ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIALS OF GURARA AND MAYANKA WATERFALLS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

By

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ABSTRACT

Tourist attractions in Gurara and Mayanka Waterfalls in Niger State are largely undeveloped as there is barely any onsite accommodation. Ultimately this negatively influences tourism as tourists are forced to limit their stay. Therefore, this study assessed the tourism potentials of Gurara and Mayanka waterfalls in Niger State, Nigeria. The primary sources of data used in this thesis include questionnaire administration, oral interview and reconnaissance survey. The secondary data are those data that have been used by previous researchers, as well as Niger State Government documents on tourism of the study areas. These were used to achieve the stated objectives. The methods of data analysis include frequency percentage, statistical mean and four-point rating scale. The result revealed that Gurara waterfall attracts both indigenes and non-indigenes while Mayanka waterfalls attracts indigenes as perceived by the respondents. Strongly agreed ranked highest with 164 respondents, while no respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed in Gurara waterfalls. In Mayanka waterfall, disagreed ranked highest with 64 respondents and strongly disagreed ranked the least with 42 respondents. The result also shows that 189 respondents strongly agree that their exist tourism master plan for Gurara waterfall, 116 respondents strongly disagree for tourism master plan for Mayanka waterfall. This implies that only Gurara waterfall has tourism master plan but the implementation of the master plan was very low. The possible constraints of tourism in the study areas include lack of strategic marketing, lack of promotional programmes, and lack of proposed event product development; like festivals. Lack of strategic marketing ranked highest with 130 respondents and lack of promotional programmes ranked least with 80 respondents. This implies that the major possible constraint was lack of strategic marketing for the tourism sites. It's therefore recommended that that tourism could flourish at Gurara and Mayanka Waterfalls in Niger State through proper co-operation and co-ordination of the key players which include tourism investors, Niger State Government, Host Communities and Local Government Authority.

Keywords: Gurara, Mayanka, Waterfalls, Tourism and Tourism potential

Introduction

According to Agba *et al.,* (2010), tourism is a business entity that provides places and events to occupy people while they are on holidays; in its original thought, tourism was seen as an act of relaxation and sightseeing. Nigeria is endowed with many beautiful scenes and interesting places that are worthy for the eyes to behold (Nigerian Bulletin, 2014).

Tourism potential refers to the potential of a region, nation, or corporation for economic development and growth and creation of surplus value. It usually means that available resources have not yet been tapped and fully developed or exploited, possibly because of missing infrastructure (Larry *et al.,* 2010).

Ajayi and Lawal (2010) viewed tourism to be anything that possess the natural ability or potential capacity to stimulate people's interest and move people from place to place. Tourism creates opportunities for local communities to benefit from their culture and natural assets through employment in tourism activities and the supply of services and goods such as food, excursions or handicrafts, to tourism businesses or directly to visitors, without having to migrate to towns in search of a better life (UNWTO, 2011).

The tourism potential of tourism is remarkable, with direct and indirect impact on employment. Similarly, it is a good public relations mechanism through which a city, state or country could attract needed foreign investments and this may be lacking in the study area which this study intend to cover. In Nigeria today, the rapid rate of growth of tourism in the industry, is a sign of promising and lasting economic boost in the years to come. Based on these published journals and thesis on the tourism potential of tourism and those one's used in the literature review, there

is paucity on the assessment of tourism potential of tourism in Gurara and Mayanka waterfall(s), Niger State, Nigeria which this study intends to fill.

Previously, Nigerian governments had formulated policies influenced by social-political and economic forces that formed and developed the tourism activities. However, Government have been the sole managers, promoters and sponsors of tourism in Nigeria until recently. (Ajadi, 2012). Tourism today has become one of the engines of growth for the Nigerian economy with a contribution of 3.20 per cent to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing 2.70 per cent of total employment in 2013 (WTTC, 2014). Nigerian tourism sector is therefore growing, and is capable of generating employment and earning large amount of foreign exchange enough to rival agriculture and petroleum sectors.

Lack of effective implementation of master plan largely results to poor tourism development. Tourism is not left out in the poor performance syndrome that has continued to characterize the real sector of the economy. Although it has strong potentials for enhancing employment and revenue for the country, such potentials have remained largely under-developed (Ijasan *et al.,* 2012).

Therefore; Tourism has been adjudged a potent sector for generating income and promoting community development. Regardless of the enormous potentials and contributions of tourism industry to development worldwide due to the vast revenue accruing from the industry, it seems the impact has not been substantially felt in terms of development in the host communities and in Niger State, Nigeria. It is important to note that attention has not been adequately given to the development of these tourist sites in the study area; in terms of construction of good roads, provision of portable water, rural electrification, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition training

centres where people could learn and acquire saleable skills in order not to depend so much on government for development package that may not be forth coming or seeking for white collar jobs which are grossly inadequate (Mbagwu, Bessong and Anozie, 2016).

The study areas are located between Latitude 8° 44" E and 9° 31"E and Longitude 6° 61"N and 7° 01"N, shares boundary with Paikoro in the North and West, Abuja East and Lapai Local Government in the South (see Figure 1). Gurara Waterfalls is about one and half hours' drive from Abuja the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria.
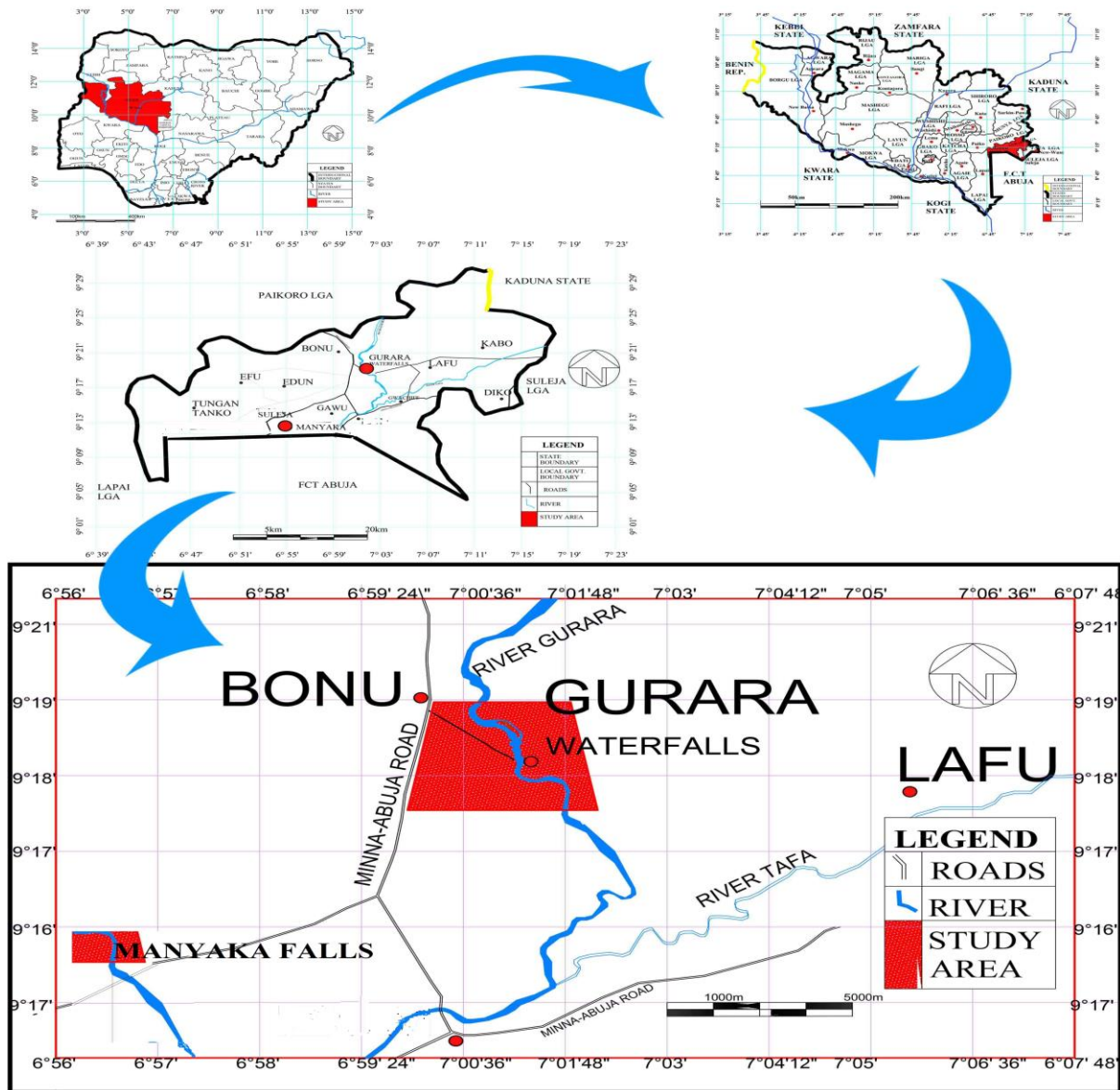
Figure 1: Location of the Study Area

Materials and Methods

The primary sources of data used in this thesis include questionnaire administration, oral interview and reconnaissance survey. This were used to achieve the stated objectives. The secondary data are those data that have been used by previous researchers, as well as Niger State

Government documents on tourism of the study areas. Other secondary sources include journals, textbooks, newspapers, unpublished and published theses, and the internet.

To achieve the aim of this study, frequency percentage and four-point rating scale with numerical response options in descending order of Very High Constraint (VHC)-4 points, High Constraint (HC)-3 points, Low Constraint (LC)-2 points and Very Low Constraint (VLC)-1 point were used for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

As revealed in Table 1, the selected locations can have international based on opinion of the respondents in the study area. Gurara ranked the highest with 161 respondents in strongly agreed option and Mayanka ranked the least with 79 respondents. Gurara also ranked the highest with 42 respondents in agreed option and Mayanka ranked the least with 29 respondents. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the areas can have international outlook and the reasons were given in Table 2 of the study.

Table 1: Presence of International Outlook

Options	SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gurara	161	42	0	0	0	203	65.3
Mayanka	79	29	0	0	0	108	34.7
Total	240	71	0	0	0	311	100

As shown in Table 2, the reasons for international outlook include raised standard of living, increased job opportunity, increased tourism development and reduced crime rate. Increased job opportunity ranked the highest with 157 respondents, increased tourism development ranked second with 61 respondents, raise standard of living ranked third with 54 respondents and reduced crime rate ranked the least with 39 respondents. This implies that the major reason for the international outlook was increased job opportunity.

Table 2: Reasons for International Outlook

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Raise standard of living	54	17.4
Increased job opportunity	157	50.5
Increased tourism development	61	19.6
Reduced crime rate	39	12.5
Total	311	100

With regard to Gurara and Mayanka Waterfalls having good natural environment combined with rich culture and history, Table 3 revealed that the study areas have good natural environment combined with rich culture and history. Strongly agreed ranked the highest with 173 respondents from Gurara sample point and agreed ranked the least with 22 respondents.

Table 3: Presence of Good Natural Environment, Rich Culture and History

Options	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Frequency	Percentage

	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		(%)
Gurara	173	45	0	0	0	218	70.1
Mayanka	71	22	0	0	0	93	29.9
Total	244	67	0	0	0	311	100

As shown in Table 4, reasons for non-implementation of tourism master plan for Gurara waterfall and lack of master plan for Mayanka waterfall include poor identification of potentials, lack of private sector involvement, inadequate funding, technical shortcoming associated with planning and implementation, inadequate publicity and institutional constraints of policy and laws. Inadequate funding ranked highest with 109 respondents, inadequate publicity ranked second with 65 respondents and institutional constraints of policy and laws ranked the least with 23 respondents. This implies that the major reason for non-implementation of tourism master plan for Gurara waterfall and lack master plan for Mayanka waterfall was inadequate funding.

Table 4: Reasons for non-implementation of tourism master plan for Gurara waterfall and lack of master plan for Mayanka waterfall

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor identification of potentials	44	14.1
Lack of private sector involvement	31	10.0
Inadequate funding	109	35.0
Technical shortcoming associated with planning and implementation	39	12.5

Institutional constraints of policy and laws	23	07.4
Inadequate publicity	65	21.0
Total	311	100

As revealed in Table 5, the possible constraints of tourism in the study areas include lack of strategic marketing, lack of promotional programmes and lack of proposed event product development like festival. Lack of strategic marketing ranked the highest with 130 respondents and lack of promotional programmes ranked the least with 80 respondents. This implies that the major possible constraint was lack of strategic marketing for the tourism sites.

Table 5:   Possible constraint of tourism in the study area

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of strategic marketing	130	41.8
Lack of promotional programmes	80	25.7
Lack of proposed event products development like festivals	101	32.5
Total	311	100

As indicated in Table 6, 139 respondents strongly agreed that is roads that connect the Gurara tourist site and 36 respondents affirmed the presence of roads that connect Mayanka tourist site. Ninety six (96) respondents select the disagreed option which revealed that there are no roads

that connect the selected tourism sites. This implies that there were roads in Gurara tourism site but no good roads in Mayanka waterfall.

Table 6: Presence of roads that connect to tourism sites

Options	SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gurara	139	0	0	21	0	160	51.4
Mayanka	0	36	0	75	40	151	48.6
Total	139	36	0	96	40	311	100

Conclusion

Tourism is an important instrument for augmenting economic development in the study area. It has credits employment through guides, handicrafts, food stalls and transport in both Gurara and Mayanka waterfalls. It contributes largely to the national income and Niger State internal generated revenue. Despites this advantages, the possible constraints include lack of health centres, inadequate motorable roads that connect the selected tourist sites, lack of strategic marketing, lack of promotional programmes and lack of proposed event product development like festival.

In summary, this research reveals that the level of awareness and general visitation to tourist centres is low. This is arguably due to inherent lack of tourism culture, lack of publicity and inadequate promotional activities coupled with low level of development of tourist destinations

and low consumer incomes. Giving the chance, local residents have the capacity to positively influence the outcome of tourism developments in the study area.

From the findings, it was revealed that Gurara and Mayanka waterfalls are yet to have significant impact on the socio-economic development of the inhabitants of the host communities and the state at large. Based on the summary of findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made to enhance tourism potentials of Gurara and Mayanka waterfalls in Niger State, Nigeria. It's recommended that tourism could flourish in Gurara and Mayanka waterfalls in Niger State through proper co-operation and co-ordination of the key players which include tourism investors, Niger State Government, host communities and Local Government Authority.

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