

A Synergy Approach as A Viable Option for Small-Scale Tourism Development and Economic Diversification of Massange, Marhai and Yashi Communities of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Yaro, Obadiah Otso

Department of General Studies, Isa Mustapha Agwai 1 Polytechnic, Lafia
Nasarawa State

Corresponding author: Obedoyaro@gmail.com

Angbashim, Bridget Bitrus

Department of Leisure & Tourism Management, Isa Mustapha Agwai 1 Polytechnic, Lafia
Nasarawa State

Bridget.ann.Sunday@gmail.com

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to identify tourism resources of Nasarawa state, investigate its potential benefits as alternative sources of income to local communities in the study area, and to show how small-scale tourism activities can be coordinated productively in the study area in order to fill the gap created in some previous work of similar nature. This work puts economic development in proper perspective as a shared role. It therefore explores the concept of economic diversification as it relates to low-income economies by calling on the government of Nasarawa State and the private sector as well as the local communities concern to harness the existing tourism potentials in their domain through public-private partnership strategy of development. Adequate and reliable information relating to this study were sourced from library and internet resources, tourism sites visit and inspection, questionnaire and interview. Data were then analyzed descriptively with the aid of distribution tables and charts. Meanwhile job openings to the locals and declining rural-urban migration are among the expected potential benefits of this work. This paper also recommends cooperative approach as a viable option for small-scale tourism development, and as an innovation and departure from the old conventional tourism development. More importantly too, small-scale tourism is emphasized deliberately so as to keep tourism development low to the levels that the environment can carry.

Keywords: *Synergy, Development, Diversification, Local communities, Potentials, Small-scale*

Introduction

Nasarawa State is a compendium of diverse communities, some of which are urban and others rural. Of interest is the fact that the development potentials of the State are domiciled in the rural communities. The Farin-Ruwa axis of the State has a unique tourist site (forest, rivers, weather, mountains, valleys and their settlement patterns). The locals have a diversified cultural heritage embodying their traditions, religions and belief system, local dishes, festivals and ceremonies. These are all potentials that can be developed and transformed into tourism assets for job creation and income generation.

Small scale tourism is a concept adapted from cottage industry; an industry where the creation of products and services is often home-based, unique, distinctive and usually not mass-produced. While the concept of cottage tourism is rarely used in tourism, small-scale tourism, rural tourism and community – based tourism are the common names in tourism industry. Small-scale tourism, as the name implies is tourism activities conducted in small-scale, done especially in the rural area. Rural tourism includes any form of tourism that show cases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience (scheme of rural tourism 2007). Small scale tourism is undoubtedly acknowledged as one of the ways through which the gains of tourism can reach the local population. It is believed that by involving the locals in tourism through community-based initiatives, their economic status would be uplifted; both at individual and house hold levels. More so, these community-based initiatives carry the potential to diversify local economy and thereby contributing to the process of rural development (Agbu, Angbashim & Yerima 2021).

Statement of Problem

Nasarawa state has a lot of tourist potentials domiciled in rural areas of Farin-Ruwa Development Area of Nasarawa State yet to be harnessed for any economic benefit owing probably to negligence on the part of government, private sector and the local communities or lack of adequate information on how small-scale tourism activity can be coordinated. Previous studies on tourism like the one embarked upon by Bashayi, Angbashim and Dayang (2022) in the State for example, focused on large scale tourism which is capital intensive and out of the reach of the poor rural dwellers whose capital is barely enough for cottage tourism. The inhabitants of the study area are mostly farmers whose vocation are seasonal and practiced only during the raining season. This therefore needs to be complemented with cottage tourism practice which is all year round. Although some previous studies were conducted on cottage tourism benefits in the local communities of Nasarawa State (Agbu, Angbashim and Yerima 2021), they lacked information or approach on how cottage tourism activity can be coordinated in the study area.

Justification of the Study

- i. This research will produce findings that will lead to recommendations for improvement in small-scale tourism development in the study area.

- ii. The result of this work will definitely serve as a reference material for further researches on similar and related areas.
- iii. This work will be of interest to potential developers of small-scale tourism in search of the where-about of tourism potentials in the State.
- iv. Particularly, this study will go a long way in helping cottage tourism developers in detecting challenges associated with tourism industry, and in helping them to address the problems.
- v. Interestingly too, this research will rid the locals in the study area of their aged-long ignorance and negligence by exposing them to the potential benefits of small-scale tourism development as an alternative source of revenue.
- vi. This study will also help the government and the policy makers to adopt strategies that would lead to the overall improvement in the tourism industry and sustainable rural development in Nigeria.
- vii. On the whole, this study will also help the general public to be creative, industrious and self-reliant in the light of the adverse effects of oil subsidy removal.

Aim/Objectives of The Study

This research aims at examining how the potentials of small-scale tourism development can be coordinated in order to enhance the living standard of local communities of Nasarawa State, especially in the study area. The following therefore are the research objectives.

- i. To identify the tourism potentials of the study area.
- ii. To create a framework of synergy for the harnessing of small-scale tourism in the study area.
- iii. To state the likely benefits of this framework of synergy to the stakeholders.

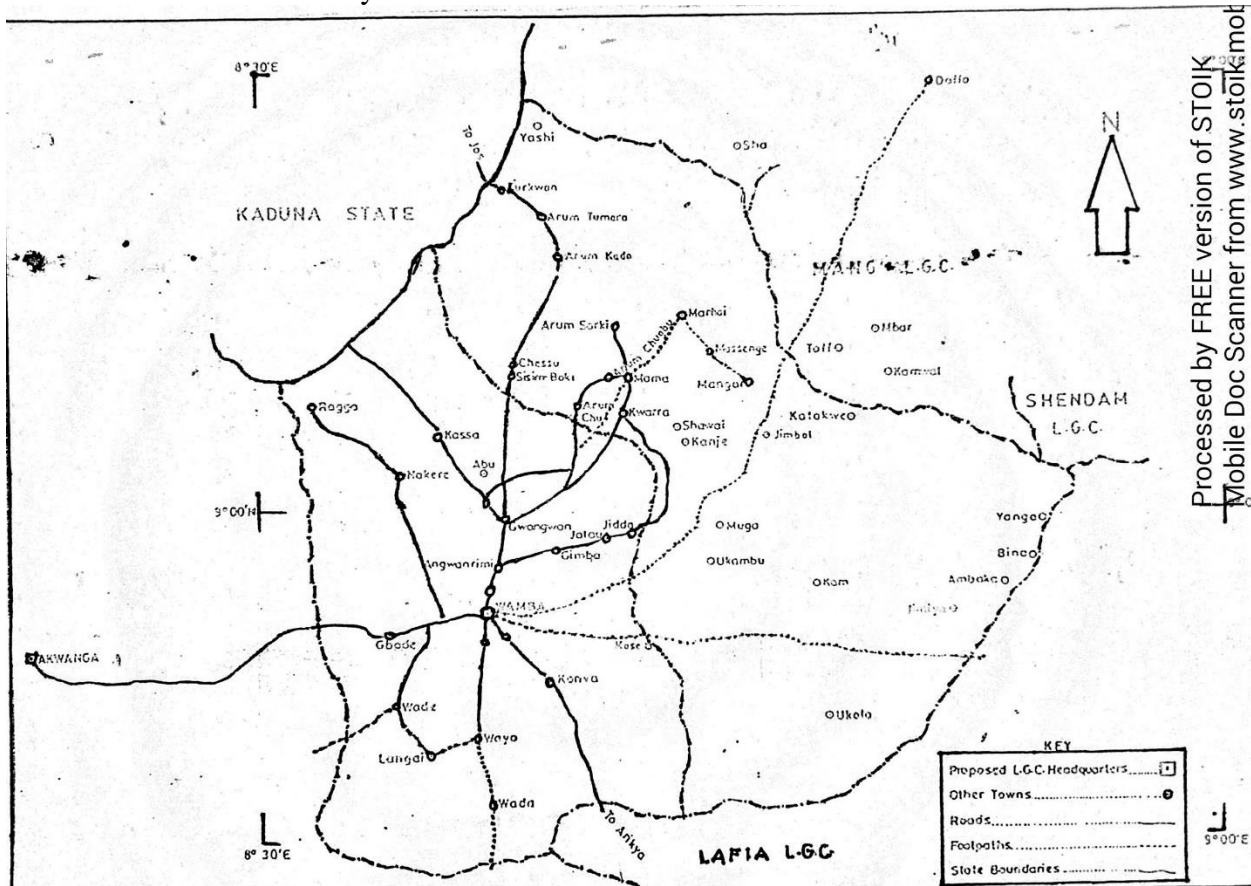
Major Research Questions

- i. What are the tourism potentials of the study area?
- ii. In what possible ways could the government synergize with the private sector and the locals to harness the tourism attractions in the study area?
- iii. What are the likely benefits of this framework of synergy to the stakeholders?

The Study Area

Massange, Marhai and Yashi are found in **Farin-Ruwa Development Area, which** is located in Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The Development Area was formerly a chiefdom called Mama Chiefdom, which later became a new Development Area, now known as Farin-Ruwa with its headquarters in Kwarra in 2002 by the first Executive Governor of Nasarawa State, Alhaji (Dr) Abdullahi Adamu, Sarkin Yakin Keffi. The Area lies in the western escarpment of the Jos Plateau. It is a very hilly area and was attractive to many small tribes who wanted to escape from inter-tribal wars. The main tribes of the area are Kantana, Arum, Chessu, Yashi, Turkwan and Kulere. The Arum tribe are said to have migrated to the area from Langtang through Bokkos to Mama. Kantana migrated from Bauchi through Dengi to Mama. The Yashi were Birom while the Kulere came from Kulere in Plateau State. The six main tribes of the area speak different languages and each manages its affairs under its village head. The Area is the home of farin-ruwa

falls, which is one of the highest waterfalls in Nigeria and is located along the boundary of Plateau State and Nasarawa State (Ayih, 2003). The economic activities of the Farin-Ruwa Development Area are predominantly farming, livestock herding, fishing and hunting. Tourism is also a potential activity of the Area. There are relevant structures like rocks, mountains, caves and many more monuments that tourists may want to observe.



A map of Wamba LGA showing Yashi, Massange & Marhai communities

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Arial coordinate of Yashi Sarki.



Arial coordinate of Massange community

Method of data collection

In an attempt to answer the research questions in line with the objectives of the research work, the researchers employed the following methods of data collection: **Local Communities survey** by which Marhai, Massenge and Yashi communities were selected and visited, not in any particular order however. These communities are relatively accessible and richer in tourism potentials compared to others not selected, hence their preference to others; **Documentary Survey**: Here, data were sourced from textbooks, journals, unpublished scholarly works, and official government publications; archives of the Nasarawa State Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as its information, culture and tourism counterpart and relevant websites. This was done to enable us present a panoramic view of the tourism potentials of the study area; **One-On-One Interview**: Few selected youths and elders of the host communities, both within and diaspora were contacted

and their opinions were sought on the best way to coordinate small-scale tourism for the benefit of the government of Nasarawa State, the private sector and the host communities. These selected individuals were drawn from various fields of endeavor comprising traditional rulers, business managers, agricultural experts, academia, politicians, hoteliers etc. The choice of this over focus group discussion is to promote independent opinion devoid of influence that usually characterizes the latter; **Structured Questionnaire:** Questionnaires were served to very few selected professionals who are not necessarily indigenous to the selected communities of the study area on their perceived opinions on possible areas of small-scale tourism development in the host communities of study given their tourism potentials; and **Google Mapping:** The use of this device is to enable us take coordinates of the area visited.

Methods of Data Analysis

Here, two methods were employed: **Contextual Analysis;** under this method of analysis, we were guided by such environmental factors as taste and preferences, historical and cultural setting as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the host and local communities; **Descriptive Statistics:** Data organization and analysis were made possible with the aid of descriptive statistics where schedules and charts are being used.

Conceptual Framework

According to Southgate & Sharpley (2002), a successful tourism development must be planned and managed responsibly. Liu (2006) posits that cottage tourism is a complement rather than a competing agent for resources. As a complement, cottage tourism operates in small scale, requires a minimum sum of capital, proper packaging and branding and intensive marketing strategies among several other variables. Meanwhile the modern theory of economic development sees economic development in terms of reducing poverty, income inequality and high unemployment through a carefully selected strategies of development of which economic diversification is one (Hardwick et al (1996). For low-income countries, Usman and Landry (2021) said that the process of economic development comprises diversification – a transition from subsistence agriculture, natural resources extraction and other forms of primary production toward value-added manufacturing, services and other forms of secondary production. In other words, economic diversification is directly linked to economic development, characterized by rising per capital incomes, reduced poverty levels and industrial transformation. And as a shared task, economic development welcomes synergy as a vital approach to development. Synergy is an approach to development that involves among several things combining the resources and skills of different group of people and organizations to achieve a common goal. Synergy, according to Pedercini et al (2019) can be applied to various fields of human endeavors including sustainable development, community-academic partnerships, project management and solar energy development. A careful assessment of the above assertion and theory shows that tourism development is not just a complement of agriculture, it is also a shared task between the government, the private sector and the host community in a well-defined synergy which this research seeks to address.

Small scale tourism is a concept adapted from cottage industry; an industry where the creation of products and services is often home-based, unique, distinctive and usually not mass-produced. While the concept of cottage tourism is rarely used in tourism, small-scale tourism, rural tourism and community - based tourism are the common names in tourism industry. Small-scale tourism, as the name implies is tourism activities conducted in small-scale, done especially in the rural area. Rural tourism includes any form of tourism that show cases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience (scheme of rural tourism 2007). Cottage tourism merges the concept of small-scale, rural and community-based tourism and provides a clearer portrayal of activities related to traditional food, culture and heritage, handcraft, chalet and home stay operated in small-scale in local areas by a group of community intended for tourists' experience.

The decline of traditional rural industries such as in agriculture, mining, and forestry over the past three decades has required many rural communities to explore alternative means to strengthen their economic base (Allen, Hafer, Long, & Perdue 1993; Gilbert 1989; Long, Perdue, & Allen 1990). Liu (2006) indicates that tourism is an option to enhance rural lifestyles and to induce positive changes in the distribution of income in underprivileged regions given the fact that tourism has comparative advantage effects in income and employment generation.

Community is one component for understanding community development for tourism development but is also important to appreciate how community affects local tourism development. Local communities have a key role in tourism development as they are crucial in providing a good environmental condition for tourists. Local communities are a basic element of modern tourism development. They are the focal point for the supply of accommodation, catering, information, transport, facilities and services for tourism development (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). The term community can have a specific geographic meaning with a clearly defined spatial boundary and area and also refers to groups of people with a common interest (Chapman & Kirk, 2001). According to Bradshaw (2008, p. 6) Community as defined has historically shared boundaries one's geography of residence. For the purpose of this study, community is defined as a group of individuals living or working within the same geographic area with some shared cultures or common interests. This geographical definition of community is essential to understand how community development is linked to the ability of a community to improve tourism development. The role of the local community in influencing the tourism development activities are becoming clearer (Hall et al., 2005). McIntyre, et al. (1993, p. 50) states that local communities must organize themselves at all levels to play a more effective role in development, and interact with government and role-players at all levels. They must be able to identify potential tourism resources and attractions within their communities and support responsible tourism and community development. They should be eager participants in tourism decision making with respect to major tourism development for communities. Kepe (2004, p. 45) states that local communities should play a proactive role to ensure positive benefits from tourism. Local communities should work closely with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) to educate others in the community concerning tourism development projects.

There are numerous definitions of “community”. In understanding the meaning of community development, the study needs first to be clear about the term of “community” itself. The definition of community is highly problematic and there are many definitions (Tesoriero & Ife, 2006). For most tourism purposes, the concept of community often hinged upon a common location. However, it has also been used to refer to groups that are not geographically determined but share common characteristics or interests. For the assessing the level of tourism development, a community can be any existing or potential network of individuals, groups and organizations that share or have the potential to share common concerns, interest and goals (Bush et al., 2002). According to Dalton et al. (2001), notion of community tends to falls within two major classifications. One a territorial conception of community based on geographic location and the other, relational conception of community based on social network relationships. Ivanovic (2009, p. 14) states that “Sociology use two approaches in defining community. First, it regards community as a territorial concept, and second, it regards community as a relational concept”. As a territorial concept, a community can be defined and delineated on a map. A community has a name, borders, landmarks, types of people and recognizable symbols. Community as a relational concept represents people who are tied together by communication, friendship and association (Ivanovic, 2009). The term community is most commonly defined as residents contained by geographical boundaries, local zoning, or politics; the ethnicity of its residents or the resources or industry established in the area (Chaskin et al.,2001; Mancini et al., 2003). The local community play a fundamental role in the lives of its members by promoting their physical, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Mancini et al., 2003). The operational definition of “community” (Chaskin et al.,2001) is a geographical area that assumes a commonality of circumstances and identity among its people and contains functional units for the delivery of goods and services. In contrast, a “community” refers to a group of people who are associated in some way. However, the most common definition of community is based on geographic location (Mahoney et al., 2007).

Presentation of Data with Possible Areas of Synergy

Table 1: Distribution of Tourism Potentials with Possible Areas of Synergy in Massange

Types of Tourist Attraction	Business/Facilities to be Provided
*Farin-Ruwa water falls.	*Tour guiding
*Mayes water falls	*Mountain climbing gears
*Mann stream (a major source of drinking water)	*Telecommunication gadgets
*Fluctuating weather (cold/hot weather)	*Picnic equipment
*Prevalence of wilds such as monkeys, guinea fowls and reptiles of all sorts.	*Camping facilities
*Forest reserve	*Electricity (hydro & solar)
*Mixed vegetation (locust bean trees, coral reeves, ogba, iroko, obeche, etc)	*Mini museum of artifacts
	*Local handcrafts making
	*Home cooked eatery with home cooked dishes
	*Food processing plants

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Agrarian (Cassava, guinea corn, maize, banana, hungry rice, palm trees, soya beans) *Bee farming for honey *Fishing activities *Charcoal making * Rocky/Relief features (Haw-mambaul rock, Massange hills.) *Palm oil production *Orchards of assorted tree-crops (palm trees, bananas oranges) *Artisanal mining of precious stones (tin, columbite, barytes) *Government presence (Primary and secondary schools, police station, customs office, national grid, cottage hospital and primary health care, chalets) *A major market (kasuwan alamis) which opens every Thursday *Local dishes (shangam made of beans, beneseed and palm oil; Hidmatukem, a local soup) *Cultural practices (Burmagbin which holds yearly after harvest; Burmafur fishing festival; Akandi massange day, during which different cultures, talents, local dishes and masquerade dance are displayed) *Cafteria services (Buka, beer parlor, canteen, restaurants, kiosks) *A fairly large inhabitants (4000 – 5000 population) with kind and hospitable disposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Borehole/water processing plants *Fruit juice processing *Bike/tricycle transportation *Day-care/kindergarten *Private secondary schools *Private clinics *Sawing mill/timber-shade *Wholesaling of food crops *Storage facilities *Accommodation facilities (event/conference hall, charlets/one-bedroom apartments, etc) *Hotel/tourist resort operations *Traditional health-care Centre *Vigilante security outfit *Operation of bookshops and provisions stores *Community-based banking *Production and sales of tourist images/sites *Furniture and allied wood manufacturing
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Source: Authors survey/questionnaire, 2023

Table 2: Distribution of Tourism Potentials with Possible Areas of Synergy in Marhai

Types of Tourist Attraction	Business/Facilities to Be Provided
<p>Marhai ancient monuments *Farin-Ruwa water falls (Hamichach, in local dialect) * Marhai Ancient Settlement (Gufur Karam) * Ndukon mambun (The shrine of Karam) * Marhai Forest Reserve (Kuf Makaram) * GOR HILL * The masquerade of karam *The ancient town hall of Karam (Achuk) *The ancient kulere baby carrier (Hurumb mbon).</p> <p>Other attractions of Marhai *Agricultural products (cereals {guinea corn, maize, hungry rice}, banana, cassava, palm fruits, orchards of mangoes and oranges, local beans {sheru and wake koto}, bee farming, palm oil) *Local dish {tuwon acha, made of hungry rice; yidmatuk, a local soup} *The inhabitants are majorly kulere tribe with few other settlers- fulanis, birom, ibos etc *Public utilities (1primary school, 1primary health care, 1secondary school, national grid, access road. *A community of 7000 – 10000 people *Cultural practices – Marhai cultural day during which various traditional dishes and cultural dancers are showcased. *Timber woods – obeche, mahogany, iroko, malina etc, all within the forest reserve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Tour guiding *Mountain climbing gears *Telecommunication gadgets *Picnic equipment *Camping facilities *Electricity (hydro & solar) *Mini museum of artifacts *Local handcrafts making *Home cooked eatery with home cooked dishes *Food processing plants *Borehole/water processing plants *Fruit juice processing *Bike/tricycle transportation *Day-care/kindergarten *Private secondary schools *Private clinics *Sawing mill/timber-shade *Furniture and allied wood manufacturing *Wholesaling of food crops *Storage facilities *Accommodation facilities (event/conference hall, charlets/one-bedroom apartments, etc) *Hotel/tourist resort operations *Traditional health-care Centre *Vigilante security outfit *Operation of bookshops and provisions stores *Community-based banking *Production and sales of tourist images/sites

Source: Authors survey/questionnaire, 2023; A guide on Marhai monuments, 2017

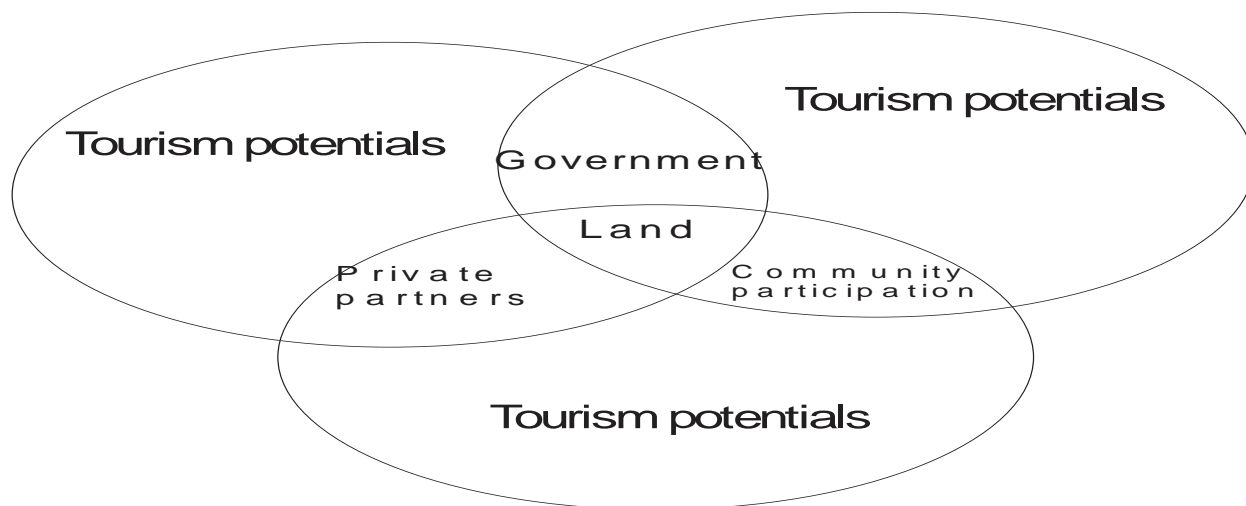
Table 3: Distribution of Tourism Potentials with Possible Areas of Synergy in Yashi Sarki

Types of Tourist Attraction	Business/Facilities to Be Provided
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Rocky environment *Different species of merchantable trees (Gmalena, teak, mahogany, iroko, obeche etc) *Plateau weather (cold weather) *Root crops (water yam, coco-yam, cassava) *Grains/cereals (maize, guinea corn, hungry rice, brownish beans) *Honey production (bee farming) *Local dishes (tuwon acha,tuwon masara, tuwon dawa, buza (white horse drink) made of hungry rice and honey, kunu tashi made of guinea corn and honey) *Cultural activities (masquerade dance, Yashi day for various cultural display) *Livestock rearing (goats, pigs) *Cultivation of banana of different species *Palm trees plantation *Palm oil production *Peace and hospitality *Deposits of solid minerals (tin-ore and columbite) *An incusive population size of 3000 – 4000 people *Blessed with few government facilities (1 Primary school, 1primary health care centre and 1 secondary school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Tour guiding *Furniture and allied wood manufacturing *Mountain climbing gears *Telecommunication gadgets *Picnic equipment *Camping facilities *Electricity (hydro &solar) *Mini museum of artifacts *Local handcrafts making *Home cooked eatery with home cooked dishes *Food processing plants *Borehole/water processing plants *Ranching facilities *Fruit juice processing *Bike/tricycle transportation *Day-care/kindergarten *Private secondary schools *Private clinics *Sawing mill/timber-shade *Wholesaling of food crops *Storage facilities *Accommodation facilities (event/conference hall, charlets/one-bedroom apartments, etc) *Hotel/tourist resort operations *Traditional health-care Centre *Vigilante security outfit *Horticulture *Operation of bookshops and provisions stores *Community-based banking *Production and sales of tourist images/sites *Solid minerals exploration equipment *Quarrying facilities

Source: Authors survey/questionnaire, 2023

Discussion of Findings

A tripartite synergy model for small-scale tourism development in massange, marhai & yashi communities



Source: Authors' improvisation, 2023

In the synergy model above, there are three principal actors whose roles are complementary rather than exclusive. The actors include the government, the private sector and the community participants.

First of all, the government as the lead actor forms the focal point of discussion as the first owner of the land and the resources thereof based on the Land Use Act of 1978. The tourism potentials can only be harnessed when government create the enabling environment for private sector participation. As the focal point, government will ensure cost minimization, efficiency in management and protection against environmental degradation and technology obsolescence.

Secondly, the private investors will ensure steady stream of income, provision of skilled workers, access to technology and innovation in the development of tourism potentials and creation of employment.

Thirdly, the inhabitants of the host communities will be employed and this will lead to improvement of their economy and their standard of living.

The table below specifies how the three actors could synergize on the basis of their competencies and comparative cost advantage given the tourism and allied potentials of the host communities.

Table 4 showing specific roles of the principal actors in the host communities

Tourism/Allied potentials	Government Responsibility	Private Sector Responsibility	Community Participation
Tourism resources	Provision of electricity, security, wildlife park, sensitization and roads network as well as siting of key government institutions in the host communities.	Construction of hotels and other hospitality facilities, mounting of mobile telecommunication gadgets, building of estates and hostels, hiring of skilled and unskilled labor.	Provision of labor and other payable services.
Water resources	Construction of dams for hydro-power generation	Provision of irrigation facilities, irrigation farming system, fish processing, boring of boreholes and mounting of water processing plants, boating as a means of transportation and engagement of labor	Provision of labor and other payable services
Agriculture	Provision of land, establishment of marketing board and market places, provision of storage facilities, subsidization of farm inputs and farming tools.	Mechanize farming of variety of crops and livestock farming, and engagement of labor	Provision of labor and other payable services
Forest resources	Provision of game and forest reserves	Provision of hotels and other recreational facilities, investment in saw milling, furniture and handcraft making, and paper making, and engagement of labor	Provision of labor and other payable services
Climatological resources	Creating an enabling environment for power generation	Provision of technology for wind and solar power, and	Provision of labor and other payable services

		hiring of engineers and technicians	
Solid minerals	Provision of access roads, issuing of license, provision of water sources – dams, ponds, boreholes	Provision of modern exploitation facilities and hiring of skilled and unskilled labor	Provision of labor and other payable services

Source: Authors' survey, 2023; adopted from Yaro et al (2018)

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted and exposed the tourism and allied potentials of Massange, Marhai and Yashi Sarki in Nasarawa state of Nigeria. However, for maximum exploration and utilization of these potentials, the paper recommends a synergy of efforts from the state government, the private sector and the inhabitants of the host communities given the huge capital outlay involved in tourism development.

Recommendation

In furtherance of this research by future researchers, this paper recommends corporative approach as a viable option that would attract funds from donor agencies from wherever given a comprehensive and realistic feasibility and viability reports from cooperators.

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