



THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RURAL AND AGROTOURISM ON THE ECONOMY OF WEST AFRICAN RURAL FOLKS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism's influence on local socioeconomic development is a key issue for West African countries. It is a key industry for national economic growth. The 'developmental' mission of local governments emphasizes the importance of tourist research and local socioeconomic development. Even though tourism has gotten attention in a growing corpus of local socioeconomic development works in West African nations, concerns surrounding agrotourism have been disregarded thus far. Agrotourism is a developing kind of agricultural tourism aimed mostly at metropolitan customers. Consequently, the primary goal of this study was to determine how Agrotourism will affect the local economies of West African countries. There is also an examination of current studies on the economic impact of rural and agrotourism on the local economy. This research concludes by laying out the requirements for effective and sustainable rural tourism, with the ultimate objective of improving lives and, eventually, the economies of West African countries.

KEYWORDS: Socioeconomic effect; Agrotourism; Rural Tourism; Economy; African countries

1. INTRODUCTION

The term "socioeconomic effect" refers to all difficulties that impact individuals directly or indirectly as a result of development or other planned actions [1]. Poverty levels, education levels, land tenure systems, sources of family income, and household monthly earnings are all affected by developmental changes [2]. Effects are possible changes that may be caused by development activities, either directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, for better or for worse, and are used to aid planners and communities in making appropriate choices that encourage long-term sustainability [1,2]. Agrotourism development should stress economic growth while also preserving local culture and ecology, equitable benefit sharing, and community engagement [3]. Agrotourism, as an economic activity, has an intrinsically negative impact on a community's social, cultural, and economic life [3]. It is a technique that has been widely utilized across the world to strengthen the socioeconomic features of the local community, as well as a catalyst for economic growth and revenue supplements (Das and Rainey, 2010). It is also a profitable industry in terms of revenue growth [1–3]. According to the literature, no one motivator drives agrotourism [4]. Numerous variables impact the choice to diversify farms through agrotourism. Aside from additional income generation, agrotourism provides the following benefits: an avenue to increase income without increasing acreage, a new way of marketing likened to the traditional commodity market, an opportunity to build a business based on already existing resources, an opportunity to educate the public on farming goods and practices, a way to continue farming and keep the farm



in the family, and so on. Yet, along with the success story, there are obstacles, as various constraints impede the expansion and realization of agrotourism potential [3,5].

Agrotourism is influenced by a variety of factors on both the supply and demand sides [5,6]. Farmers have chosen agrotourism as a diversification strategy to combat several issues such as diminishing agricultural revenue, declining crop output, abandonment of farming jobs, and rural-urban outmigration in response to 2008 to 2009 global economic crisis [7]. Farmers are also drawn to agrotourism because it allows them to make greater use of their agricultural assets and products. In other words, farmers use their extra farm area and underused agricultural goods to give agrotourism services to tourists and profit from the activity [2,4]. On the demand side, customers are paying increasing attention to food quality, provenance, and sustainability. On the demand side, customers are more concerned with food quality, origin, safety, and environmentally friendly methods, and desire a shorter food supply chain where producers and consumers are in the same location. Researchers believe that the potential of agrotourism to assist the development of a local experience and feel of the place is a crucial "pull" element that influences tourists to pick this activity [3,6]. Agrotourism provides just a small portion of farm revenue, which might be explained by several causes [8]. Among these issues include money, marketing and quality, location, education and training, and government backing. A recent study found that not all rural regions have a tourist attraction and that neighbourhood impacts may influence the formation of tourism clusters [7,9]. As a result, providing lodging and other infrastructure at a location does not ensure demand. Likewise, individual operators may lack the knowledge and resources needed to effectively promote agrotourism products, which is a critical component of economic success. Another criterion that assures agrotourism development is quality [8,10]. The quality of the products and services provided by agrotourism firms must match tourist demand and expectations. The quality of the products and services provided by agrotourism firms must match tourist demand and expectations. Operators' lack of professionalism may have a detrimental impact on the destination's image through unfavourable referrals [7,11].

As a result, the focus of this research was on determining how Agrotourism practice will affect the local economies of West African countries. A collection of current research on the socioeconomic impact of rural and agrotourism on the local economy is also explored. This study finishes by outlining the conditions for successful and sustainable rural tourism, to improve livelihoods and, ultimately, the economies of West African countries.

2. CURRENT TRENDS IN AGROTOURISM

Agrotourism is a growing part of the tourism business in numerous places [12]. Agrotourism is traditionally regarded as a subset of rural tourism, encompassing recreational experiences that involve visits to rural settings or rural environments to participate in or experience activities, events, or attractions that are not readily available in urbanized areas [13]. Country housing or lodging, farm restaurants and vineyards, ranch resorts, leisure fishing, the rental of rooms on farms, and the provision of food to guests are only a few of the activities that might be associated with agrotourism in developed world settings. The economic benefits of agrotourism development have recently been recognized as an area in need of further study attention [13,14]. Figure 1 below represents studies in agrotourism in the last two decades.

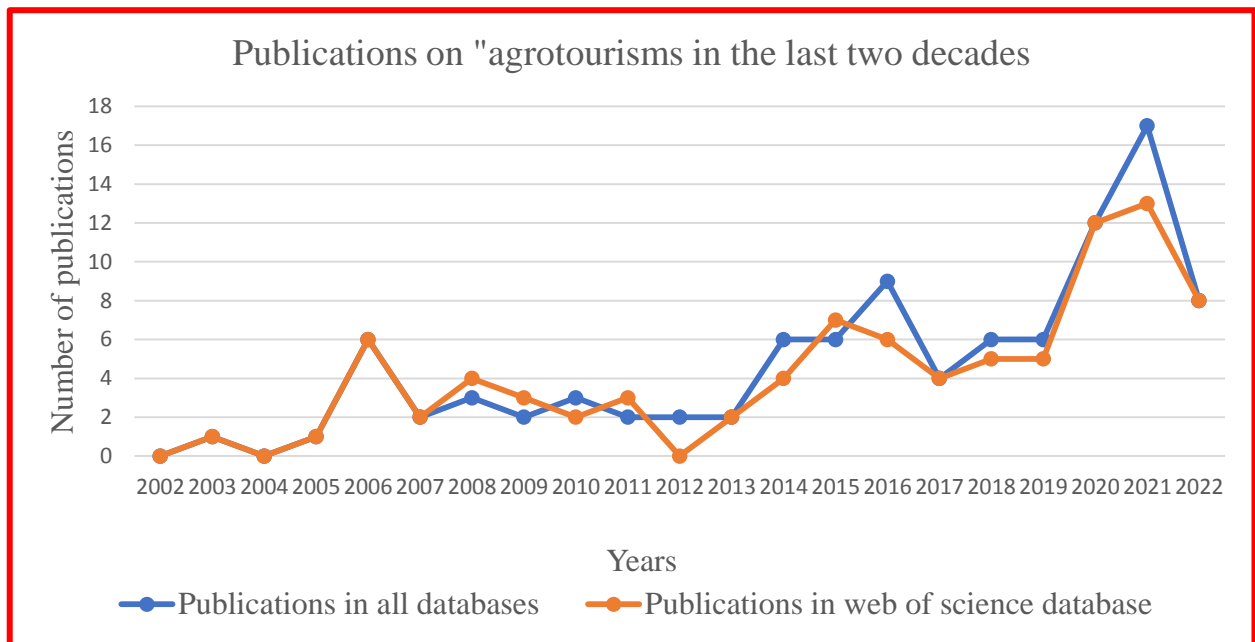


Figure 1 illustrates publication on “agrotourism” in the last two decades (retrieved on April 21, 2023, from all databases: <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/alldb/summary/d1361afe-dd3f-4c92-9159-4b68ecb2e132-83e7d849/date-descending/1>; web of science database: <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/summary/9106471e-5f1e-4d3f-82f7-29438f63b02f-83e85514/date-descending/1>).

Much of the research which examines agrotourism view the phenomenon as a form of leisure or recreational pursuit that is normally spent on farms and relates directly to agricultural activities. However, despite the growth of the phenomenon, the term agrotourism is contested and lacks a shared understanding in terms of precise definition [13,15]. Research maintains “researchers have struggled to develop a classification system concerning both the characteristics and the broad definition of agrotourism”. On the contrary, agrotourism is “nearly any activity in which a visitor to the farm or other agricultural setting considers the farm landscape or participates in an agricultural operation for recreation or leisure purposes.” A group attempted to resolve the ambiguous nature of agrotourism by presenting a typology based on three criteria: whether the setting is a working farm, the level of contact between the tourist and the agricultural operation, and whether the visitor's experience was authentic or staged [16]. Agrotourism is defined in the developing world as a type of rural tourism that allows tourists to visit farms and experience a farmer's daily life. Proposed an alternative typology of agro tourists based on their preference levels, readiness for payment, and issues that would dissuade them from engaging. Four types of agro tourists are distinguished: genuine, discrete, passionate, and demanding [15,17].

Agrotourism research is still in its early stages, and there is room for conceptual and theoretical advancements. With the growth of agrotourism in both industrialized and developing nations, several applied difficulties for tourism and local development planning may be emerging. Agrotourism is seen as a catalyst for reviving these struggling rural agricultural economies [15,16]. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the additional function and connection between agrotourism and historical preservation. Agrotourism is recognized as an alternative farming activity that can contribute to agricultural sustainability across North America through rural economic diversification, with the added benefit of fostering greater community cohesion in rural areas by providing educational opportunities to urban visitors [18]. Agrotourism innovations and expansion are motivated by economic concerns and a set of intrinsic and market-related objectives like seeking a rural lifestyle, providing work for family members, and mingling with tourists. Implementation of agrotourism could be critical for farmers since the extra income may aid in sustaining their businesses, retaining their rural lifestyles, and keeping their farmlands with benefits that extend beyond the farm gates to society, which can include “environmental amenities, recreational opportunities, landscape management, biodiversity, and cultural preservation” in addition to the production of food or fibre. The benefits of expanding agrotourism activities for rural regions extend beyond economic recovery to include environmental and socio-cultural benefits that can help long-term development [15,19].



The global expansion of agrotourism in rural economies poses several critical policy challenges for local development programming [20]. The most essential are those related to product development and entrepreneurship in agrotourism. According to a study conducted in the United Kingdom, while farmers are increasingly turning to agrotourism as a form of income diversification, they may not necessarily have the fundamental business abilities required for success [13,20]. Similarly, in North America, an argument is made that encouraging farmers to engage in agrotourism is best achieved through developing business and entrepreneurial skills. Another policy approach is to encourage networking, particularly farmer-to-farmer linkages [13]. According to a study, governmental measures that address skill inadequacies in product creation and the operation of small tourist business enterprises through the implementation of efficient training assistance programs are critical. These capacity-building concerns for agrotourism development are equally essential for the upgrading of agrotourism goods and firms in poor countries [13,20].

2.1 Current Trends in Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is the familiarity with a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in rural locations, and it is associated with wide-open spaces and relatively low levels of tourism development [21]. It allows visitors to immediately experience agricultural and eco-touristic natural areas. South Africa's rural areas are endowed with a diverse range of cultures, customs, and, in many cases, one-of-a-kind natural treasures. Rural areas are ideal for recreational nature tourism, ecotourism, agrotourism, rich cultural tourism, and village tourism [20,22]. These varieties are not as developed as they should be, and as a result, rural tourism has various obstacles and is not as established as its urban counterpart [22]. Furthermore, because it is centred in rural regions, it usually has an impact on the local population and its traditional traditions. Rural tourist ventures are often limited in scale, and the market is also extremely seasonal. The availability of lodging and other amenities is insufficient to create a captive market [23]. It is critical to provide appealing offers as well as acceptable possibilities for tourists to spend their money. The portrayal of a rural location in marketing campaigns and tourist literature is critical to the long-term viability of rural tourism [22,23]. Tourism contributes significantly to poverty reduction, but considerably more effort should be put into marketing it in rural communities and an ethical manner. It creates job possibilities for residents and allows for collaboration between a community and governmental organizations in the conservation of natural heritage sites and a range of protected regions. According to one research, the core concept of community engagement in community-based tourism should be examined through the lens of the sustainable development paradigm, which connects the ideas of economic empowerment, self-sufficiency, and environmental sustainability [24].

The increase in personal money, free time, and migration, particularly among the middle classes, has resulted in more robust requests for rural regions to be appealing destinations for domestic and foreign visitors [24]. However, it is also maintained that rural areas' standard of life and employment prospects are dependent on the tourist sector. Failure to create pro-poor policies, a lack of duty to implement policies, the difficulty to shift from policy to implementation, and a lack of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation are all significant challenges when dealing with poverty and inequity, according to a study [24,25]. Rural areas face a problem in taking full advantage of the tourism sector owing to a lack of necessary infrastructure to sustain yearly visits, and care must be made to maintain a region unique. As a result, to capitalize on the financial infusion that tourism frequently delivers, and with no additional resources, many rural towns have chosen to conduct tourist events on an annual basis. This is problematic since the single-year events have limited potential advantages for the communities concerned [23,25].

While numerous theories can be used to define a suitable community-based tourism model, Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation is increasingly being used to recognize the foreseeable and real participation levels of local communities when they are involved in rural tourism development decision-making. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Engagement assesses the gap and its components between the local community's expected and actual degree of community engagement. Rural tourism is likely to have a detrimental impact on the local community if it is not managed responsibly. Local community leaders and other stakeholders in rural tourism should collaborate to manage it so that it becomes a community industry that benefits everyone in a win-win situation [17,25,26]. It is obvious that rural tourism growth has an influence on the natural environment in which it takes place as shown in Figure 2 below; representing trends in Rural tourism in the last two decades. Considering that visitors to rural regions consume the products of the places they visit, environmental consequences are inescapable [1]. This is because a local community's involvement in the process is vital. The desire and commitment of the local community to be involved ethically in whatever way, from hosting tourists to planning for them and serving as guides, is critical to the success and sustainability of tourism. A Local Economic Development approach to economic growth is regarded as a good way to tackle local challenges



because it aids in the achievement of the goals of sustainable development, which consist of mass poverty alleviation [12,25].

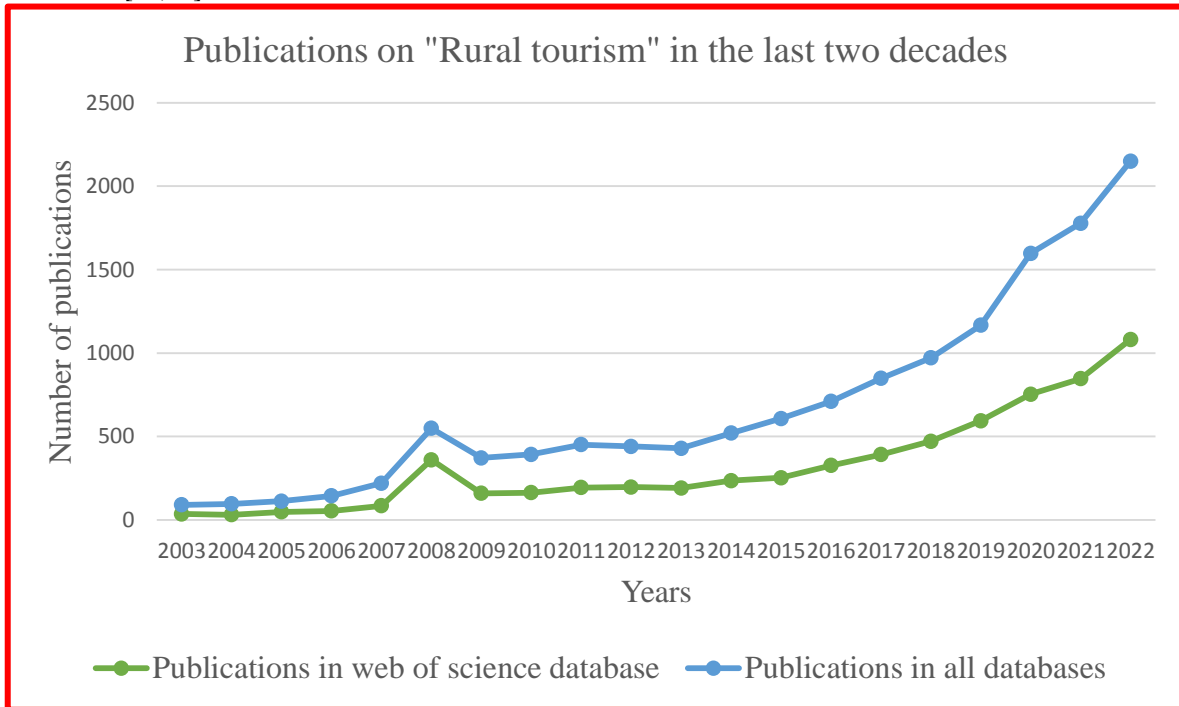


Figure 2 illustrates publication on “Rural tourism’ in the last two decades (retrieved on April 21, 2023, from all Web of Science databases: <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/summary/0704a600-bdf3-41ec-87a5-5a7f66ef490b-83e91fb3/date-descending/1>; all databases: <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/allldb/summary/3965e523-566c-451b-b597-94a0201c8e19-83e9df5a/date-descending/1>).

2.2 Sub-Saharan Africa's rural tourism facilities and Competencies

According to Ezeuduji (2015), rural Sub-Saharan Africa has distinct cultural and ecological attributes that distinguish it from other continents or sub-continent in the globe, allowing it to build and hold a favourable position in the 'rural tourism' sector. Traditional dances, local music, rural way of life with myths and legends, local handicrafts, local festivals, and traditional ceremonies are cultural characteristics. Natural features include a variety of savannah and woodland types, animal species, and rural terrain. It is good knowledge that rural Sub-Saharan Africa is seen as having the 'rural idyll' by Europeans and North Americans, which is in sharp contrast to where they are coming from. By providing unique experiences, Sub-Saharan Africa might have a distinct selling pitch in the international tourist business. Sub-Saharan Africa might have a distinctive selling proposal in the international tourist sector by organizing unique experience-setting plans in rural regions that incorporate cultural qualities within natural space [27]. The study also proposed four key features of rural imaging procedures: the creation of an essential mass of visitor attractions and facilities; the hosting of events and festivals; the development of rural tourism strategies and policies, which frequently coincide with new and rekindled regional tourism organizations, as well as the expansion of regional promotional and marketing initiatives; and the development of leisure and cultural services and initiatives to promote regional marketing and tourism effort [27,28]. As a result, rural tourism tactics centred on hosting events and festivals that represent the cultural characteristics of a region could grow into a way of illustrating local community life and its integration with the is frequently an essential part of the marketing image and branding of the rural tourism product. This may be done without harming or jeopardizing the way of life on which the local attraction is founded [27–29]. Events are seen as major tourist motivators, vital in most destinations' development and marketing plans, and are becoming increasingly important for destination competitiveness. The phenomenal expansion of the event tourism sector in the tourist industry has been described. Tourists are a possible market for scheduled events, and the tourism sector is an important stakeholder in their success and appeal. Although not all events are tourism-oriented, and some are concerned about the possible negative consequences of adopting a commercial focus, events do play roles in community building, urban or village rejuvenation, cultural



development, and developing national identities [27]. However, successful event design in rural Sub-Saharan Africa necessitates marketing awareness of visitor-motivating elements [27,30,31].

Because rural tourism programs rely primarily on healthy environmental conditions, local communities and other 'rural tourism' stakeholders must determine the boundaries of acceptable change and visitor carrying capacity in their natural environment. As a result, a sustainable and healthy social environment will be built, meeting the needs of the stated ecotourism goods. The Southern African Bird Atlas project, Africa's largest public participation biodiversity database covering six southern African countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe), is an example of successful ecotourism projects in the Sub-Saharan African region, where positive influences on further scientific endeavour and societal awareness of scientific issues have been reported through public participation in research [27]. Another instance is the sacred Kaya Kinondo Forest Ecotourism project of the Digo sub-group of the Mijikenda people on the south Kenya coast, a biological and culturally significant site, where earnings from the project have provided significant support to a wide range of community projects, and the project does not appear to violate local community cultural rights [27]. Regions presenting themselves as tourist destinations should have a thorough grasp of the ecological limitations or acceptable range of change from tourism, and they should also monitor how new tourism development threatens the region's environmental quality. National Environment Agencies are in charge of assessing environmental effects in Sub-Saharan African countries. They can assist local communities who want to participate in rural tourism in staying on track. They can assist local communities who want to participate in rural tourism in maintaining the required environmental standards [27,32].

Sub-Saharan African rural landscape is of high strategic importance due to its globally perceived distinctive rural symbol, and locals may be capable of staging traditional events in rural landscape showcasing traditional dances, local music, rural way of life, local festivals and rites, and more [3,7]. These intangible resources and competencies satisfy the concept of scarce, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable sustainable resources, providing Sub-Saharan Africa with a long-term competitive edge over other global regions or sub-regions. The most valued resources and capabilities are those that combine these three characteristics (rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable) to contribute to competitive advantage; hence, superior resources are naturally restricted in availability. This is an emerging method that might strike a compromise between implementing bottom-up values and implementing top-down. This is an emerging method that might strike a compromise between bottom-up ideals (local values and community ownership) and the necessity to use top-down resources [32,33]. Collaboration for the acquisition or development of competencies that an institution does not already have is becoming a more typical strategy. Local communities can develop alliances with tour companies, tourist institutions of the local and national governments, and non-governmental organizations. These partners, by using their marketing skills and processes, can help local communities bring new tourism services to market faster than local towns working alone. Even among tour operators, local and national government tourism institutions, and non-governmental organizations, 'know-how' and resource capabilities are key aspects that are becoming increasingly difficult to locate inside the confines of a single organization [27].

Training provided by the government and non-profit organizations will increase local communities' competency in personal business connections, business planning, management, and operational abilities, which may hurt rural tourist growth [2]. Tour operators can assist in marketing local locations based on their national value positioning. Because tourism in rural locations does not always provide the intended advantages to local people, the incentive for involvement may become crucial to successfully integrating a local population into rural tourist operations. According to some academics, local populations in desperate need of economic growth would quickly accept tourism. However, it has been discovered that a local community might respond negatively to increased tourism growth. If foreign investors control the resources, or if donor agencies control the whole budget, community-based tourism may foster a new type of reliance [25]. As a result, long-term institutionalization of rural tourism development in local communities, as well as efficient communication of advantages derived from it among people themselves, can assist boost motivation and collaboration for rural tourism growth [12].

3. INDICATORS AND KEY FACTORS FOR SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH OF RURAL AND AGROTOURISM

Poverty levels, education levels, land tenure systems, sources of family income, and household monthly earnings are all affected by developmental changes [34]. Effects are possible changes that may be caused by development activities, either directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, for better or for worse, and are used to aid planners and communities in making appropriate decisions that promote long-term sustainability. Agrotourism development should stress economic growth while also preserving local culture and ecology, equitable benefit sharing, and community engagement [35]. Agrotourism, as an economic activity, has an



intrinsically negative impact on a community's social, cultural, and economic life. It is a technique that has been widely utilized across the world to strengthen the socioeconomic features of the local community, as well as a catalyst for economic growth and revenue supplements. It is also a profitable industry in terms of revenue growth [9,11,15]. As illustrated by Figure 3 below, researches such as the one by Bwana et al. (2015) concentrated on determining the effects of agrotourism on the local economy. The study used a cross-sectional design, with structured questionnaires sent to homes in the study region using a survey approach. Key informant interviews and focus group talks were also held with stakeholders from Kisumu County's key institutions. In this study, potential Agrotourism locations included a total of about 5,000 families from the three identified sub-counties, Kisumu East, Nyando, and Seme [15]. It was clear that assessing the socioeconomic impact is critical, and the potential for agrotourism in Kisumu County is vast and mostly unexplored. This is demonstrated by the fact that over 1% of respondents are now involved in Agrotourism. The demographics of the responses are highly promising, with the majority falling in the young full to middle age group. Agrotourism has a high potential for positive socioeconomic effects with sufficient capacity building and awareness. To capitalize on the potential prospects, all parties must work together. According to the study's findings, the local population is eager to join in Agrotourism activities [31]. The majority of rural communities undertake subsistence farming, which should be promoted. The majority of rural areas conduct subsistence farming and should be encouraged to practice commercial agriculture. The majority of people are still dependent on rain-fed agriculture, and with the consequences of climate change and weather, there is still a lot that has to be done to make Agrotourism a niche market for the county and reap the socioeconomic advantages [15].

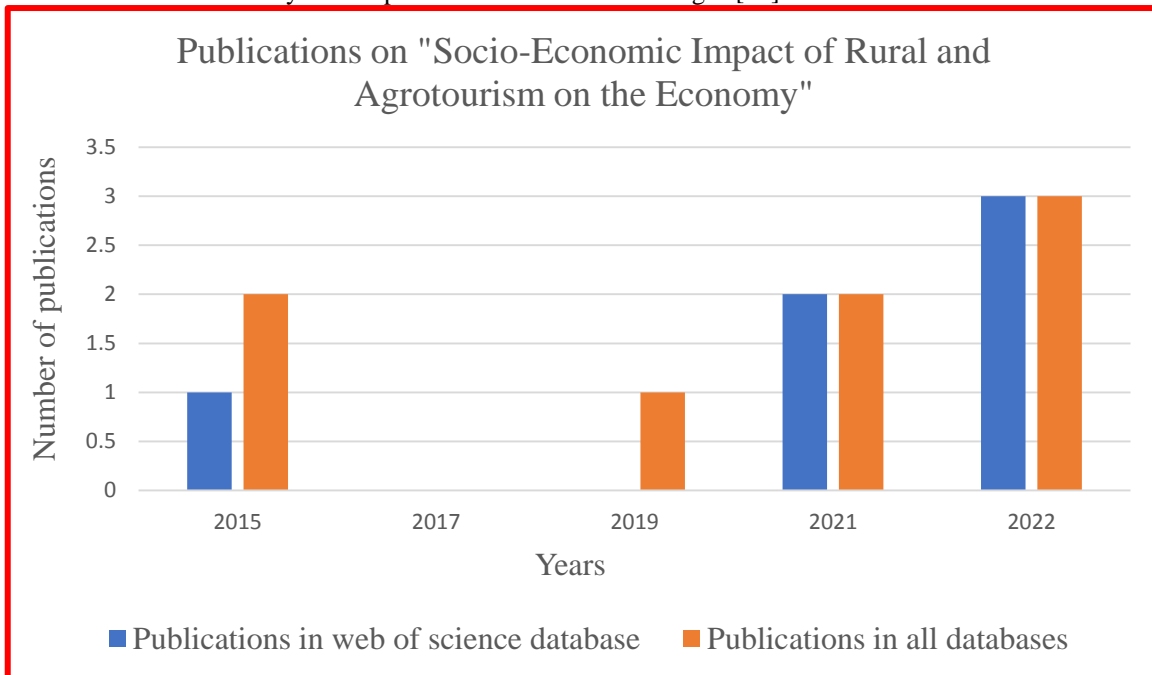


Figure 3 below represents trends in the Socio-Economic Impact of Rural and Agrotourism on the Economy (retrieved on April 21, 2023, from all Web of Science databases:

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/summary/d4c26c41-443c-46b9-9349-66c9c4f90516-83eb536f/date-descending/1>; all databases: <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/alldb/summary/36e05d96-98b0-4378-9f1b-54baf9c0afed-83eca276/date-descending/1>).

Participation of key stakeholder groups, having clear aims and objectives, making clear individual or mutual benefits, appointing a legitimate convenor, and the commitment to implement decisions reached are all critical to successful community-based tourism development in developing countries [36]. Tourism in developing countries can contribute to sustainable rural development by creating self- and local employment opportunities, fostering collaboration among the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, enhancing the socio-cultural effects of tourism, enabling locals to access infrastructure and services provided to tourists, fostering local community participation, and supporting institutional growth. Rural Sub-Saharan African places selling themselves as rural tourist destinations, on the other hand, must meet the notion of industry essential success elements. Tourists visiting rural Sub-Saharan Africa anticipate the qualities of the tourism products and services given to match their minimal standards [33,36]. Tourists place a premium on these crucial success characteristics. Key success characteristics are found by analyzing client



expectations and determining the basis of competitiveness in an industry. Accessibility, marketing communications, a great value position, perceived quality of services, the authenticity of experience, personal connections with visitors, and solid operational capabilities are examples of these. These major success variables are developed from demand and competitive evaluations [37]. Hierarchical capability utilization can guarantee rural destination accessibility via road infrastructure development, training local communities to improve operational capability, and targeted marketing communications, whereas bottom-up values will foster a strong value position, perceived quality of offerings, authentic tourist experiences, personal relationships with tourists, and operational excellence. However, the findings of the analysis show that partnerships for the acquisition or development of competencies that local communities do not already have are the only method to prevent any service gaps in Sub-Saharan African rural tourist offers in terms of the major success characteristics for rural tourism. The ability to influence and manage internal environmental elements, as well as monitor and respond to external environmental factors, is critical for strategic rural tourist growth [38].

3.1 Prospects and Improvements of Agrotourism in West Africa

Sensitization through seminars, and capacity development for both agricultural personnel and the community on the notion of agrotourism are some proposals for furthering the expansion of agrotourism in developing countries. Advertising campaigns, exhibits, and agricultural fairs can also be used to promote products. This is consistent with the assertion that agrotourism development is a process that necessitates resource planning, organization, coordination, and control to fulfil goals effectively and efficiently [15]. Contract farming to directly feed hotels is an opportunity that should be capitalized on to generate cash for the local community. The primary entrance point for development is the identification of asset levels, which is accomplished through modifying assets, processes, and institutions to produce desirable results. The county administration, in collaboration with the relevant state departments, must conduct an inventory of the players along the prospective agrotourism value chain and arrange for public-private partnerships to deepen these ties. This might have a significant socioeconomic impact due to a multiplier effect including agro-input suppliers, producers, transporters, traders, service businesses, and homestays [8,33]. Financial support is also essential for the development of agrotourism in the study region. Governmental and non-profit organizations can also help identify appropriate partners for co-funding. Deliberate attempts to diversify tourist promotional activities, locations, and attractions to include agrotourism may aid in the preservation of agricultural land and the distribution of tourism advantages. Lastly, small-scale agrotourism might be launched on a trial basis through demonstration farms at important locations. The whole output of a system will influence the county due to synergetic qualities. More study on the management, planning, and policy implications of agrotourism is needed. State governments, local governments, the national environment agency, tourist authorities, non-profit organizations, and tour operators are all valid partners in the development of 'rural tourism,' with varying needs and duties.

To make participatory tourist development a reality, systematic empowering techniques should be supported. For example, state governments in Sub-Saharan Africa may carefully implement purposeful policies that allow indigenous people to take advantage of tourist prospects if the intended goals are to share profits with local populations. One approach could be to encourage local communities to make a financial commitment to tourism development in their communities through various educational, financial, and fiscal tools, though non-profit organizations may assist local communities in obtaining initial funding and capacity building. Proper political decision-making at the central level, implementing adequate legislative frameworks, empowering local communities, and collaboration of dominant elite groups are crucial to the establishment of dominant elite groups. Appropriate political decision-making at the national level, the implementation of necessary regulatory frameworks, the empowerment of local people, and the collaboration of dominant elite groups are all crucial to the formation of the participatory tourist development model in developing nations. Power dynamics among stakeholder groups should be considered since powerful stakeholders control resource allocation and have sway over overall strategy. This is a critical aspect of a destination's unified strategic vision and capability.

4. CONCLUSION

Agrotourism is a new and growing kind of tourism that happens in both developed and developing nations. It offers a variety of experiences for urban tourists in a fast-urbanizing environment, allowing them to reconnect with the countryside. Despite its growing popularity, the consequences of agrotourism for local economic development have received little attention. Competitive advantage is becoming more connected with scarce and less imitable resources and competencies. Cultural legacy, population friendliness, and climatic circumstances are all difficult to replicate socially complex resources. Intangible resources, such as the reputation of providing a 'rural idyll' experience to tourists through cultural qualities and a particular rural



scenery, are uncommon. With a defined value position, operational excellence, and good customer interactions, Sub-Saharan African 'rural tourism' players can achieve a competitive edge. The success of this emerging event-based rural tourism strategy is predicated on training in customer service, operational excellence, and product quality, all of which may be achieved through the stakeholder network and collaboration proposed in this article. Long-term empowerment of local actors would also promote institutional capacity building, which may assist solve the challenges of inadequate competence in business planning, management, and operational abilities, as proposed. This will result in ensuring a brand identity in the global tourist marketplace, producing products and services that equal and surpass industry key success indicators while protecting the subcontinent's distinctive natural heritage. The concepts addressed in this paper are broad; nevertheless, each nation in Sub-Saharan Africa can modify them to its individual socioeconomic and environmental situations.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Research involving human participants and/or animals

No human participants or animals were involved in this research

Author contributions

Brou Pettay Jean: Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing-Original Draft; Writing-Review and Editing; **Kambou-Pandzou Renaud Steel:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing-Original Draft; Writing-Review and Editing; **Denzel Eshwanu Ulric Strasser-King:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing-Original Draft; **Tembele Kimia Stevy Lovell Cephas:** Writing-Original Draft, Formal analysis, Writing-Review and Editing; **Faustina Brown:** Resources, Methodology, Data Curation, Writing-Review and Editing; **Michael Enyan:** Data Curation, Resources, Methodology, Validation, Writing-Review and Editing, Supervision.

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