



AGRO-TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF UKWA PLANTATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract: The study of agro-tourism in Nigeria as a tool for sustainable tourism development in Southeast Nigeria was conducted to investigate sustainable tourism development by utilizing ukwa (African breadfruits) plantation an agricultural resource found in the southeastern Nigeria. This study sought to identify the contributions derivable by the Southeastern Nigerians and the country as well from the combination of tourism and agriculture as a means of economic and social development. The study was descriptive in nature, with a study sample size of five hundred (500) respondents purposively selected from respondents living in the area. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire administered for the purpose. Thus, the entire questionnaire administered was returned representing 100% return rate and collected data was analyzed using the coefficient correlation statistical method which indicated that P-value is 0.000 and is less than 0.05, consequently, the H_0 was rejected. The study revealed that ninety-nine (99) respondents agreed that Ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation as an agro-tourism resource can drive tourism/agro-tourism development in the Southeastern Nigeria. The paper concluded that Ukwa (African Breadfruit) can become a sustainable agro-tourism resource if there is public and privation involvement in the industry's development. It is therefore recommended that agriculture most especially ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation should not be left in the hands of aged but participation of younger people should be encouraged.

KEYWORDS: Agro-tourism, Development, Sustainable, Tourism

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is regarded as one of the largest and fastest growing economic sector in the world over the past six decades (Reza, 2017). The concept of agro tourism is a direct expansion of ecotourism, which encourages visitor(s) to experience agricultural life at first hand basis. Agro tourism is getting support and potential, furthermore tourism has great capacity to generate additional income to the skilled and unskilled participation from small communities as rural people have realized the benefits of sustainable development brought about by similar forms of nature travel. (www.ecotourdirectory.com). Kubar (2010) "Tourism" has being recognized as an engine of growth in various economies of the world, with several countries transforming their economies by developing their tourism potential, because tourism is able to generate additional income to the skilled and unskilled. Sharpley and Telfer (2015) described Tourism as having positive contributions to both the local and national economies; internationally it serves as an important source of foreign exchange earnings, and with contribution to balance of payments which is the principal reason why governments support the development of tourism in their localities. Tourism industry has been on the rise for decades, the major driver for this trend is globalisation, which has made borders red-tapeism almost nonexistent, consequently easing movement of people. And at the same time air, rail and road travel has become more affordable, even an increasing disposable income of people in both developed and developing nations has contributed to leisure travel. These factors are also responsible for the strong growth rate and have extended over time irrespective of the occasional global and even localized economic crises suffered (Travel Daily News, 2020).

Agricultural development is imperative in the wellbeing of any community. Nigeria not being exempted and tourism provides a unique opportunity to combine agriculture and travel for pleasure/leisure for sustainable agricultural

practice through agro tourism. Sustainable development of Ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation in the southeastern Nigeria can serve as a catalyst for the sustainable growth of agro tourism in the area. Reza (2017) describes agro tourism as a type of travel where hospitality is offered to vacationers which may include the opportunity to assist with farming task during visits, where tourists/visitors have opportunity to pick fruits and vegetables, ride on horses e.t.c with each farm generally offering a unique and memorable experience. However healthy eating habits had made people to show more interest in how their foods are produced. Agro tourism is described as a "niche" tourism that is considered a growth industry in many parts of the world. Kumbar (2010) described agro tourism as a new face of tourism, further describing it as a farm based business that is open to the public, specialized agro tourism destination generally offer things to see, things to do and produce or gifts to buy for the public, "Travel that combines agricultural or rural setting with products of agricultural operations all within a tourism experience. Kari (2016) citing McGehee, Kim and Jennings (2007) Agro tourism as "rural enterprise which incorporates both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component" Kari (2016), citing World Tourism Organization (1998) described agro tourism as involving accommodation being offered in the farm house or in a separate guest house, providing rural environment and organizing guests in the activities, in the observation and participation in the farming process. Kari (2016) further described agro tourism from two perspectives and from the farmer's perspective and the tourist's perspective.

Farmer's perspective: "agro tourism is a range of activities, services and amenities provided by the farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate income for their business;" Tourist's perspective: "it is anything that connects tourists with the heritage, natural resources or culinary experience unique to the agricultural industry or a specific region of the country's rural area."

In summary agro tourism combines the components of hospitality, tourism and agriculture to make an attractive total tourist product/package for an interesting tourist destination.

Agro-tourism in Nigeria is a relatively new concept in the tourism industry, that even the government recognizes its importance and is working through the ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation in collaboration with private organizations to develop and promote agro-tourism in Nigeria.

Ukwa (African breadfruit) '*Treculia Africana*' is an agricultural product that is commonly eaten by the Igbos in the southeastern Nigeria, also called Afon in Yoruba, Ize in Benin, Jekiri, Sobo in Ijaw and Eding in Efik, it is a seed that is similar to the breadfruit eaten in the Caribbean and South pacific, but slightly different Okoh (2022). Walker and Matt (2009) describe it as a food material with other various uses, the fruits are hard and rich in fibre, with average weight of 8.5kg. The geographical distribution of African breadfruit extends through the West and Central Africa especially in the Southeastern part of Nigeria. The specie can grow below altitudes of 1500 metres i.e. 4900ft. The seeds are of particular interest because of their high nutritive value i.e. 17.7 % crude protein and 15.9% fat.

The challenges of ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation as a sustainable agro-tourism resource in the south-eastern part of Nigeria are many but a few are identified as shown in figure 1 below:



Figure 1: Challenges of Ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation as a sustainable agro tourism product
Source: Nuga and Ofodile (2010)

1.1 The concept of sustainable development and sustainability

Sustainable development is a way to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. Thus, protecting natural resources and enhancing the environment creating sustainable communities and a fairer world (Benson, 2014) citing London, school of economics and political science (2009).

Agro-tourism is seen as a tool for sustainable development. Agro-tourism is a method to develop unique tourists' product for integrated tourism that will contribute to the sustainable development of the south-eastern Nigeria in agro-tourism. Sustainable farming involves environmentally friendly farming methods that encourage crop and live stock production without endangering the natural system. The unique agro-tourism experience combines nature, culture and traditional practices to attract both local and international tourists (Kother and Perwaj, 2021).

The major aim of this research is to identify the prospects of agro tourism in the economic and social wellbeing of southeastern Nigerians through Ukwa (African breadfruits) plantation; other specific objectives include:

- i. To identify the environmental benefits of the sustainable development of Ukwa (African breadfruits) plantation in the south-east as an agro-tourism resource;
- ii. To identify the benefits of agro-tourism on agricultural practices of Ukwa (African breadfruits) for sustainable agriculture in the south-eastern Nigeria;
- iii. To examine the role of insecurity on the sustainability of agriculture and agro-tourism in the south-eastern Nigeria.

1.2 Hypothesis of the study

H₀: There is no significant relationship between agro-tourism and sustainable development of agriculture in the south-eastern Nigeria.

H₁: There is significant relationship between agro-tourism and sustainable development of agriculture in the south-Eastern Nigeria.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The gradual decline in agricultural activities in the South Eastern Nigeria has impacted negatively on the development of agriculture and agro tourism, this as a result of the high rural –urban migration among the populace to seek improved standard of living outside the area, leaving agricultural practices in the hands of the senior citizens, women folk, and some youths who have no other shot at another means of livelihood and has led to gradual loss of indigenous food resources like Ukwa (African breadfruits). The indiscriminate use of land resources in the southeastern Nigeria; farm lands and even forests that should be protected had being diverted for other uses such as houses, industrial properties etc (Nuga and Ofodile, 2010). The shift from agriculture and manufacturing to oil and gas has impacted negatively on the development of agriculture and reduced the availability of raw materials for the manufacturing industry.

Insecurity in the country in general has served as an impediment to the increased agricultural productivity and agro-tourism development in the area. All are responsible for the poor development of agro-tourism and the destination an unpopular agro-tourism destination.

1.4 Justification for the Study

Agro-tourism is considered as a form of “niche tourism” that can stimulate growth in agriculture and the tourism industry. Agro-tourism development can reduce poverty, empower the rural communities through job creation in both agricultural and nonagricultural sectors, generate revenues through tourist’s expenditures, entertain, and educate both local and international tourists (Ogbonmwan, 2019). Traveloregon (2019) categorized the benefits of agro-tourism as diversification and increased income for farm owners, contributing to the viability of the local economy, giving more value to existing property, strengthened opportunities for families, promoting the value of agriculture.

1.5 Uses of ukwa (African breadfruits)

The ukwa (African breadfruits) tree is a very useful tree plant, Nuga and Ofodile (2010) described the uses of ukwa (African breadfruits) in the following ways:

- **Provision of food:** the seeds are used as food materials most especially in the Southeastern Nigeria.
- **Wood producers:** the wood of the tree is used for roofing, carving, furniture making, pulp and paper and fibre board production
- **Traditional medicine:** the roots are used for malaria tonic and worm expeller for children, while the bark is used as treatment for cough, neck swelling and rheumatism, rashes etc.
- **Livestock feed:** the fruits-head pulp and brand of the product have been used as feed for farm animals etc.
- **Environmental function:** ukwa (African breadfruit) grows on a wide range of sites and is found at altitudes ranging between 0m to 1500m. The tree makes good use of marginal areas where other species may not be able to grow. The tree helps to control erosion and also helps in soil conservation as the tree is a good source of mulch. Nutrecul Agro forestry (2017) in the course of their research identified that ukwa (African Breadfruit) can be used for afforestation and reforestation processes.

1.6 Economic and social benefits of ukwa (African breadfruits) plantation to the

Southeastern region; as a tourism resource

- Job creation;
- Sustainable food culture;
- Extra cash flow for the farmers to invest into the farm business;
- Stimulate tourism dependent investments;
- Foreign exchange earner;

- Preserve and sustain cultural values;
- Improve standard of living through infrastructural revamp or improvement;
- To some extent stem the rural urban/cities migration;
- Promotes peace in the region;
- It instills feeling of value into the people in the area;
- Promotion of local products.

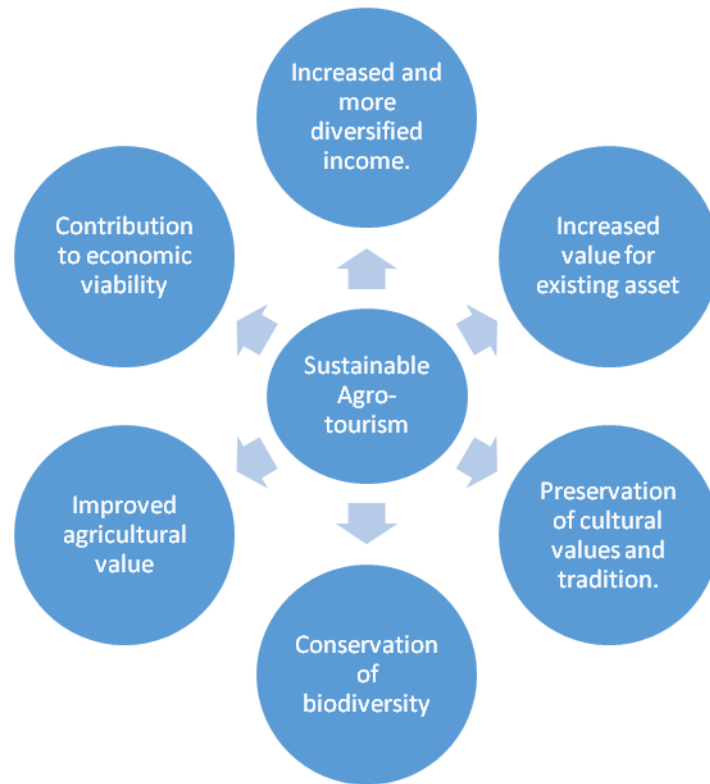


Figure 2: Benefits of Agro-tourism in the South -Eastern, Nigeria

Source: Traveloregon (2019)

1.7 Sustainable benefits of agro-tourism to Agriculture

School of Oriental and African Studies report (2021) Agro-tourism is gaining the most important footing in the farming community, as it not only offers added income to the farmers along with their farm production but also better sustainability across the globe. Agro-tourism has huge potential to provide good business opportunities to the farmers and also offer cost-effective and family-oriented recreation surroundings. Farm tourism, where people can experience a green, peaceful ambiance, rural lifestyle, and farm activities that the public cannot find simply in urban zones, is expected to boost the farm tourism industry. Nowadays, individuals are progressively finding innovative and new ways of entertainment and peace in their life and also finding alternate ways to go and stay in village areas, which is accelerating the market growth. Moreover, the rising interest of the new generation of people in farm activities and their eagerness to have some knowledge along with entertainment is beneficial to farm growth. Around the globe government initiatives are aimed at promoting farm tourism in their regional market to drive economic and employment growth. Additionally, most urban families and people are visiting agro-tourism farms where families get to spend valuable time together and understand the village culture, however, the increase in spending power and rising standards of living are some of the major factors accountable for attracting people to the agro-tourism industry that is fueling the market growth. Owing to rising income levels and improving business environment in the world, governments in different regions are introducing various initiatives to promote agro-tourism activities in their areas. Farmers are adopting adjoined business for additional revenue along with their regular farm activities, which will promote sustainability.

1.8 Insecurity on the sustainability of agro-tourism

One of the major prerequisites for tourism to thrive in any given destination is the safety and security of lives and properties both locals and tourists alike, (Agbebi, Alabi and Salako, 2019). Insecurity is described as a state of being subject to fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, harassment etc (Agbebi, Alabi and Salako, 2019). Insecurity in Nigeria is having a very negative impact on farming communities due to its endless disruption of farming activities thereby affecting food production in affected communities. The activities of herdsmen and other sundry groups have had a devastating effect on agriculture in the South-east. This will invariably affect agro-tourism negatively and the National tourism industry as a whole (Nwozor, Olarenwaju and Ake, 2019). Nwaagba et al (2020). Baje, (2022) cited insecurity as one of the factors that is impeding the country's tourism and agro-tourism sector from maximizing its potentials to the fullest. Insecurity is a major challenge to growth of Agro-Tourism as it has created fear in the minds of potential international tourists and domestic tourists also.

2.0 MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 MATERIAL

2.1.1 Study Area

The study area was South- Eastern Nigeria a densely populated area, with population of about 21million, Merem et al, (2019). The study areas consisted of the five Igbo speaking states in Nigeria namely Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, and Ebonyi states of which one (1) community each was selected purposively from the five Igbo States namely Anambra (Ihiala community), Imo (Aboh Mbaise Community), Abia (Umuhia community), Enugu (Nsukka community) and Ebonyi (Abakaliki Community). The study area and study group is a balanced representation of Igbo speaking people who the African breadfruit is a common staple. The size of the sample helped to elimination the constraints associated with a very large study area or group; the problems of cost of administrating the questionnaires and the need to eliminate repetition and redundancy.

2.1.2 Population of the Study

Table 1: Population Distribution of the Sample Area

<i>STATE</i>	<i>COMMUNITY</i>	<i>POPULATION COUNT</i>
ANAMBRA	Ihiala	87,796
IMO	Aboh Mbaise	194,779
ABIA	Umuhia	359, 230
ENUGU	Nsukka	309, 633
EBONYI	Abakaliki	198, 793

Sources: World Gazetteer (2007), National population commission. (2010), Gazette of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007), Gazette of the federal republic of Nigeria (2007), Ebonyi State Government population figures (2023)

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Research design

The research study was descriptive and exploratory in nature as previous research studies on agro-tourism were reviewed. Thus, questionnaires were administered on 500 respondents in the course of the research study which assisted the researchers in collecting relevant information on the subject matter.

2.2.2 The sample size of the study

The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the sample size of (500) five hundred respondents which comprised of randomly selected one hundred (100) respondents from each of the community, that consist of the

youths, those that have Ukwa farms, those that sell the produce as finished produce and semi finished produce, hospitality providers within the areas. The justification for sample size is taken from the consideration of cost effectiveness and the need to minimize ambiguity, redundancy and repetition. Thus, five hundred (500) were administered and all were returned representing 100% returned rate.

2.2.3 Data collection and analysis techniques

The respondents were guided to complete and return the instrument on the spot; data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using cumulative frequency count while correlation coefficient statistical method of SPSS was adopted for test of hypothesis of the study.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Table 2: Analysis on the acceptability of ukwa (African breadfruit) in the South-eastern Nigeria

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE (%)
HIGH	292	58.4%	58.4%
AVERAGE	112	22.4%	80.8%
LOW	66	13.2%	94%
NOT KNOWN	30	6%	100%
TOTAL	500		

Fieldwork; Obaji, Ndasule and Ikusemiju (2022)

Table 2 showed that there is a high acceptability of ukwa (African breadfruit) in the southeastern Nigeria. is not a popular venture in the area, people just have a few trees of the resource and it is already gradually going into extinction in the study area as a lot of respondents were not exactly familiar the research subject?

Table 3: Analysis of ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation as vehicle of developing a sustainable agro-tourism in the southeastern Nigeria.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE (%)
STRONGLY AGREED	247	49.4%	49.4%
AGREED	175	35%	84.4%
STRONGLY DISAGREED	65	13%	97.4%
DISAGREED	10	02%	99.4%
UNDECIDED	3	0.6%	100%
TOTAL	500	100%	

Fieldwork; Obaji, Ndasule and Ikusemiju (2022)

Table 3; showed that two hundred and forty seven (247) respondent strongly agreed that ukwa (African breadfruits) plantation can be a vehicle for a sustainable agro-tourism development, by increasing the additional income from non-farm activities for plantation owners through tourists expenditures on exploration in the property and hospitality services.

Table 4: Analysis of Development of ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation as a sustainable venture in improving economic and social wellbeing of the people in the southeastern Nigeria

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE (%)
STRONGLY AGREED	152	30.4%	30.4%
AGREED	190	38%	68.4%
STRONGLY DISAGREED	70	14%	82.4%
DISAGREED	58	11.6%	94%
UNDECIDED	30	6%	100%
TOTAL	500	100%	

Fieldwork; Obaji, Ndasule and Ikusemiju (2022)

Table 4 showed that seventy-six (76) respondents agreed that developing ukwa (African breadfruits) plantation as a sustainable tourism resource can be a sustainable venture in improving the economic and social wellbeing of the people in the study areas.

Table 5: Analysis of Ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation as a source of income generation medium in the southeastern Nigeria through its multiplier effect

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE (%)
STRONGLY AGREED	162	32.4%	32.4%
AGREED	215	43%	75.4%
STRONGLY DISAGREED	43	8.6%	84%
DISAGREED	22	4.4%	88.4%
UNDECIDED	58	11.6%	100%
TOTAL	500	100%	

Fieldwork; Obaji, Ndasule and Ikusemiju (2022)

Table 5 showed that eighty-six (86) respondents agreed that ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation can be a source income generating medium in the southeastern Nigeria, for not only farm owners but for everyone as a result o the multipliers effect of tourism.

Table 6: Analysis on the land use an impediment to development and growth of ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation in the southeastern Nigeria as a sustainable tourism resource.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE (%)
STRONGLY AGREED	230	46%	46%
AGREED	152	30.4%	76.4%
STRONGLY DISAGREED	53	10.6%	87%
DISAGREED	32	6.4%	93.4%
UNDECIDED	33	6.6%	100%
TOTAL	500	100%	

Fieldwork; Obaji, Ndasule and Ikusemiju (2022)

Table 6 showed that ninety-two (92) respondents strongly agreed that land use in the southeastern Nigeria is as an impediment to the development and growth of ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation in the southeastern Nigeria as a sustainable tourism resource.

Table 7: Analysis on increased ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation has the ability to stimulate tourist interests to the agro-tourism attraction in the southeastern Nigeria that will eventually increase more tourists' influx.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE (%)
STRONGLY AGREED	175	35%	35%
AGREED	175	35%	70%
STRONGLY DISAGREED	88	17.6%	87.6%
DISAGREED	50	10%	97.6%
UNDECIDED	12	2.4%	100%
TOTAL	500	100%	

Fieldwork; Obaji, Ndasule and Ikusemiju (2022)

Table 7 showed that seventy (70) respondents agreed that more ukwa (African breadfruit) plantation can stimulate tourist interest to the agro-tourism resource that it will eventually lead to increased tourist influx to the destination.

Table 8: Summary of correlation coefficient (r) tables of significant relationship between agro-tourism and sustainable development of agriculture in the south-eastern Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient correlation	p-value	Remark	Decision
Agro-Tourism	0.809**	0.000	H ₁ accepted	Significant
SDA	0.809**	0.00	H ₁ accepted	Significant

*Correlation is significant at 0.05, ** correlation is significant 0.01

Key; S = significant, NS = not significant, SDA = Sustainable Development of Agriculture

P < 0.01; H₀ is rejected (significant) but P > 0.01 = H₀ is accepted (not significant).

P < 0.05; H₀ is rejected (significant) but P > 0.05 or equal 0.05 = H₁ is accepted (not significant).

3.1 Summary of findings

Based on the table above; there is significant relationship between agro-tourism and sustainable development of agriculture in the south-eastern Nigeria with Ukwa (African breadfruit) as a sustainable agro-tourism resource.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1 Conclusion

In view of the research findings it can be said that ukwa (African Breadfruit) an agro-tourism resource can become a viable niche in tourism industry and welcome development in the southeastern Nigeria, because it will be beneficial to the people, the environment and the government and entire nation, which will be a boost to economic development and social wellbeing. If Ukwa (African Breadfruit) as an agro-tourism resource is sustainably encouraged through participation from both private players and government it will yield the desired result.

4.2 Recommendations

The researchers therefore recommend as follow:

- Nigerian Government also initiate programmes aimed at improving and developing agro-tourism activities just as it has been done by the U.S, Canadian Government etc in order to drive economic and employment growth in the region.
- There should be underlying objectives in whatever agro-tourism promotion initiative the Government is introducing and within a specific timeline for the manifestation of the objective benefits for the good all.
- * Since the benefits accrued from a well established and flourishing agro-tourism industry is beneficial to all and sundry, individual and farmer groups should come together as common business for additional revenue towards sustainable agro-tourism business.
- * Research by agricultural research institutes to develop improved specie(s) of ukwa (African breadfruit) so that planting can increase and also adequate conservation measures should be initiated using sustainable policy structure that will enhance the conservation of the resource.
- * Easy access to funding for the businesses at reduced interest rate should be made available by agricultural and commercial banks.
- * The government should ensure adequate security for lives and properties.

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