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Rural Tourism as a Tool for Rural Development: A Study of Kainji Lake National Park, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Rural tourism entails the services and amenities provided by rural people to attract tourists as a means of employment generation, poverty eradication, and platform for socio-economic development of rural people. This study examined rural tourism as a tool for rural development, focusing on Kainji Lake National Park (KLNP), Niger State, Nigeria. The questionnaire was administered on 103 tourists that visited KLNP over a three-week period and the data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results show that most of the tourists (32.09%) heard about KLNP from the internet, 41.75% arrived by bus and 21.35% visited the tourist destination for the purpose of conference attendance while relaxation (27.18%) was the motivation for choosing KLNP. Safety and security considerations (54.37%) were paramount to the majority of the tourists while 36.89% were pleased to visit the tourist destination. Most of the respondents (50.49%) agreed that KLNP has ensured the availability of uninterrupted electricity supply, agricultural development and revitalization of the irrigation network in the area. Majority of respondents (70.88%) agreed that the presence of KLNP in the area brought about greater access to social amenities. However, 52.42% disagreed that KLNP generated additional employment opportunities in the private sector through the promotion of investment, improved marketable vocational skills with widespread use of information technology in the area. It is clear that rural tourism as a form of tourism is a key tool for developing rural areas and people in Nigeria because it enhances the development of social amenities for the people in the rural area among others. This study, therefore, recommends that rural tourism should be embraced by state governments as a tool for rural developments.

Keywords: Tourism, development, rural area, administered, Kainji Lake National Park.

Introduction

Tourism is simply described as “away from home” to experience nature and interact with new people outside the usual environment. It is one of the fastest-growing and biggest sectors of the global economy with major economic, social, cultural and environmental effects (Hilaly *et al.*, 2016). There are several categories of tourism. Mass tourism is characterized by large numbers of people seeking culture holidays in popular resort destinations. Alternative tourism, also known as special interest tourism or responsible tourism refers to the understanding of the inhabitants’ way of living and

local natural environment. One aspect of responsible tourism is rural tourism.

Rural tourism has the potential for rural development through tourism destinations that provide opportunities for employment generation, poverty alleviation and economic empowerment and encouragement of friendships among nations and regions leading to exchange of ideas and culture for the enhancement of socio-economic development. Thus, rural tourism has been recognized internationally and considered as a booster for economic and social development of rural communities and sustainable support to their socio-

economic problems (Ezeuduji, *et al.*, 2014). Hence, national and international governments, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism industry have identified tourism as a viable tool for rural development initiatives to alleviate poverty and conservation of cultural diversity of indigenous communities (Doohyun, *et al.*, 2014).

The concept of rural tourism originated from the developed countries and favoured as a means of enhancing the rural economy (Giampiccoli, *et al.*, 2013) but it is a tool for diversifying the rural economy in order to create a new strategy or perspective for rural populations and to eliminate poverty and land abandonment in the developing countries (Sharpley, 2006). Therefore, at the global level, rural tourism was acknowledged as an indispensable rural development strategy initiated by the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and directed at governments and international organizations for support in order to increase the net benefits to the poor (Shakya, 2009; Petroman, 2013).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has rated 'rural tourism' as one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry with an annual growth of 5 percent worldwide and representing 6 percent of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Eneji, *et al.*, 2016). Although tourism is recognized worldwide as an economic development industry, the potentials are not fully exploited in Nigeria with the paltry contribution of 3.2 percent of GDP and 3.3 percent employment (UNWTO, 2016).

Rural tourism will entail a range of activities, services, and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income from agro-tourism but also a special interest in nature holidays, touring in rural areas and residential tourism. The services include accommodation, events, festivities, outdoor recreation, production and sale of handicrafts and agricultural products. Eruera (2008) described rural tourism as a wide range of activities, natural or man-made attractions, amenities and facilities, transportation, and marketing and information systems. Rural tourism encompasses all tourist activities and recreational experiences that occur in non-urban and non-populated areas offering opportunities for tourists to experience people, events, culture, cuisine, and crafts that are not available in cities and bigger towns. Oruonye and

Abdullahi (2010) noted that rural tourism is a touristic activity which provides accommodation and catering services and programmes from the point of view of the hosts and a cheap and active holiday for the guests.

Rural tourism provides economic and social benefits to rural destination communities (Iorio and Corsale, 2010), new sources of income for families living in remote rural areas (Su, 2011), a new market to small-scale businesses that facilitates development of rural areas (Jaafar *et al.*, 2015) and constitutes a positive force for change and catalyst for development (Claiborne, 2010). Thus, the association of tourism with the promotion of growth, employment, and community development has influenced its wide acceptance as a tool to enhance rural area development in developing countries in which diverse strategies are already in operation (Giampiccoli, *et al.*, 2014).

Most tourist destinations in Nigeria are located in rural areas which create great opportunities for rural communities to identify tourism opportunities and utilize them. The rural tourism industry can be properly harnessed as a tool for development of rural areas because of the potentials to bring concomitants of economic development such as education, health, and economic infrastructure and communication services to underdeveloped areas where a larger portion of the population lives. However, tourism, especially rural tourism development, is a low activity due to poor awareness of its potentials for socio-economic developments, poor attention by the governments, poor road and infrastructural facilities, stereo-typed policies and security challenges at tourism destinations. Consequently, this study examined the potentials of rural tourism as a tool for rural development and a catalyst for eliminating poverty and unemployment among rural people around the Kainji Lake National Park in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

Study area

The study area is Kainji Lake National Park (KLNP), located in the northwest central part of the country between latitude 9°40'N and 10°30'N and longitude 3°30'E and 5°50'E in Niger and Kwara States (Fig. 1), 500 km from Lagos and 385 km northeast of Abuja the Federal Capital (NPS, 2019). The park was established in 1979 by the amalgamation of Borgu Game Reserve (in Niger and Kwara States) and Zurguma Game Reserve (in Niger State. Before

the merger, these the two sectors had been gazetted in 1962 and 1971 respectively as game reserves by the then Northern Regional Government (Ijeoma *et*

al. 2013). KLNPN has a total area of 5,340.82 km² and experiences tropical savannah climate (Fig. 2).

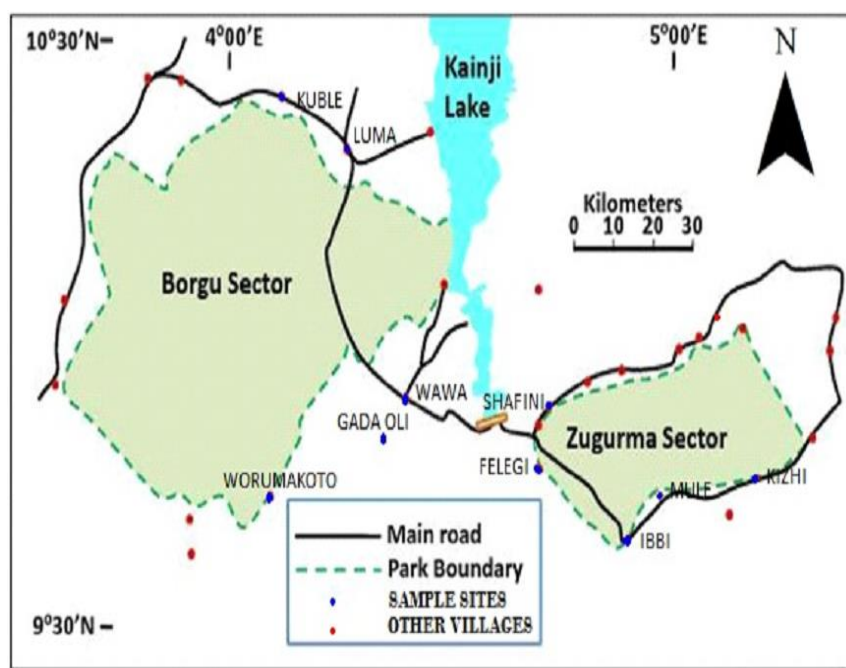


Figure 1: Map of Kainji Lake National Park.
Source: Ijeomah *et al.*, 2013.



Fig. 2: Kainji Lake National Park, Niger State Nigeria.

Questionnaire was administered on 103 respondents randomly selected who visited Kainji Lake National Park (KLNPN) over a three-week period. The data were analyzed using descriptive (percentages and frequencies) and inferential (correlation) statistics. The model adopted in this study is expressed mathematically as:

$$Y = a + bx \quad \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

where Y = rural development,

a = constant,

b = coefficient,

x = independent variable (rural tourism)

The statistical model used was:

$$RD = \alpha + \beta_1 RTR + \mu \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

where RD= Rural Development, RTR= Rural Tourism

Results and Discussion.

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area. The results show that there were more male respondents (72.82%) than female (27.18%) which agrees with Adetola and Osanyinleye, (2016) in Osun Osogbo Grove, Osun State and Orimaye *et al.*, (2018) for Ikogosi Warm Springs in Ekiti State. The finding is therefore consistent with the 2006 Census (NPC, 2006) and estimates by CIA, (2014) and the country's sex ratio at 1.06 males per 1 female. A large percentage (38.84%) of the respondents was 40 - 50 years old, 31.08% was 21-30 years old, while 22.33% was 31-40 years old but only 0.97% was 60 years old and above. The results agree with NMEC, (2008) that the dominant age group in Nigeria falls between ages 15 and 64 years. Oladokun *et al.* (2014) observed a similar trend and noted the participation of both young and relatively aged respondents which presented a balanced view in a study on the protection of Osun-Oshogbo Grove for ecotourism development. The majority (61.17%) were married, 19.42% was single and 9.71% divorced while the separated and widowed respondents were 8.74% and 0.97% respectively. However, most (51.46%) of the respondents were Christians while 41.75% and 6.80% were Muslims while Traditional worshippers respectively. Orimaye *et al.*, (2018) obtained similar results with 84.7% of the respondents as Christians but which differed from Oladokun *et al.* (2014) who observed 37.0% of the respondents in Osogbo metropolis as Christians. The majority (81.55%) had a family size between 1-5 individuals, 11.65% between 6-10 individuals while 6.80% was between 11-15 individuals. This agrees with the result of Adetola and Osanyinleye, (2016) where a (59% of the respondents were married indicating emotional stability with a household size of mainly 1 to 5 individuals. Also, most (60.19%) of the respondents attained a tertiary level of education, 22.33% secondary level, 10.68 primary level while 6.80% had no formal education. The high literacy level (93.20%) is higher than the 69.0% reported by Adetola and Osanyinleye, (2016) in a study on Influence of community perception on tourism acceptability in Osun-Osogbo Sacred Groove. The result is higher than the national estimated literacy

rate of 61.3% (CIA, 2014). This literacy distribution pattern indicates that the study area is highly patronized by the literate population. The occupation of the respondents shows 48.54% as researchers and academics, 32.04% as business moguls, 9.71% as civil servants and 6.80% as retirees. Most of the respondents (52.43%) were indigenes while 47.57% were immigrants.

Table 2 shows the awareness of the destination and the mode of transportation during the visitation. Some of the tourists (13.59%) were already aware of KNLP while others became aware through the internet (32.09%), media (21.35%), travel agencies (16.50%), friends and relatives (10.67%) and books and guides (5.83%). The majority (41.75%) of the respondents arrived KNLP by bus, 22.33% by car, 9.71% by water transport while 26.21% arrived by other means which probably included motorcycles, bicycle, and trekking.

Fig. 3 shows the method of booking and visitation pattern to KLNP. The tourists booked their tour to KLNP mainly through the internet (43.69%), travel agents (36.89%) while the use of the telephone was least (19.42%). This is in agreement with Vesna Spasi *et al.*, (2016) that 46% of respondents use the Internet to search for information about their travels. However, this is contrary to the findings of Baghdadi (2013) that 71% of respondents preferred booking through a travel agents rather than booking online. Table 2 shows the number of tourists who had visited the Kainji Lake National Park. A large portion of the respondents (58.25%) had visited KLNP in the past while 41.75% was visiting for the first time. Out of those who had visited the score was 55% for one to three times, 15% visited the destination for 4 to 6 times and 30% for 7 and above times in line with the principle of social exchange theory which notes the most social relationship is based on rewards and costs. Thus rural development benefit from rural tourism through selling of foods, souvenirs, booking of lodges, selling of beverages, and generation of revenues through visitation to historical centers. This agrees with Giampiccoli *et al.* (2013) and Jaafar *et al.* (2015) noted that rural tourism enhances the rural economy and serves as a positive force for change and catalyst for development

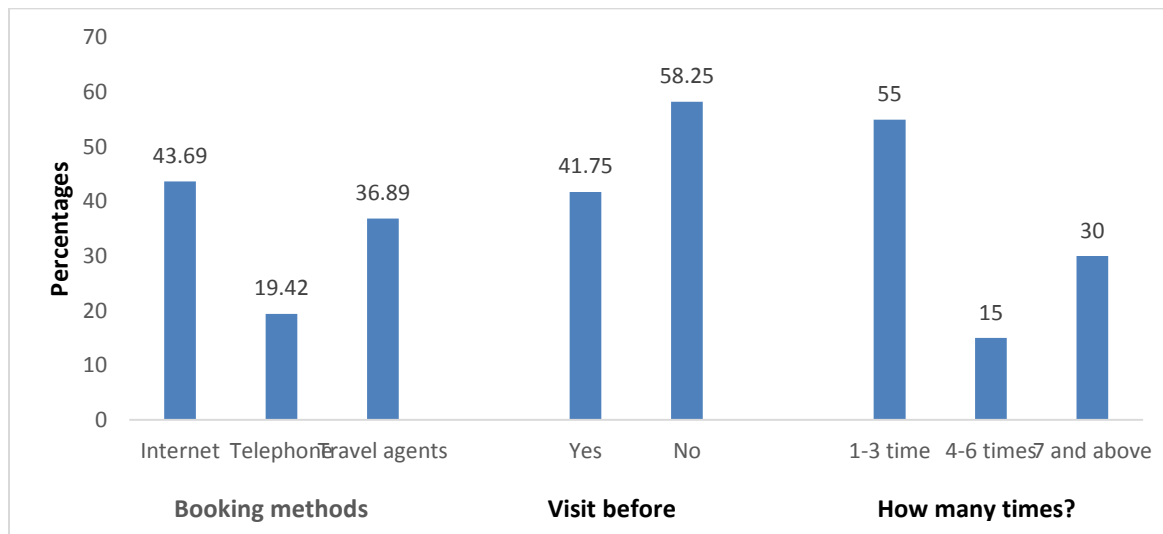
Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in the Study Area.

Variables	Frequency (N - 103)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	75	72.82
Female	28	27.18
Age Class		
1-20	02	1.94
21-30	32	31.08
31-40	23	22.33
41-50	40	38.84
51-60	05	4.84
61 and above	01	0.97
Marital Status		
Single	20	19.42
Married	63	61.17
Divorced	10	9.71
Widowed	01	0.97
Separated	09	8.74
Religion		
Christianity	53	51.46
Islam	43	41.75
Traditionalist	07	6.80
Household Size		
1-5	84	81.55
6-10	12	11.65
11-15	07	6.80
Educational Level		
Non-Formal	07	6.80
Primary	11	10.68
Secondary	23	22.33
Tertiary	62	60.19
Occupation		
Business tycoon	33	32.04
Researcher/ Academics	50	48.54
Civil servant	10	9.71
Retiree	07	6.80
others	03	2.91
Ethnic Origin		
Indigene	54	52.43
Immigrant	49	47.57

Table 2: Awareness of the destination and mode of transportation during visitation

Respondents	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Awareness of the tourist destination		
I already know of it	14	13.59
Through the internet	33	32.09
Friends and relatives	11	10.67
Media	22	21.35
Books and guides	6	5.83
Travel agency	17	16.50
Total	103	100
Mode of transportation during visitation		
By Car	23	22.33
By Bus	43	41.75
By Water	10	9.71
Other specify	27	26.21
Total	103	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

**Figure 3: The Method of Booking and Visitation Pattern to KLNP**

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 3 presents the reasons for the visitation, factors of attraction and motivation to visit KLNP. The respondents visited KLNP for the purpose of attending conferences (21.35%), visiting friends and relatives (20.38%), fun (18.45%), rest and relaxation (15.53%), culture (12.62%), business trips (9.73%) and sports (1.94%). The critical factors that

influenced the visit of the tourists were destination attractiveness (47.57%), hotel choice (27.19%), price (22.33%) and weather (2.91%). The specific motivation for the choice of KLNP was relaxation (27.18%), family (19.42%), romance (16.50%), shopping (15.33%), adventure (10.68%), camping (9.72) and sight-seeing (0.97%).

Table 3: Reasons for visitation, factors of attraction and motivation to visit KLNP

Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
Reasons for visiting this destination		
Rest and Relaxation	16	15.53
Visiting friends and relatives	21	20.38
Business trip	10	09.73
Attending the conference	22	21.35
Culture	13	12.62
Fun	19	18.45
Sports	2	01.94
Total	103	100
Which of the following factors attracted you to this destination?		
Price	23	22.33
Hotel choice	28	27.19
Destination attraction	49	47.57
Weather	3	2.91
Total	103	100
What is the motivation for the tour to this destination?		
Romance	17	16.50
Camping	10	9.72
Family	20	19.42
Adventure	11	10.68
Relaxation	28	27.18
Shopping	16	15.53
Sight seeing	1	0.97
Total	103	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 4 shows the importance of cost to the respondents on the choice of the tourist destination. Most of the tourists considered costs as a critical factor before choosing the destination at extremely important (32.04%), very important (20.39%), slightly important (10.67%), and important (9.71%) while 27.18% did not consider it as important at all. On the choice of other destinations the tourists intend to visit in the future, the responses were Calabar (31.07%), Lagos (23.30%), Port Harcourt (22.33%), Kebbi (10.67%), Jos (4.85%), Bauchi (4.84%), and Osun (2.91%).

Figure 4 shows the necessity and overall assessment of the tourist destination. Majority of the tourists considered safety and security paramount (54.37%) while cleanliness (18.45%), friendliness (11.65%), good image (8.74%) and poor image and management bottlenecks (6.79%) as a necessity for a visit. The overall assessment of the tourist destination by the respondents was: pleased to visit (36.89%), destination exceeded their expectation (28.16%), would inform friends (19.42%) while 15.53% indicated that the experience was below expectation.

Table 4: Importance of cost on the choice of tourist destination

Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
Importance of cost of choosing a tourist destination		
Extremely important	33	32.04
Very important	21	20.39
Important	10	9.71
Slightly important	11	10.67
Not important at all	28	27.18
Total	103	100
What other destination do you intend to visit in the future?		
Bauchi	5	4.85
Calabar	32	31.07
Jos	5	4.85
Kebbi	11	10.67
Lagos	24	23.30
Osun	3	2.91
Port Harcourt	23	22.33
Total	103	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

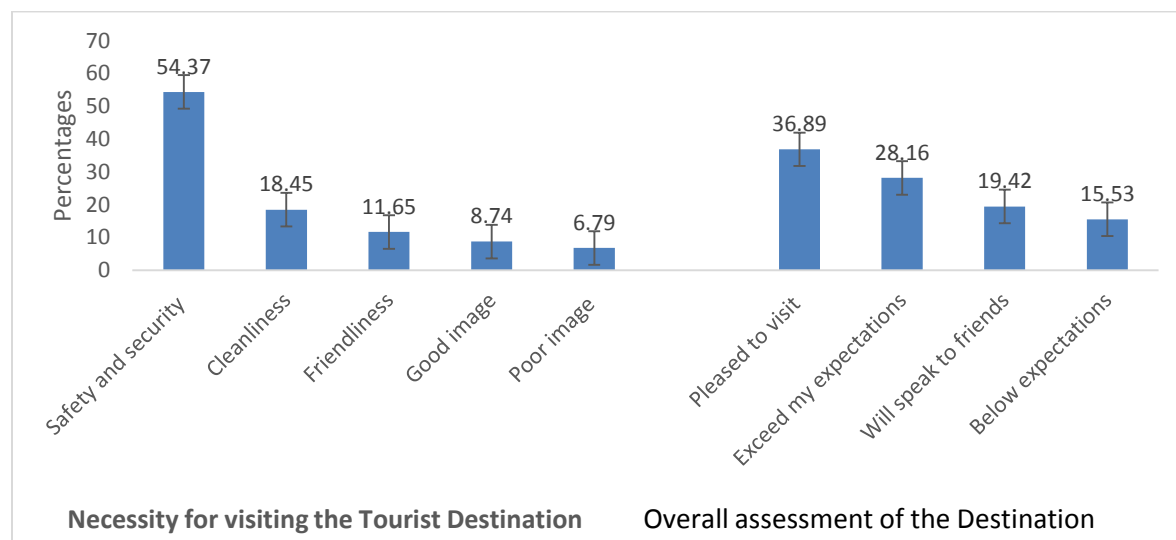


Figure 4: Necessity and overall assessment of tourist destination

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 5 shows the respondents perception of the tourism destination as a tool for rural development. Majority of the respondents (50.49%) agreed that the presence of the tourist destination in the area has brought about the availability of uninterrupted power supply, agricultural development, and revitalization of the irrigation network around KLNP while 45.63% disagreed. Also, 70.88% of the respondents indicated that the area enjoyed greater access to potable drinking water, better roads, better educational infrastructure particularly primary education, and provision of quality health services because of the development of tourism destination while 27.19% disagreed. However, 52.42% of the respondents disagreed that generation of additional employment opportunities in the private sector through the promotion of investment, improving

marketable vocational skills with the widespread use of information technology in the area was engendered in the tourism destination. The rural tourism in KLNP ensured access to good drinking water and provision of rural road infrastructure and good quality health services to match with revenues generation. The implication is that rural tourism benefits the rural people. Sharpley *et al.* (2006), Agri *et al.* (2016) and Domiroric *et al.* (2016) had observed that rural tourism creates new income generating strategy for the rural population, eliminates poverty and contributes to the GDP while ensuring a better standard of living for the rural people. Hilay *et al.* (2016) had noted that rural tourism is based on complex products which enhance socio-economic activities of the rural areas

Table 5: Tourism destination as a tool for rural development

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Uninterrupted availability of power to agriculture and revitalization of the irrigation network in the area	29 (28.16)	23 (22.33)	4 (3.88)	43 (41.75)	4 (3.88)
Greater access to potable drinking water, better roads, better educational infrastructure particularly primary education, and extension of quality health Services in the area	20 (19.42)	53 (51.46)	2 (1.94)	21 (20.39)	7 (6.80)
Generation of additional employment opportunities in the private sector by promoting investment, improving marketable vocational skills with the widespread use of information technology in the area	33 (32.04)	10 (9.71)	6 (5.83)	31 (30.09)	23 (22.33)

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 6 shows that the coefficients of rural tourism were positive and significant in achieving rural development. The p-value and t-statistic values of the independent variable were significant. The f-statistic value of 4123.70 was significant at p statistic value of 0.00 and a Durbin Watson value of 1.29 provides

evidence of the existence of a linear relationship between rural tourism and rural development. The $R^2 = 0.81$ indicates that the tourist destination could explain 81% of rural development embarked upon while 19% can be explained by other factors not captured in the regression model

Table 6: Regression analysis of the relationship between rural tourism and rural development

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.57	0.014	12.97	0.00
RTR	0.70	0.015	16.18	0.00
R-squared	0.81	Mean dependent var		2.33
Adjusted R-squared	0.78	S.D. dependent var		1.12
S.E. of regression	0.42	Akaike info criterion		1.10
Sum squared resid	60.38	Schwarz criterion		1.12
Log-likelihood	-189.03	Hannan-Quinn criteria.		1.11
F-statistic	4123.70	Durbin-Watson stat		1.29
Prob (F-statistic)	0.000000			

Source: E-view Output, 2018

Conclusion and Recommendation

Tourism is one of the industries that countries of the world are diversifying their economic activities into because of the positive impacts it has on the socio-economic activities of the people. Rural tourism as a form of tourism should be seen as a key tool for developing rural areas and people in Nigeria. This study has shown that rural tourism is a tool for rural development because it enhances the development

of social amenities for the people in rural area among others. This study, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

1. Rural tourism should be embraced by state governments as a tool for rural developments.
2. Nigerians and civil servants should be encouraged to go for rural tourism during their annual leaves

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