

Potential Development of Agri-tourism in Remote Areas of Developing Countries: The Case of Rwanda

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to develop an understanding of the supply and demand dynamics in Rwandan agritourism business. The motivations of tourists and farmers, the difficulties they face, and the opportunities that arise as a result of agritourism, in addition to the job opportunities that are created for rural Rwandan farmers are assessed. For this study, we adopted a qualitative approach, employing a semi-structured web and paper-based questionnaires and the online and face to face-based interview. To assess the answers from respondents, SPSS tool is used. The findings of this research indicate that agriculture-based tourism has not yet been developed in the considered area. Consequently, there are significant gaps in the preservation of biodiversity and tourist attractions, as well as a halt in the creation of jobs for local residents, as well a decline in revenue from tourism. Researchers hope to be able to contribute to the solutions to the challenges of operating an agritourism business by first gaining an awareness of the limitations, motivation, and perspectives of farmers. This work introduced garden tourism as a sort of agri-tourism in Karongi to help alleviate some of the above-mentioned problems, since it will increase the region's attractiveness and diversify the tourist industry there so that it isn't solely reliant on Lake Kivu.

Keywords: agritourism, botanical garden, development, Rwanda, rural area

1. Introduction

The tourism matrix has undergone significant transformations over the past several decades, and it is now referred to as an "industry of experiences". Travelers are always on the lookout for something different to do. As a result, they look to live and feel the sensations and experiences of the locations, to have moments that are outstanding, and to look for anything that may be unique and that extends beyond the range of common sense (Dixit et al, 2021). Worldwide, some of the most well-known agritourism hotspots can be found in the following countries: Taiwan; Italy; Tuscany; Spain; Mallorca; Brazil; Hawaii; Grenada; California; the Philippines; and these locations are administered by the government, the private sector, or a public-private partnership, (Han, H, 2021) to attract tourists and visitors. Also, the Rwandan subcontinent's many varied regions and climates, in addition to the fact that its farmers use so many different approaches, may be to the region's advantage.

As for garden-based tourism as the subsector of agritourism, the number of people wanting to visit gardens and landscapes has increased recently. This can be attributed to the qualities of these locations, feelings they generate, the meanings they convey, and represent (Backhaus and Murungi, 2009). Along with promoting and lengthening trips to various locations, garden tourism has the potential to aid in conservation efforts by raising awareness about environmental issues, arousing an appreciation for nature, and generating funds that can be put toward protecting natural landmarks (Gastal et al., 2018), (Anna J Czmyk et al, 2015).

The study's primary goals are to investigate the opinions of international and national consumers regarding the agritourism process and to gauge farmers' interest in starting an agritourism business in the near future by demonstrating to them a developed garden tourism during the period of the research.

2. Research Elaboration

2.1 Research questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Is agritourism feasible in Karongi District?
2. Are farmers interested in participating in agritourism? (Because they are too busy with their daily routines to notice.)
3. Will domestic and foreign visitors be interested in agritourism?
4. What are the advantages both economically and socially of visiting the botanic gardens in Karongi District?

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology (Boujie et al., 2019), (Dźwigoł et al., 2018) in order to investigate and explain the expectations and perceptions of the target community regarding the introduction of botanical garden tourism and awareness in agritourism in the Karongi District. In this research study, an investigation was carried out to identify two distinct aspects.

2.2 Population and Sample size

In this research study, an investigation was carried out to identify two distinct aspects.

Supply side: The first study of its kind to investigate the level of interest that farmers have in running agritourism businesses. The interview method (Busetto et al., 2019) used by the researcher is semi-structured. Owing to the difficulty in communicating due to language difficulties and IICT illiteracy, study interviewers were tasked with conducting interviews with farmers in order to gather information. The interviewee is required to provide responses to ten questions. In this particular study, a sample size of 100 was intended to be used. The sample was chosen in a random fashion, and the respondents each took part in an individual interview.

Demand side: After that, research was conducted to determine whether or not members of the general public are open to participating in agritourism activities. A questionnaire online with a semi-structured format designed to collect information from the general public regarding their willingness to participate in agritourism (Aithal et al., 2020), (Singh et al., 2021). This survey has a total of ten questions. The number 100 was chosen as the aim for the sample size of this investigation. The information obtained from members of the general public was gathered by the researcher through the use of email and various social media platforms.

2.3 Data analysis strategies

To analyse data, regression analysis (Brook et al., 2018) was used by researchers to understand the relationship between the variables and T-Test analysis (Van Doorn et al., 2021) was used to compare the means of our two groups (tourism operators and visitors).

3. Findings and results analysis

3.1 Findings on supply side

Participants in the survey were chosen at random. A total of 288 farmers from different parts of the Karongi District (13 sectors as named from Bwishyura to Twumba) participated in survey questions prepared by the researchers. 230 men, or 79.86 % of the total, took part in the survey, while only 19 women, or 20.14%, did so. This is because the farm industry is traditionally dominated by male family heads. Every single one of the responders had some sort of connection to the agricultural industry dating back 15 years. The chart in Figure 1 denotes the distribution of participants from different locations of Karongi District.

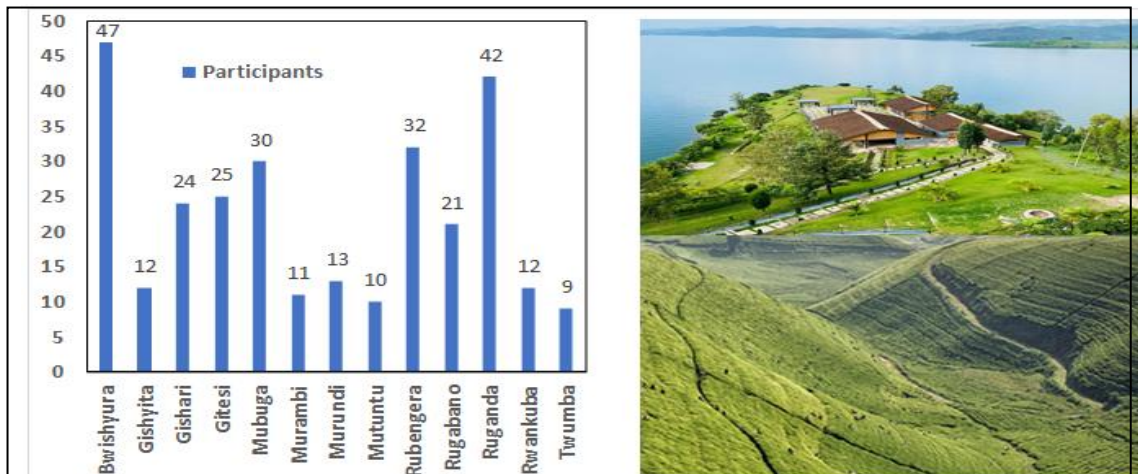


Figure 1: Participated farmers and their place of origin in Karongi District. Source: Author

3.1.1 Knowledge about agritourism

Among the respondents, 256 (or 88.9%) had never heard of agritourism; only 32 (or 11.1%) had been informed about agritourism by their friends and family members who live abroad or had read about agritourism in some articles. Agritourism is the practice of farmers hosting tourists on their farms and providing them with food and accommodation.

Despite the fact that most farmers are unfamiliar with the notion of agritourism, the majority of them are interested in beginning this type of business, and each responder has inquired about how agritourism may complement agriculture. After hearing about the benefits and drawbacks of agritourism, researchers came to the following conclusion: 156 people, or 54.1%, are completely open to the idea of beginning a business. 92 farmers, or 32%, are eager to perform if the government provides them with the appropriate training and financial support (in the form of bank loans and subsidies). 40 farmers, or 13.9%, have indicated that they are not interested. Figure 2 shows the findings regarding the farmers willingness about starting agriculture tourism and their interest in doing this.

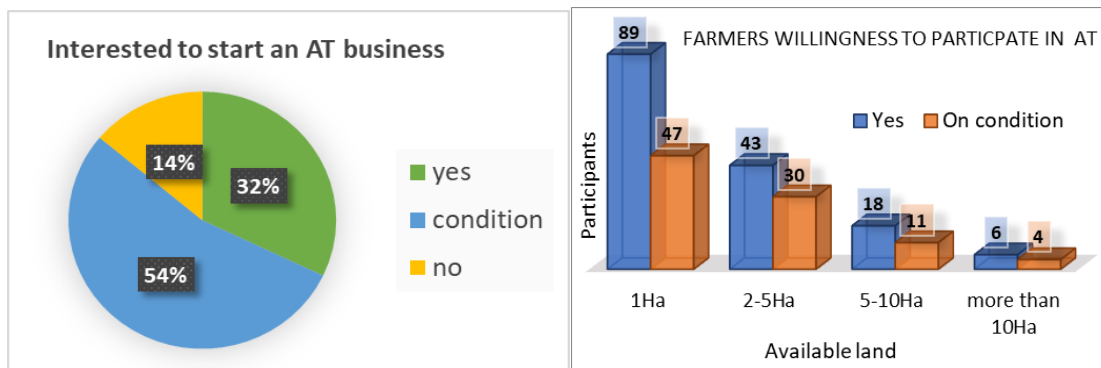


Figure 2: Respondents interested to start an Agrotourism (AT) and farmers willing to take part. Source: Author

3.2 Findings on demand side

This particular aspect of the research was carried out by the researcher using a web survey. The author has used social media and email as well as solicited the assistance of human resource managers at various multinational firms based in Karongi in order to disseminate the questionnaire among the many organizations located throughout Karongi. A total of 1047 replies have been received by the researcher. In the course of this study: There are 422 (40%) female participants and 625 (60%) male participants. Only

101 (9.69%) of the people do not have jobs or have not mentioned what they do for a living. Age distribution of respondents is presented in Figure 3.

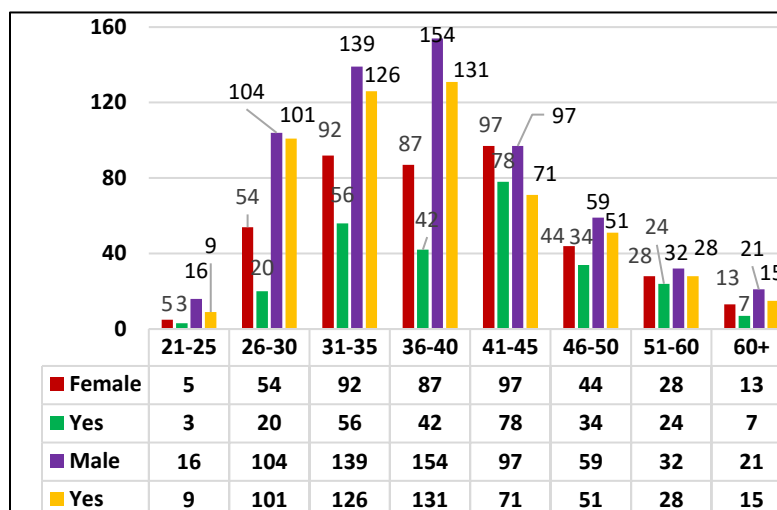


Figure 3: Gender wise and age participation. Source: Author

3.2.1. Awareness about agritourism

The findings of this study include the opinions of 622 male respondents (representing 60% of the total) and 420 female respondents (representing 40% of the total). 798 of the respondents, which is 77%, have heard of agritourism farms in Karongi, however only a relatively small number (11 persons) have indicated that they have visited these farms and that their visit was enjoyable. A total of 244 (23%) of the respondents had no prior knowledge of agritourism.

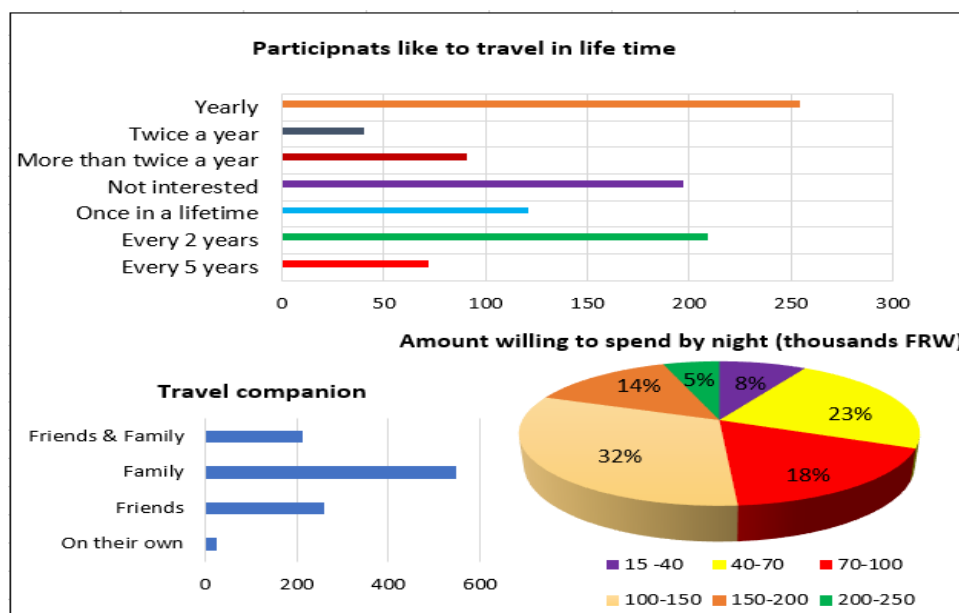


Figure 4: Travel frequency, travel companion, and the amount will be spent. Source: Authors

According to the information provided by the respondents, the researcher has discovered that 984 people, or 94%, are interested in participating in agritourism at least once in their lives. According to the findings of the study, 53.96 percent of respondents have entertained the idea of staying at the location for two days up to one week and desire to spend between 150 thousand and 300 thousand Rwanda franc. Surprisingly,

all of the respondents who are employed in the field of information technology are included in the group of 84 people who have indicated that they are willing to stay for one day each year and that they are able to spend up to one hundred thousand francs. The vast majority of individuals are open to going along with friends, family, or even with friends and family; nonetheless, only 26 individuals (2.64%) want to perform on their own.

From what the study participants told the researchers, they were willing to spend anything between 15,000 and 200,000 RFW on a vacation that involved agricultural activities. A total of 351 respondents (34% of the total) said that their family's annual travel budget can range from 80,000 to 120,000 RFW.

3.2.1 Attractive hobbies and events

A total of 981 respondents indicated enthusiasm for various pursuits. Sightseeing is noted by fewer than half of the respondents, followed by Relaxing and Learning Local Culture & Tradition (721; 73.27%) each, then Farming Activities (584; 59.34%), followed by Participating in botanical Garden Visiting (51%), and finally Campfires and Sporting Activities (50% each). The reason for travel for the population under consideration are depicted in Figure 5.

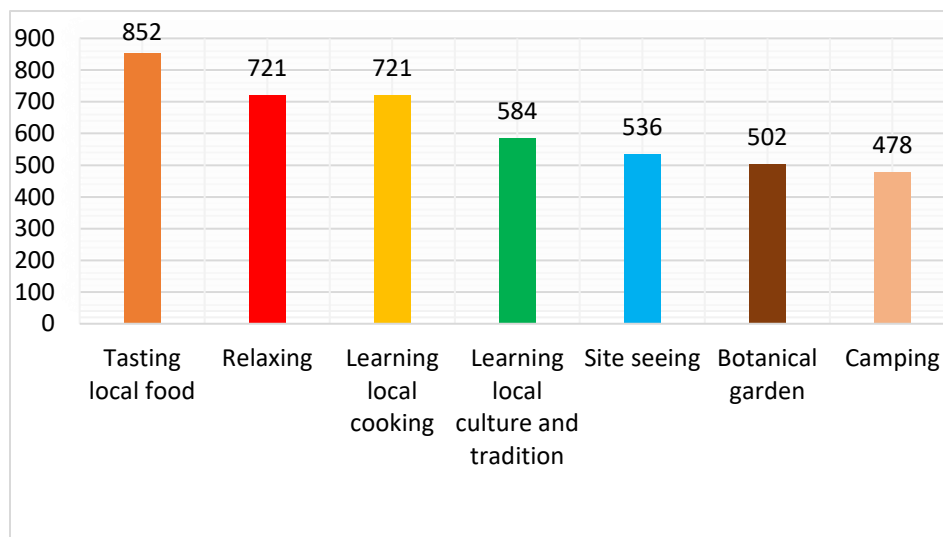


Figure 5: Most activities to perform during agriculture-based tourism. Source: Author

3.3 Discussions

The majority of the people that took part in the study were male. It is common knowledge that there are fewer women participating in the comparative research study than there are men. It's possible that the low number of female farmers who took part in the study is due to the fact that farming in Rwanda is traditionally dominated by men and is managed by the head of the family.

According to the findings of the study as a whole, 63.33 per cent of women and 85.5 percent of men are interested in participating in agritourism. More women in the age range of 40 to 60 years old have expressed interest than women in any other age group. Agritourism piqued the curiosity of males between the ages of 26 and 35 more than any other age group.

In general, the following were observed:

The concept of ecotourism and sustainable travel appeals to vacationers, and they are eager to become involved because they wish to "FEED THE FEEDER" by supporting local farmers by visiting their farms and participating in tourism activities there.

These individuals are prepared to invest a sizeable sum of money in tourism and in the direct purchase of locally grown products from the farmers.

Some of the responders have expressed an interest in helping farmers without charging them while others have stated that they are willing to pay farmers for the opportunity to improve their farming skills. In order for them to be able to open their own farms in the future or to run hobby farms in their respective communities.

4. Conclusion

Because each province in Rwanda is unique in terms of its culture, traditions, climate, history, scenery, and agricultural practices, the market for agritourism in Rwanda has a lot of untapped potential. It can help farmers create more money and it can also give employment in rural areas, both of which are important factors that one hopes will contribute to a reduction in the outflow of people from rural Rwanda. Agritourism in Rwanda is something that many visitors are looking forward to partaking in because it offers a variety of various services. Before beginning an agritourism business, farmers are required to take all essential precautions and undergo training in all elements of hospitality and tourism. In the event that the farmers do not take any action, their financial situation would deteriorate, which will result in significant indebtedness.

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