
EFFECT OF TRANSPORTATION ON RURAL TOURISM AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN KAIAMA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of transportation in rural tourism and economic growth of in Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study identified available rural tourism resources in Kaiama Local Government area, determined impact of transportation on rural tourism and economic growth, and identified challenges of rural tourism in the study area. Convenient sampling method was used to draw 105 respondents from rural communities; while judgmental sampling was used to draw 55 respondents from other critical interest holders (20 transporters, 15 customers, 15 Village Heads and 5 Kaiama Local Government Tourism Committee members). Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis with the aid of SPSS. The results showed that there are numerous tourism resources in Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State; including the Annual Gani festival, Ancient settlements, Old Crocodiles. The results also shows that transportation improve the standard of living of the rural people, enhance catering business, and ease movement of tourist to destination. The results further showed that challenges facing growth of rural tourism include improper implementation of government policies on rural tourism development and poor accessibility to tourist sites. The study concludes that Kaiama Local Government Area is blessed with several rural tourism resources which the residents are aware of; and recommends that available rural tourism resources should be harnessed to allow for the realization of the maximum dividends that could be achieved through exploitation, and that transportation infrastructure should be given deserved attention to allow for growth of rural tourism and enhanced economic growth.

Keywords: Economic growth, Gani festival, aiama Local Government Area, rural tourism,

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is endowed with numerous cultural resources largely situated in rural communities. Most of these resources existed without the rural dwellers recognizing their significance. The presence and perhaps passion for historical, traditional and cultural heritage, traditional and historical relics, monuments and archeological properties, arts and crafts products and exhibition, and others has paved way and indeed strengthened and encouraged cultural and rural tourism activities that enhance economic growth.

Cultural tourism is the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experience to satisfy their cultural needs (Richards,

2011). The significance of transportation to cultural tourism cannot be over emphasized as it makes it easy for people to visit destinations and derive experience and excitement. Cultural resources are largely situated in rural destination, save a few that exist in towns and urban centres. The urban centres that host cultural relics were actually former rural areas that metamorphosed into urban areas due to rural tourism. Transportation and transportation facilities constitute a major component of tourism and is essential for rural destination visit and perhaps, growth of rural tourism and economic growth.

Transportation infrastructure (good road network and reliable transportation facilities) is essential to tourism growth and economic growth (Ighodaro, 2008). The quality of journey cannot be disassociated from quality of road network, transport facility as well as the quality of attractions to visit for leisure (Nworge & Oluwalaiye, 2012). The collapse of transportation infrastructure, due to lack of investment, poor maintenance and overuse of existing roads, will further restrain the transportation boost required for visitors experience, speedy rural tourism and indeed, economic growth.

Osinubi (2006) defined transportation as the movement of people, goods and services from one place to another. The extent of accessibility of an area determines the inflow of tourist to such sites. Recognizing transportation as an important ingredient for rural tourism development will accelerate the transformation in the transport industry and further promote and develop rural tourism for greater economic yield. However, poor service, poor scheduling, unnecessary delays associated with transportation service which might emanate from bad road or poor state of the transport facility could seriously affect a passenger's perception and lead to regrets about a trip.

Transport is the transport of passengers and goods by means of wheeled vehicles specially designed to run along railways or railroads. Rail transport is part of the logistics chain, which facilitates the international trading and economic growth in most countries and it is an energy-efficient and capital-intensive means of mechanized land transport and is a component of logistics (Nwanze, 2002). Though rail transportation is not a common means of transportation in rural areas rather, transporting people and goods to majorly urban centers in the Nigerian contexts. In Nigeria, the road transport sub sector plays a dominant role in the internal movement of passengers and goods accounting for over 95% of overland movement of passengers and freight (NISER, 2003).

The focus of this study was to identify available rural tourism components in Kaiama Local Government area, determine the impact of transportation in the development and economic growth and finally to investigate the challenges associated with the growth of rural tourism in Kaiama as it is disheartening that most rural roads remain erosion routes, extremely tight, ungraded and with pot holes as if they were deliberately dogged due to poor maintenance culture and as a result making the roads not accessible to transporters with ease and subsequently, leading to unbearable hike in the cost of transportation and adversely discouraged and reduces the rate of patronage to rural tourism destinations. It is paramount to note that tourist safety and comfort in the course of visit for leisure or whatever purpose to rural communities is an essential element.

Tourists expect to be transported safely, quickly and comfortably at moderate costs to their destinations before a trip could be termed memorable (Nwankwo, 2005). Several regimes at all levels failed to demonstrated reasonable concern and appreciative effort in the repair and general maintenance of rural roads, and this problem led to high cost on vehicle maintenance cost and transport fares and ultimately affected rural destination visit.

Transportation is a very crucial component in rural tourism development and as such, study of such magnitude became imperative as the findings would contribute to knowledge as it provide information on rural tourism components with particular emphasis to Kaiama Local Governments, reveals the effects of transportation on rural tourism development and as well, the challenges associated with rural tourism

development that future researchers in the field could relate to and would also serve as a policy instrument for policy makers and indeed, other stakeholders in the field and the society at large.

METHODOLOGY

This study was exploratory in nature. The study was conducted in Kaiama local government of Kwara State. The occupation of the people is majorly farming and partly civil servants. Kaiama is recognized as a home of agriculture and tourism with a renowned cultural festival known as Gani festival that is usually celebrated yearly. Transporters, customers, Districts and Village Heads of the emirate including Kaiama Local Government Tourism Committee members and residents of rural areas constitute the study population within which samples of 105 respondents were drawn for the study. Data were generated through primary source with the aid of a well-structured, open and closed ended questionnaire, Likert scale format with weighed average of 5.

Convenient sampling method was used to draw 50 respondents from the rural communities based on the fact that majority of the residents were in the rural communities of Kaiama Local Government and were aware of the issues related to rural tourism. Judgmental sampling method was used to select 55 other respondents from the rest categories. The composition includes 20 transporters, 15 customers, 15 amongst Districts and Village Heads and 5 from Kaiama Local Government Tourism Committee members. However, only 100 questionnaire was retrieved and used for analysis. Data collected from the study were subjected to statistical computation with the aid of Special Package for Social Science (SPSS) in frequencies and percentages, with mean coefficients and further presented in tables for better understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Rural Tourism Components in Kaiama Local Government

Variables	Not Available	Available	Neutral
Annual Gani Festival	9.6	90.4	-
Ozia rock, Kilasigbe, Old crocodile (Bakade)	20.2	71.2	8.6
Local farm settlements across various rural areas	-	83.3	7.7
Ancient settlements like Gwanabe, Zekana, Kabarun, Wajibe work kugiji, etc	-	76.9	23.1

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 1 reveals the available rural tourism components in Kaiama Local Government. The results show that annual Gani festival is the most acknowledged rural tourism component with the highest number of respondents while Ozia rock, Kilasigbe, and Old Crocodile were the least acknowledged components. Other rural tourism components included local farm settlements across various rural areas and lastly, ancient settlements like Gwanabe, Zekana, Kabarun, Wajibe work kugiji. This signifies that Kaiama Local Government is endowed with several rural tourism components that were highly recognized and aware of their presence in the local government area. With these developments, the local government could be a centre for rural tourism development and indeed economic growth through the activities that take place in the above rural components, particularly if the below listed challenges could be resolved.

Table 2: Impact of Transportation on Rural Tourism and Economic growth

Variables	Very Effective	Effective	Undecided	Ineffective	Completely Ineffective	Mean	Remark
It ease the conveyance of tourist to destinations	50.0	42.2	7.8	-	-	4.41	3 rd
It enhance the acquisition of souvenirs	19.2	43.3	-	16.8	20.7	3.14	6 th
It helps in promoting the image of rural areas		24.4	13.3		62.2	3.06	7 th
It promote trading	48.9	23.3	-	16.7	6.7	3.21	5 th
It improve the standard of living of the rural people	84.4	15.6	-	-	-	4.87	1 st
It boast catering business	67.7	32.3	-	-	-	4.55	2 nd
It aid the development of rural roads	39.6	60.4	-	-	-	4.13	4 th

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 2 reveals the effect of transportation on rural tourism development in Kaiama Local Government area. It shows that the major effect of transportation on rural tourism development include improved standard of living, enhanced business activities, ease of movement, development of transportation infrastructure, among others. This suggests that transportation is crucial to rural tourism and economic growth and development.

Table 3: Challenges associated with growth of rural tourism and Economic growth

Variables	Rating					Mean	Remark
	SA	A	U	D	SD		
Poor accessibility	44.0	36.7	10.0	-	-	4.66	2 nd
Poor documentation of rural tourism activities	21.3	62.4	7.6	-	-	3.87	4 th
improper implementation of government policies for rural tourism development	74.6	16.4	-	-	-	4.85	1 st
Absence of Support from relevant agencies	31.3	22.2	9.1	12.4	16.0	3.51	5 th
Lack of enlightenment on rural tourism development matters	67.0	21.6	11.3	-	-	4.59	3 rd

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, U- Undecided, D-Disagree, SA- Strongly Disagree

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 3 reveals the challenges associated with the growth of rural tourism and economic growth in the study area. The major challenge identified was improper implementation of government policies for rural tourism development, while the least challenge was absence of support from relevant agencies. Other challenges include poor accessibility, poor documentation of tourism activities and lastly, lack of enlightenment on rural tourism development matters. All the challenges highlighted has significant mean coefficient which signifies that they all existed as a constraints to rural tourism and economic growth in Kaiama Local Government Area.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on identifying the role of transportation in enhanced rural tourism and economic growth of Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, In view of the results obtained, the study concludes that Kaiama Local Government Area is blessed with several rural tourism components ranging from annual festival, local farm settlements and ancient settlements, and that residents of the area are aware of the presence of these tourist sites in their domain. The study also concludes that transportation (road and water) is crucial to the growth of rural tourism as it eases movement of people to

tourist destinations, promote the image of communities, and boosts commercial activities, hence, hold economic benefits that can be harnessed; and that rural tourism in Kaiama Local Government is faces numerous challenges that serves to constrain the realization of the maximum benefits possible, from the exploitation of rural tourism components.

Thus, the study recommends that available rural tourism components should harnessed to allow for the realization of the maximum dividends that could be achieved through exploitation. This will enable the realization of economic benefit in the area. The study also recommends that transportation routes and facilities should be given deserved attention to facilitate growth of rural tourism and enhance economic growth within the study area. The study further recommends that relevant agencies of government and other interest bodies should take required action to neutralize the challenges to rural tourism as identified in this study; so as to enable the maximum actualization of rural tourism goals and promote economic gains in the area.

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