or no farming innovation. Furthermore, small scale operation which is a feature of farming in Nigeria, as observed in the study, gives little or no room for the use of modern production techniques and ideas and it was thus not surprising that farmers exhibited low agricultural diversification indices similar to what was revealed in the study by Kassali et al (2012). Providing enabling environment for farmers to upgrade their operating scale is thus imperative.

Most of the farms were located away from home, as it is typical among Nigerian farmers (Akinola, 2003). According to Kassali et al. (2009), farms located far away from village residence show more productivity and most farmers working on full time tend to reside in the village than on farm during farming. The effect of long home to farm distance on production is, however, largely negative in actual fact considering that most of the roads are in bad shape and farmers had to trek for hours to and from farm or pay for other modes of transportation. Although most of the farms were located at least 20 kilometers from the city centers (which is good for agrotourism), it is important to ensure that the roads are in good conditions for the development of agriculture and agrotourism.

Awareness and Perceptions of Agrotourism

Awareness is the first step in the adoption of any new idea. Previous studies on agrotourism focused mainly on its impacts, features and other aspects – few (such as Iakavidu and Turner, 1994; Timothy, 1999; and Sharpley, 2001) have addressed awareness and perceptions (Kunasekaran et al., 2011). This study thus contributes to agrotourism knowledge by investigating awareness and perceptions of agrotourism in Nigeria. The farmers in this study demonstrated remarkable awareness of the concept of agrotourism, which is a great impetus for its development. This relatively high awareness level is beneficial as it would enhance adoption of agrotourism practices. Governments and other stakeholders should therefore exploit this in order to enhance agrotourism in Nigeria and by implication worry less on creating awareness but concentrate on changing the farmers' negative perceptions. Particularly, farmers should be enlightened to appreciate its practicability and contributory roles in promoting sustainable environment, rural development, rural employment and peaceful coexistence (Nnadi and Akwiwu, 2005). This could be achieved through programmed enlightenment campaigns using appropriate means, coupled with other institutional supports and frameworks. Although the farmers generally conceded that agrotourism could boost agricultural development, their perceptions of its overall benefits and practicability were negative. Without a favourable perception by farmers, agrotourism would fail to witness any meaningful development.

Participation in selected agrotourism activities

The low level and rate of participation in agrotourism by the farmers obviously amounts to underutilization of agricultural and rural resources (Hjalager, 1996; Mason and Cheyne, 2000). For instance, the farmers would be losing incomes that could have

earned through agrotourism activities. Respondents' participation was fair in, and largely limited to crop festivals and welcoming of visiting students and researchers (most of who did not pay for their visits) out of the nearly 30 activities that were investigated. Farmers should be educated on the tourism potentials of their farms and be educated on how to make optimal use of same. Indeed, researchers should advise farmers on diversification towards tourism. It is also suggested that extension agencies (public and private) should have agrotourism departments that would help farmers to exploit their agrotourism potentials. Another recommendation is that researchers should consider incorporating respondents' fees in their research budgets when it concerns farmers, especially when such studies are sponsored. Indeed, some farmers in Nigeria already demand to be gratified financially for showing researchers round their farms/homes and answering their questions. Furthermore, tourism outfits and government tourism departments should incorporate farm tourism into their tourist packages in conjunction, of course, with farmers. Similarly, farmers' unions should be involved in organizing farm tours for local and foreign visitors, albeit in conjunction with NGOs and other stakeholders. The study revealed that three factors tend to discourage participation in agrotourism among the farmers namely: old age, long nearest hotel to farm distance, and major road to farm distance. This is in agreement with the findings of Loureiro and Jervell-Moxnes (2004). It is thus important to emphasize that agrotourism would thrive better when these factors are taken care of by encouraging youth employment in tourism and providing more and better roads. Finally other factors that significantly correlated with agrotourism practice (such as farm size and farm income) should be enhanced.

Entrepreneurial Agrotourism: Willingness and Competencies

Agrotourism is not the same thing as agriculture. It is a business on its own, even though its basis is inextricably linked to agricultural production. Therefore, it requires far more than just possessing agricultural production competencies. Despite the fact that the farmers did not have the right perceptions of agrotourism *practice* (though they were well aware of the *concept*), they generally expressed a noteworthy willingness to participate in entrepreneurial agrotourism, EAT – economic and technical management and coordination of agrotourism facilities. It is not, however, farmers' involvement in EAT that would qualify them to be entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is already recognized as a defining hallmark of modern agricultural production (Smit, 2004). But willingness to practice is not the same as competence to operate a successful agrotourism venture. Similar to the findings by Phelan and Sharpley (2011), the farmers in this study (expectedly) conceded that they lack the competencies needed for EAT. To remain profitably in farming business and be innovation compliant, farmers must learn new skills and acquire more competencies (such as EAT competencies) that would enhance their position in an increasingly competitive situation. It is thus expedient that famers should be encouraged and assisted to acquire the necessary skills that would make them make maximum use of the agrotourism potentials abound in their communities. A major contribution of this study to the practice of agrotourism in Nigeria is its analysis of agrotourism competency. It is important to encourage develop agrotourism management competency among farmers and prospective practitioners even as the agrotourism sector is still at its infancy. The paper exposed the wide competency gap and thus indicated the needs of farmers regarding the competency required for successful practice of entrepreneurial agrotourism in Nigeria. The Nigerian

authorities (federal, state, and local) are hereby encouraged to set up agrotourism development departments/offices that would work with other stakeholders to ensure the development of agrotourism in Nigeria.

Conclusively, the study has highlighted the nature, problems, perceptions, and prospects of agrotourism in north-central Nigeria and proffered suggestions on the way forward. Rural agrarian households must be encouraged through every possible means not only to combat poverty and raise income for the rural household and economy, but it is also imperative to make maximum use of rural human, material and natural resources. Agrotourism, of course, does not hold the magic wand to cure all rural and agricultural problems, but it certainly has the potential to enhance the living standards of famers and rural people. It is imperative that concerted efforts by all stakeholders be made to ensure the development of agrotourism in Nigeria. It is however suggested that further studies are required to focus on the economics and financial analysis of rural agrotourism as well as institutional, legal, environmental and geopolitical imperatives and implications for efficient and sustainable development of entrepreneurial agrotourism in Nigeria.

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