

AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is a new form of tourism practice that is gradually gaining global recognition. The combination of agricultural activities with tourism services, is known as “Agritourism”. It is a medium for promoting participation in agricultural activities and physical development. This form of tourism can be considered as a key approach to rural development, if properly managed. This paper examines how agriculture could be promoted through tourism by the fusion of both sectors to develop more socio-economic opportunities for the host community. This study is focused on accessing the agritourism potentials of Afe Babalola University (ABUAD) farm in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Quantitative and qualitative methods of research were adopted through interviews and questionnaires: These were administered through the use of random and purposive sampling method to gather important data. Data gathered were presented in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of simple percentage analysis.

Keywords: *Agritourism, Sustainability, development, Socio-economic*

1. Introduction

Defining agritourism is problematic. Literature is replete with many definitions of this form of tourism (Busby and Rendle, 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001). Agricultural Tourism or agritourism is any commercial enterprise that combines agriculture and tourism on a working farm, ranch, or other agribusiness operation. The Commonwealth of Kentucky (2011) defines agritourism as “The act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.”

Agricultural tourism is a rapidly emerging form of tourism in Europe and America due to the urgency of preventing the risk of low agricultural participation which could affect the economy

of concerned countries (Kukorelli, 2011). Thus, promotion of agricultural activities through tourism is becoming a strong medium of encouraging participation in agriculture globally. Tourism is used as a recreational means of orienting and educating the public about the various aspects of agricultural activities. Unfortunately, in Nigeria not much has been done in this area to attract the huge number of the teeming unemployed youth to agriculture. The Nigeria's economy is majorly based on crude oil. It accounts for 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (Uwakonye et al., 2006). Nigeria stands the risk of serious economic crisis if the petroleum sector ceases to flourish. Thus, agritourism is another important potential area for alternative national revenue generation considering the prime need for new forms of physical and social economic development tools in Nigeria. It is a common knowledge that in the 1960s and 1970s Nigeria was tagged as a country with substantial agricultural economy. The role that agriculture had played in the country's history cannot be over-emphasized taking into account the many developmental projects that were executed through revenue generated from agriculture (e.g. The Cocoa house in Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile Ife, Obafemi Awolowo Stadium in Ibadan and the like). This era witnessed great growth in the nation's economy. Regrettably, in recent times the growth of the agricultural sector has continued to decline over the years as a result of over-dependence on petroleum products.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) declared in 1988 that Sustainable Tourism is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. The principal reason for promoting tourism is its perceived role as a catalyst of development. UNESCO (2013) defined Sustainable tourism as "tourism that respects both local people and the traveler, cultural heritage and the environment". It seeks to provide people with an exciting and educational holiday that is also of benefit to the people of the host country. In tourism, the triple bottom-line can be critical, especially for those businesses and tours located outside the large cities. Businesses that do not hire or benefit the locals often lose their support. In the long run, communities whose social fabric is damaged by tourism lose their attractiveness to tourists and businesses based on natural

resources cannot survive if the natural resources concerned are destroyed since this is why the clients are visiting in the first place (Bien, 2008).

Sustainable tourism ensures:

- Improvement in material and non-material well-being; An ecologically sustainable tourism will be one which considers carefully the quality of experiences offered as well as simply numerical outcomes
- Intergenerational and intra-generational equity: An ecologically sustainable tourism industry would not diminish the range of educational, recreational, and environmental activities available to present or future generations. Species diversity and ecosystem integrity cannot be replaced or substituted.
- The protection of biological diversity and the maintenance of ecological processes and systems: tourism development should occur in such a way which maintains biodiversity and supports the maintenance of ecological increase (Bien, 2008).

According to Sharpley (2009:29) the promotion of tourism, whether locally, regionally or nationally, is based essentially upon its potential to generate direct and indirect economic benefits in destination areas. According to Andah (1990:116) the recognition and effective mobilization of a country's resources (cultural or natural resources) is the key to tourism growth. He further argued that to mobilize such resources effectively, one must know what the resources are, where they are located, what the objectives of mobilization are (or should be) and how best to mobilize the resources in order to achieve these objectives. Agbaje-williams (1990:136), in support of Andah (1990) reported that the recognition of the nature of the resources of a country (natural or artificial) always form the basis of any country's tourism development programme. For example, East African countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania base their tourism industry on their animal populations while others such as Western Europe and the Middle East base theirs on their ancient monuments. Aremu, (2010:144) recognizes that tourism is a neglected area of culture in Nigeria. He opined that Nigeria should make a huge success of the various tourist resources in the nation by giving adequate attention and encouragement to the non-oil sector of our economy, including tourism, and thus create more job opportunities for our youth.

AGRICULTURAL TOURISM

Agricultural tourism or agritourism has been defined by Walker (2001:1) as any commercial enterprise that combines agriculture and tourism on a working farm, ranch, or other agribusiness operation. Agricultural tourism is considered by most people as a visit to a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation in order to enjoy, be educated by, or become actively involved in the activities of the farm or operation – in other words, getting a true farm experience. According to Walker (2001), Virginia law defines agritourism as “any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. The increase in urbanization is fast turning farming into an exotic experience that is craved by city dwellers, and tour operators all over the world are taking advantage of this situation to develop farm sites as tourist destinations. Tour operators in different parts of the world have different terms they use to describe, categorize and define these tours ranging from farm tourism, rural tourism, ecological tourism, nature tourism and more appropriately, agricultural tourism. As apparent from the fore-going, agricultural tourism has been variously described as agro-tourism, agri-tourism and agrarian-tourism. All these terms clearly refer to the same basic activity which simply is farm based tourism. It is also considered to be a form of tourism which capitalizes on rural culture as a tourist attraction. It is similar to ecotourism except that its primary appeal is not the natural landscape but a cultural landscape. It involves any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch. Agritourism or agrotourism has different definitions in different parts of the world, and sometimes refers specifically to farm stays, as in Italy. Elsewhere, agritourism includes a wide variety of activities, including buying produce directly from a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, picking fruit, feeding animals, or staying on a farm. Agritourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered a growth industry in many parts of the world, including Australia, Canada, the United States, and the Philippines. Nielsen and Nissen (2010) reported that in Denmark there have been efforts towards encouraging participation in Agricultural activities through diversification of the sector by introducing farm tourism. Knezevic’s (2011) argument suggests that agrotourism or agritourism

is not only a relevant topic being discussed in the academic society or even in the business cycles; rather it is the trend of modern societies, given the fact that tourists have become more sophisticated, environmentally conscious and curious to experience the country life (See fig 1).

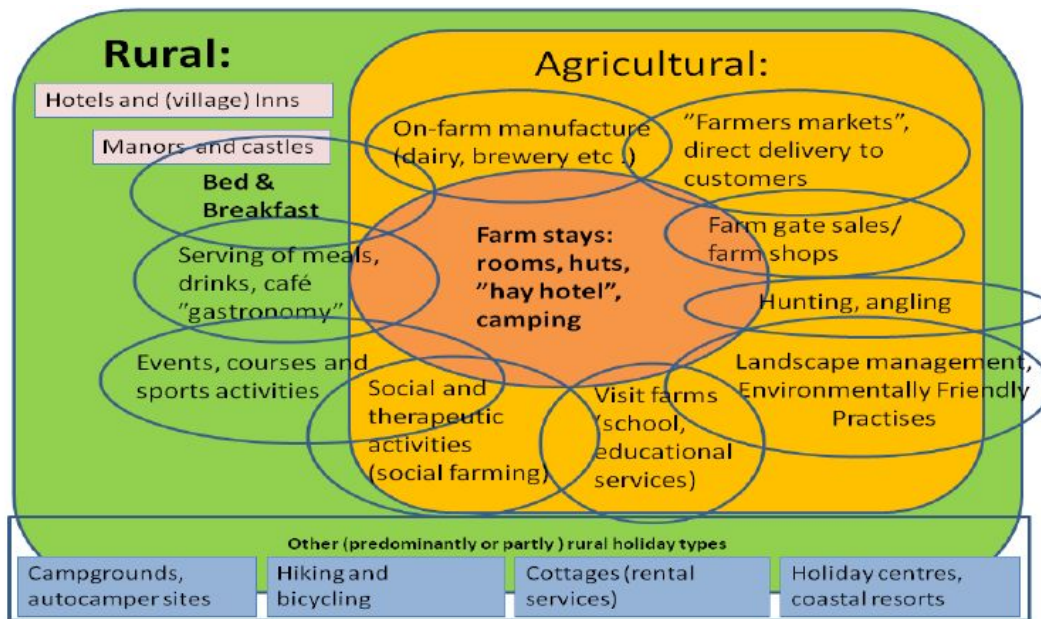


Fig. 1: Agricultural tourism or agrotourism seen as subset of rural tourism, from a Danish perspective with focus on farm stays (Marsden et al 2002; Nielsen and Nissen 2010).

2. Objective of the Study

To examine the socio-economic effect of agricultural tourism in Afe Babalola University Farms on the host community.

Study Area

Afe Babalola University farm is located in Ado Ekiti. It is owned by Aare Afe Babalola the founder of Afe Babalola University. The farm was established in 2011 as one of the visions of the founder to contribute his quota to the development of agriculture and creation of more employment in Ekiti State. The land mass of the farm is estimated to be well over 3000 hectares (Iyaduni 2014, pers.com.). The farm operates an integrated farming system with such practices as

aquaculture and animal husbandry. The various sections of the farm are clearly indicated on sign posts that are installed in strategic areas of the farm for easy location by visitors (Plate 1).

Farm animals at the farm include:

Pigs, Broiler chicken, Layer chicken (Plate 2), Guinea fowl, Quail bird, Foreign turkey, Pullet “isa brown”, Australian geese, Snail, Australian duck, Ghanaian geese, and Fish farming with 87 fish pounds of cat fish (*Clarias batrachus*).



Plate 1: Sign post at ABUAD Farm

Facilities at the farm include:

Preservation House, Moringa factory, Honey Processing center, Automatic incubators, Hatcheries, Feed mill (Plate 3) and Bottle factory.

Crops grown at the farm include:

Mushroom, Plantain, Mango (88,000 stands), Gmelina, Oil palm, Maize, Soya bean, and Grand nut, among others (Ademo 2014, pers.com.).

Tourism Village:

There are also shelters built on the farm area, tagged as the Tourism Village; here tourists can have some of their needs catered for.



Plate 2: Layer Chicks in enclosure



Plate 3: Interior of ABUAD Farm Feed Mill

3. Observation and Findings

TABLE 1.Tourist awareness of recreational facilities in ABUAD Farm

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
very few	28	28.0	28.0	38.0
Few	10	10.0	10.0	48.0
moderate	52	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The table above reveals that 10% of the respondents are with of opinion that there are no recreational facilities at ABUAD Farm, 28.0% believe that there are very few recreational facilities at the farm, 52.0% opined that the recreational facilities at ABUAD Farm are moderate. According to the data, most of the tourists believe that recreational facilities at the destination are moderate as against few people with contrary opinions.

TABLE 2: Tourist view on the ability of recreational facilities to attract visit to ABUAD Farm

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
agree	64	64.0	64.0	64.0
disagree	36	36.0	36.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 2, show that 64.0% agree that there are recreational facilities that could enhance visit to ABUAD Farm, while 36.0% are of contrary opinion. This indicates that recreational facilities are tool of motivation of tourists to ABUAD Farm.

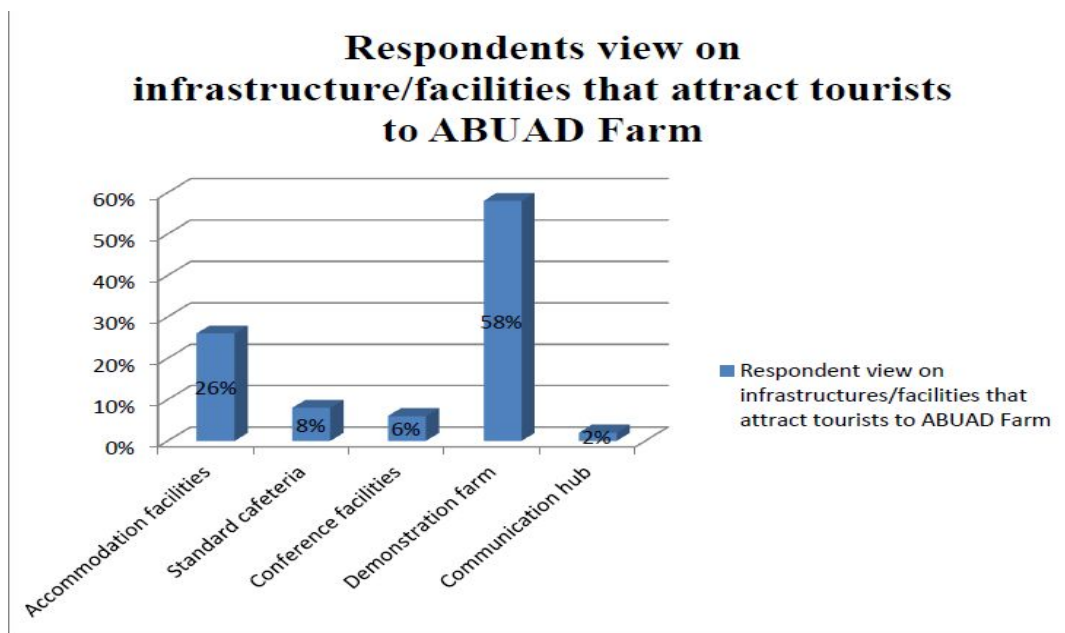


Fig.2: Tourist view on infrastructure/facilities that attract tourists to ABUAD Farm

Source: (Balogun, 2014)

The above figure indicates that 26.0% out of the respondents were attracted to the destination because of Guest facilities, while 8.0% were attracted by the standard cafeteria, 6.0% were attracted by the conference facilities, 58.0% were attracted by the demonstration farm and just 2.0% were motivated by the communication hub. These data suggest that the demonstration farm is the major source of attraction for most tourists who visit the destination.

Table 3: Tourist use of ABUAD accommodation facilities

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	38	38.0	38.0	96.0
no	58	58.0	58.0	58.0
other	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

From the above table, 38.0% out of the 100 respondents spent the night using ABUAD accommodation facilities, while 58.0% made use of other forms of accommodation outside ABUAD Farm; 4.0% did not respond to the question. This indicates that tourists that visit ABUAD Farm mostly make use of other accommodation facilities outside the destination, thus giving opportunities to neighboring accommodation providers to make sales.

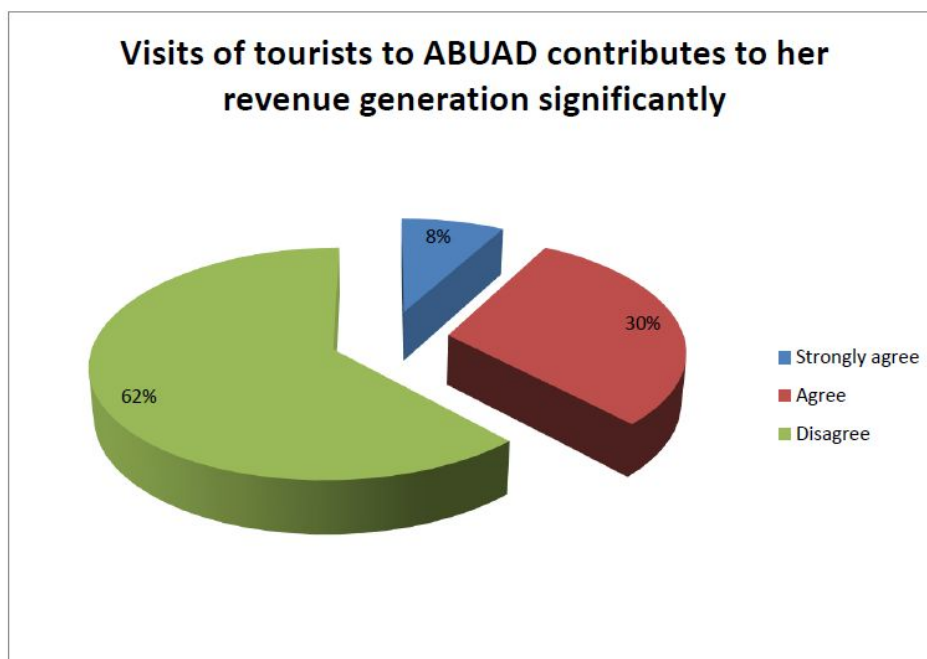


Fig.3: Staff opinion on revenue generation of tourist visits to ABUAD Farm

Source: (Balogun, 2014)

Fig.3 reveals 8.0% of the respondents strongly agree that visits of tourist to the farm generate revenue significantly, 30.0% simply agreed, while 62.0% disagreed. The bulk of the respondents thus disagree that tourists' visit to the farm generate revenue significantly, probably because the farm presently is solely focused on agriculture as its major operation with less attention given to tourism or recreational activity at the destination. This fact is obvious at the farm because tourism visit to the main farm is not commercial (there are no charges on visit to the farm, both recreational or research purpose), but farm tour or visitation is mainly through request from the authorities of the farm. The tourism village at the farm is open for public use; thus the tourism village is designed for commercial activities.

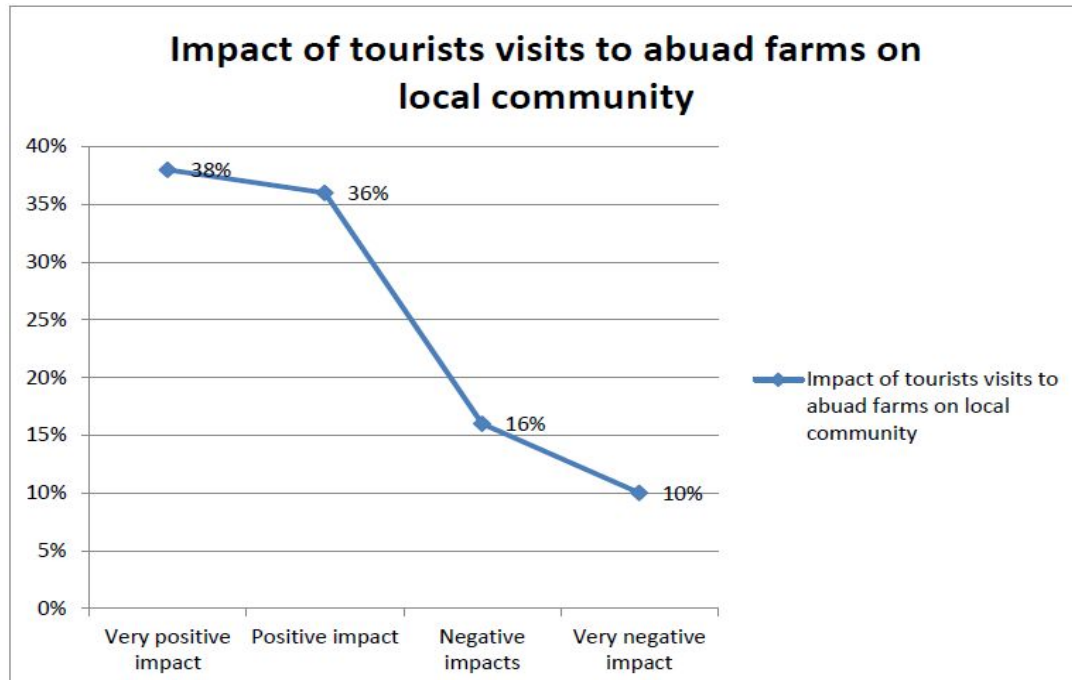


Fig.4: Impact of tourists visits to ABUAD farms on the local community

Source: (Balogun, 2014)

As shown above (Fig.4), 38.0% considers visit to ABUAD farm to have very positive effects on the host community, 36.0% simply believes it has positive effect, 16.0% believes it has negative effect, while 10.0% considers it to have very negative impact on the local community; they believe that inflow of tourist to the community can lead to the spread of transmittable diseases like HIV and diseases that could affect farm animals (e.g. Flu), also they believe that crime rate would increase. Based on the above, most of the respondents believe that tourists' visit to ABUAD Farm has positive effect on the host community. It is presume that tourists' visit to the farm help to boost the economy of the host community of the farm through commerce between members of the community and the tourists.

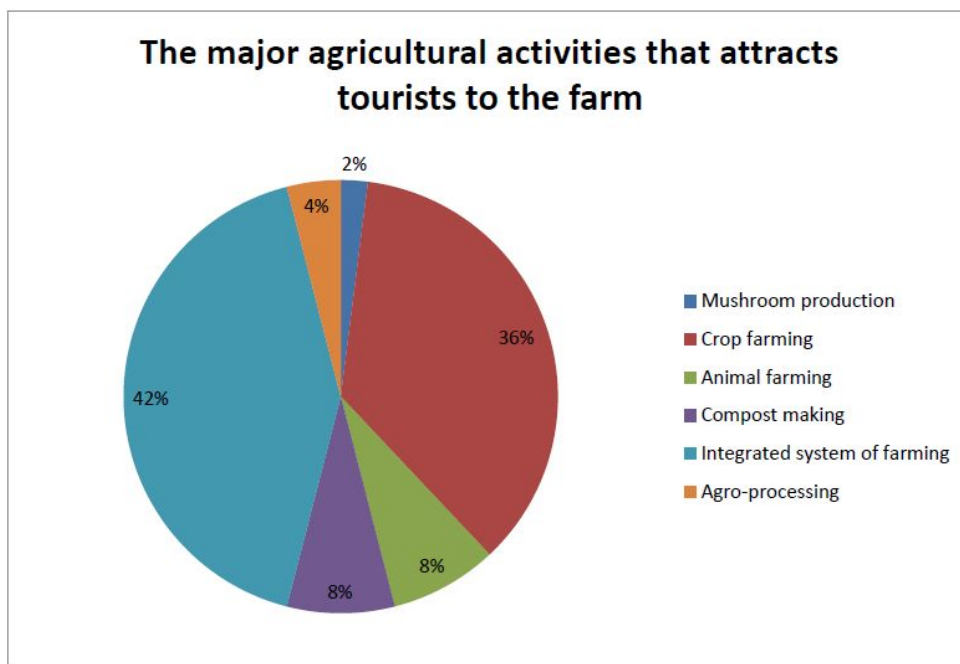


Fig. 5: The major agricultural activities that attract tourists to the farm

Source: (Balogun, 2014)

The above figure reveals the perception of the respondents on the major agricultural activities that attract tourists to ABUAD Farm. 2.0% believe it is mushroom production, 36.0% believe it is crop farming, 8.0% believe it is animal production, 8.0% believe it is composite making, 42.0% believe it is integrated system of farming, and 4.0% considers agro-processing as the major agricultural activity that attracts tourist to the farm. This indicates that integrated system offarming seem to be the major farming activity that attracts tourists to the farm, with crop farming being the next in order of agro attractions to the farm.

4. Discussion

ABUAD farm is endowed with refreshing scenic view that gives Tourist a sense of closeness to nature. Facilities at the farm include; Automatic incubators, Feed mill, Moringa factory, Bottle factory, Honey Processing center, Preservation House, Hatcheries, among others. Also, ABUAD farm is unique due to the introduction of crop species that are rare in this part of the world; the farm has about 88,000 stands of hybrid mangos, Plantain plantation, Soy bean, and ground nut etc. Animal farming activities at the farm include the rearing of Quail bird, Foreign turkey, Pullet “isa brown”, Australian geese, Broiler chicken, Guinea fowl, Snail, Australian duck, Ghanaian geese, pigs etc. Also the farm engages in fish farming with about 87 fish ponds of cat fish (*Clarias batrachus*) (Ademo, 2014 pers.com). Another captivating attraction at the farm is the Tourist Village designed as Hut shelters built in front of a simple building that serves as the cafeteria to guests and tourists, here tourist required hospitality attention is catered for in the range of meals to assorted drinks. This study has revealed that the farm possess the potential tourism product capacity that can be developed for agritourism.

Information from the data collected during this research has been able to reveal the potential of Afe Babalola University Farm for sustainable tourism development. The farm as observed has the potential and capacity to attract prospective tourist. Data from this research indicate that the farm attracts a meaningful amount of population (Ademo, 2014 pers.com). Information from key informant interview revealed that population of tourist to the destination is below 100 on the weekly bases. Observation from the research revealed that the bulk of tourists

that visit the destination are mostly educationally affiliated (research, field trip etc.). This may be due to the location of the farm around two academic institutions (Afe Babalola University and Federal Polytechnic AdoEkiti). The study also revealed that tourists visit it for relaxation and other leisure activities. The tourism village located around the entrance of the farm caters for tourist's relaxation needs and hospitality services. As further revealed, the Farm is capable of attracting tourists, considering the various agricultural practices that the farm engages in. Some of these include; the combination of different agricultural practices which seem to complement each other (integrated farming system), for example, shades are provided for the fish pond through planting of plantain around the pond area. It was also discovered that, waste from farm animals is used as manure (fertilizer) for crops. According source (Iyaduni, 2014 pers.com) the farm aim at becoming a key destination that will attract commercial activity through agricultural products, in Ekiti State, Nigeria and the world at large. Plans are in place to develop attractions like a mini zoo at the farm and to introduce other tourism activities like picnicking, agricultural symposium, workshop and exhibitions, among others. Facilities at the farm are examined which revealed the level of richness of the farm as a destination to visit. A clear fact in tourism practice is that amenities are important factors to consider before any tourism business can flourish. According to the data (See Fig.2) 26.0% of the respondents were attracted to the farm because of accommodation facilities, 8.0% by the standard cafeteria, 6.0% by the conference facilities, 58.0% by the demonstration farm and just 2.0% by the communication hub. The demonstration farm seems to be the major source of attraction for most tourists who visit the farm, this is not to ignore the fact that the other facilities at the farm also contribute to the pull factor for tourists/visitors visit to the destination. There has been plan in place to sustain power supply at the farm and its host community. According to Layi Ajibola spokesman for Afe Babalola University, the institution had concluded an agreement with General Electric of the United States, which had granted the school \$700,000 to build an hydroelectric power on the Elemi River, which passes through the institution (Transformation watch, 2014). Data gathered from the host community revealed that tourists' visit to the destination does not have negative impact on its local culture, rather tourism activities at the destination have been able to impact positively in the socioeconomic activities of the community, owing to the fact that tourism create avenue for creation of job, redistribution of resources through commerce and urban/rural integration

(Iyaduni, 2014 pers.com). This is evident in table 3: out of the 100 respondent interviewed, 38.0% spent the night using ABUAD accommodation facilities, while 58.0% made use of other forms of accommodation outside ABUAD Farm. This indicates that tourists that visit ABUAD farm mostly make use of other accommodation facilities outside the destination, thus giving opportunities to neighboring accommodation providers to make more sales. The establishment of ABUAD farm has been able to bring about meaningful development to the host community through revenue generated from tourists who visit and spend their money on catering and accommodation purposes. The transport unit is not left out of these benefits and people engage in commercially inclined activities, thus improving the economy of the host community.

Based on the findings of this study, agriculture does not only support tourism by providing food and other natural produce for tourists' consumption but is also capable of providing attractions, leisure and enriching experiences. It is not merely a potential source of tourist attraction; it is already an attraction being tapped effectively all over the world. Afe Babalola University farm is another farm in Africa potentially capable of sustaining its community with investment in agricultural tourism.

5. CONCLUSION

A common knowledge in tourism practice is that tourist's needs and interests are not static. This is because tourist overtime loses interest in things they perceive as familiar and may consequently develop interest in things that are not. Thus, tourists are beginning to develop interest in engaging in authentic farm experience, this therefore reveals the need for investment in this sector of tourism (agritourism) due to the already existing market all over the world. This research clearly identifies agricultural tourism as a tool for rural development since most farms are located at the country side. Sustainable development is achievable through Agricultural tourism since the latter promotes urban and rural integration through provision of basic infrastructures and employment; this is due to the fact that tourism is accounted for as the most rated industry in terms of employment of labour globally (WTO). Through this research, ABUAD farm's agritourism potentials in influencing sustainable socio-economic activities at the host community is properly appreciated.

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