



INDIGENOUS HANDCRAFT AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN WAMBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE, 1996 – 2020

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Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between indigenous handicraft and tourism development in Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State between 1996 and 2020. The research was motivated by the problem of declining traditional craft practices and the underutilization of indigenous cultural industries despite the presence of significant tourism potential, particularly around the Farin Ruwa Waterfalls. The main objectives were to examine how traditional crafts such as weaving, pottery, blacksmithing, mat-making, and carving contributed to cultural preservation and local livelihoods, to analyze the extent to which tourism promoted these crafts, and to identify the challenges hindering their integration into the tourism economy. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology, relying on oral interviews, field observations, and documentary sources to gather historical and socio-economic data. Findings revealed that indigenous handicrafts in Wamba played a vital role in sustaining cultural identity and generating income for artisans, while the growth of tourism modestly improved their visibility and market opportunities. However, infrastructural deficits, insecurity, weak marketing systems, and inadequate government support hindered the full development of the handicraft–tourism nexus. The study concludes that indigenous handicrafts in Wamba remain an underexploited resource for sustainable tourism and rural development. It recommends increased government investment, improved infrastructure, and cultural promotion initiatives to enhance the contribution of local crafts to tourism growth and community empowerment.

Keywords: Indigenous, Handcraft, Tourism, Development,

Introduction

The development of most states across the globe were predicated on specific socio-economic activities that were carefully explored and its potentials adequately harnessed. Thus, development



of most societies did not emanate in a vacuum. One of these numerous socio-economic activities that has continued to improve the economy of most states across the world is the tourism industry, states such as United States, Spain, Japan, Singapore, and United Arab Emirates among others.¹ In fact, Mfon suggest that “tourism has become an important industry in the world”.² This notion was influenced by the large percentage of revenue generated among some of the nations that identified the potency of tourism and contributed hugely in its development. Thus, tourism industry, which has become major source of wealth and channel through which most nations improve their ailing economies, has been described as one of the largest and fastest growing industries. The level of the expansion of tourism industry and its expanding impact has been attributed to several factors such as improvement in technology which spans through to other key areas such as communication, transportation, improved human relations through diplomacy in the international system. Several states, across various continents such as Britain, China, Dubai, Rwanda, Sri-Lanka, Thailand, United States of America, among others are hugely investing and improving their tourist sites as an alternative to transform their economies.

Statistics from World Economic Forum shows that many states have benefited from the dividend of tourism. As at 2024, states such as Cyprus France, United States, Japan, Spain, and Singapore respectively were ranked the four largest economies improved from the foreign exchange gotten from tourism.² Statistics provided by World Bank Report suggest that as from 1980 to 2000 tourism has taken a new dimension with new global arrivals having seen its impact on other countries.³ The report further notes that from 1980 to 2000 arrivals in Asia Pacific grew from 8% to 22% contributing to economic growth and improved livelihoods. Within the same period, Africa’s market share for global tourism grew from 3% to 5% in 2010. Meanwhile, Athula and Sandaruwani

1 World Economic Forum. These are the top 10 countries for travel and tourism. May 21, 2024. retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/05/tourism-travel-pandemic-economy/> on 15/01/2025

² E. E Mfon “Art and Tourism: Promising Yet Unkempt Resources of Nigeria.” *Nigeria Journal of Art and Tourism* Vol 1. No 1, (2017), 45

2 S. Shankman, “15 Countries with Biggest Gains in Tourism Receipts in 2013” accessed via <http://skift.com> 23/07/2023.

3 “Africa Tourism Report 2013: More Tourists visit Africa Each Year, Boosting Economic Growth and Making the Continent Competitive with other Regions” World BankReport, 2013, 21.



observes that in 2013, Sri Lanka economy was transformed through foreign exchange earnings.⁴ Thus, the significance of tourism is numerous.

Furthermore, with the transformation of the tourism industry, new areas began to emerge shifting its parameters to cover areas such as culture which is averse to the primary use of national parks and vacations. Thus, areas such as the crafts industry became focal and incorporated rural dwellers to be part of the expanding tourism industry with considerable rate of rural development in all ramifications. Hence, the link between local crafts and tourism became parts and parcel of development chain in states with tourism potentials. In Africa, Lain et al suggests that there are numerous and unprecedented economic growth and development linked to tourism which remains unexplored.⁵ To these authors, problems such as poor leadership management, lack of entrepreneurial drive, and mismanagement of natural resources are accountable for the backwardness in the tourism industry in Africa. This is not surprising because of the rich natural resources such as rivers, vegetation, forest, and mountains among others that key in tourism industrial are under used.

This problem cuts across most Africa nations such as Nigeria, endowed with enormous natural and human resources with diverse cultural heritage displayed in their local industry and artistic practices, making her one of Africa's largest economies, which can boost this sector are neglected. In other words, these unquantifiable cultural and artistic skills are yet to be tapped and fully utilized for social, economic, religious and political well-being of her citizens. Given these fortunes, the economy has been plagued with the "Dutch epidemic", which has been exacerbated by the weak reliance on crude oil since its discovery in 1956.⁶ According to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the petroleum sector has gradually become the centre piece of Nigeria's economy because it accounts for 10% of the gross domestic profit, 70% of the federal and state government revenue and up to 83% of the country's export, making other sectors almost dormant.⁷ This negligence has contributed to Nigeria's development crisis as reflected on the national gross domestic product. This is the same problem affecting Nasarawa State. This study

4 W. K. G. Athula and J. A. R. C. Sandaruwani "Impacts of Tourism Development in Cultural and Heritage Sites: An Empirical Investigation" *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration* Vol. 2, No. 6, 2016, 68-78

5 C.Lain, T Fernandes, E. Herrera, H.R Twining-Ward, and D. Louise. Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Tourism for Growth and Improved Livelihood (World Bank Publication, 2013), 2.

6 A. Bankole, "The Nigerian Tourism Sector: Contribution, Constraints, and Opportunities". *The Journal of Hospitality Financial Management*, 10(1). 2002. 71-89.

7 The Economic Context of Nigeria - Economic and Political Overview – Nord Sea Trade Portal, 2020), 13.



seeks to examine the role of local handcrafts industry to the development of the tourism industry in Nasarawa State.

The relationship between indigenous handcraft industries and tourism industry, complementarily and strengthen each other in attracting tourists and competing favorable with other destinations and regions across the globe. To this end, many states that have successfully identified this connection have benefited and improved their socio-economic conditions. Crafts creates the uniqueness of tourism industry which paves ways for tourists' patronage while tourism enhances craft through the establishment of market base required for the expansion of crafts industry. Thus, creating a strong relation between tourism industry and its element handcrafts. However, there is lack of development in tourism to boost opportunities provided by the handcraft industries to tourism. This is particularly so at Farin Ruwa Waterfall in Nasarawa State. The problem of this backwardness in the tourism industry in Nasarawa State is that, while there are array of literature on the intertwining and mutual impact of tourism industry on local craft industry, there is a lack of literature that documents and explains the nexus between indigenous handcraft industries and tourism in Farin-Ruwa and by extension Nasarawa State generally. This is a major setback that has limited the awareness of these thriving economic activities and its positive impact not felt by the citizens.

The study area and subject matter has also suffered a significant negligence in terms of efforts to revamp this sector by the State Government as well as private investors investing in the sector. This has affected the economic growth of the state and the citizens because of its dormancy. This study therefore seeks to interrogate Indigenous Craft Industry and the Development of Tourism in Farin-Ruwa in Wamba LGA 1996 to 2020 and study adopted a multi-disciplinary approach, where several sources of history and other disciplines such as economics and development studies are deployed for the purpose of corroborating the information reached at the end of the study

Conceptual Clarification

Handicrafts

Handicrafts depict a cultural trait of a specific region/time and are defined as products made without the use of tool. They are simple implements or implements operated directly by the craftsman/woman, by hand or foot, having traditional or artistic features driven from the geographical cultural peculiarities of craftsmen/women and generally on a small industry and not on a mass production basis. A key feature of crafts is that they involve a high degree of "hands-on" craftsmanship rather than just skill with a machine. Some crafts that are practiced by artists working alone are sometimes referred to by the vague term "studio craft".⁸ Hence, traditional craft as will be used in this study is seen as a traditional branch of business, which embodies the

⁸ The Economic Context of Nigeria - Economic and Political Overview - Nordea Trade Portal, (2020), 13.



knowledge acquired by a particular people or society in their struggle to adapt to the natural environment. It is pertinent to note that these traditional crafts are always an important aspect of culture, because they constitute viable cultural attractions.⁹

Tourism Development

Tourism as a concept, explained separately from development, is the business of providing services to tourists. It conceptually arises from the movement of people to, and their staying in different destinations. This movement could be at three different levels namely intercontinental, intra-region and domestic. In another way, the International Association of Scientific Experts on tourism describes tourism as “the sum of phenomena and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity.”¹⁰ Scholars such as Uche opines that “tourism is about people being away from their own homes on short term, temporary visits for particular tourism purposes”¹¹ This can further be explained as the pastime of journeying from one’s home or country to some places, near or far in connection with either business or pleasure. Honey agrees that tourism is seen as a leisure travel.¹³ Hence, tourism is a pleasure activity in which money earned in one’s normal domicile is spent in places visited.

Tourism can be explained, further still, as the deliberate movement of people from a particular region to another area for recreational purposes. This explanation is characterised by the following: Firstly, it is essential for promoting mutual understanding between people of different tribes, races, religious and cultural background. This first feature promotes global peace and social co-existence among individuals from different part of the world who eventually come in contact with each other through tourism activities. The second feature from the definition above is that tourism creates an opportunity for people to acquire art works, and traditional customs among others, that are indigenous to their host country. Thus, tourism erodes the sociocultural limitation of acquiring artistic piece from people from different cultural background. Hence, appreciation of art and culture is lucidly manifested in the process among tourist and host communities.

Theoretical Framework

The push and pull theory of motivations proposed by Dann is another widely accepted theoretical framework in tourism research.¹² The theory suggests multiple factors that motivate tourists and/or

⁹ A. I Okpoko, and P.U Okpoko, *Tourism in Nigeria*. (Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publishing Co. Ltd. 2002. 3

¹⁰ S. Prath, *Successful Tourism Management: fundamental of Tourism*, (India: Sterling Publishers, 2005), 5.

¹¹ M. Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: who Owns Paradise?* (2nded), (London: Island Press, 2008), 9

¹² G.M.S, Dann, “*Tourist Motivation: An Appraisal*”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1981, 187



travelers to visit particular places or destinations, but these factors can be categorised as either push or pull motivations. For the push factors can, at the most basic level, be explained as intrinsic factors or internal drives that urge individuals to travel. These are associated with factors such as longings for rest, recreation, adventure and escape and a desire to ‘get away from it all’ and to transcend the feeling of isolation inherent in contemporary lifestyles. Thus, push factors can be summed up as factors encouraging people to travel, representing individuals’ socio-psychological needs. In contrast, pull factors are mostly associated with destinations’ amenities, for example, service quality, prices and infrastructure.¹³

It should be pointed out that push factors are more inward in nature and physiological. When exploited by destination planners and marketers in appropriate ways, these factors can help attract more tourists to particular destinations. Push factors that are adequately understood and exploited by destination planners in appropriate ways can then become pull factors, which are mostly external in nature. Pull factors come from within destinations, but these factors can help trigger push factors. Destinations thus should be able to meet customers’ expectations in terms of prices, facilities (e.g. accommodation, transportation, food, restaurants and amusement parks) and, most importantly, the level of quality provided. This means that, from time to time, destination managers need to augment their offers in ways that satisfy customers’ needs and desires.

Forms of Handcrafts Industry in Wamba

There are various handcrafts industry in Wamba. The handicrafts industries are classified into domestic and workshop crafts and do not require sophisticated technology and are based on local and traditional expertise. The majority of raw materials used by them are provided within the locality. This is because the materials needed for production in the local industry are sourced locally from the available natural resources such as trees, raffia palm, stones, calabash, animal skins among others. This therefore presents the independence and economic self-sufficiency in this type of industry compared with other rural industries. In addition, handicrafts have both artistic and applied features.¹⁴ This industry includes the insight, talent, thought and culture of rural communities which has been transformed overtime and passed on from generation to generation as a way of life. This does not necessarily mean that the styles and methodology are not improved on by the apprentices. In fact, craftsmanship is dependent on the ability of the individual to improve on existing ideas or methods of developing a particular craft such as carving, blacksmiths, and weaving.^{15, 92} The use of technical and indigenous knowledge in this industry represents the originality of this industry in Wamba. Thus, handicrafts include: Firstly, weaving industries where mats, baskets, and fans are produced. Secondly, traditional textile industry where local loom made

¹³ Dann, “*Anomie, Ego-Enhancement and Tourism ...*”, 1977, 184

¹⁴ E. Jahangard, “The Role of Rural Products in Iran’s Economy”. *Jihad Journal* 16 (9), 2008, 5

¹⁵ Interview: Godiya Shuaibu, F, 57, Weaver and Trader, Wamba, 23/07/2023



of sticks and iron are used to produce products like woolen cloth, shawls and cotton and wool cloths. Thirdly, the pottery industry whereby clay gotten locally are used to produce domestics utensils and trade items among the indigenous people. And lastly, blacksmithing industry where iron equipment for domestic, agriculture and other purposes are produced locally. It should be pointed out that these local industries are scattered around within the major towns and rural areas which in strategic location such as market, festival centres, and town squares.¹⁶

Nature of Handcraft Industries and Tourism Site in Wamba

As observed earlier, the prevalence of this crafts industry is owing to the rich nature of the environment. Thus, the availability of human and natural resources has made it easy for the people to benefit from the numerous opportunities provided by crafts industry. The nature of handcrafts industry in Wamba would be explained using the wood carving industry among several others.¹⁷

Wood Carving Handcrafts

Wood carving industry has played significant role in the history of Wamba area. This activity dates back to the pre-colonial period. In the wood carving industry, several materials such as hoe, mortar, chair, table, and wood for building houses. This activity is practiced by both men and women at different level of its processing. The activity entails the falling of trees and design them into various usable state. As pointed out earlier, the area has thick vegetation and forest. Hence, collecting the desired wood for carving is easy. However, the distance from some of the forest to the workshop where they are then processed has affected this activity. In Wamba, the major groups engaged in the carving handcrafts are the Kubere and Yashi community in Wamba. Carving serves as an indigenous knowledge and cultural practices of the people.

A wood carver identifies what he wants before getting the exact type of materials required for its production. For instance, mortar is an important domestic utensil. This activity is engaged mostly by men in areas such as falling of trees and transporting them back to where it is needed for processing. This is supported by the position of Bichi “art of mortar carving is strictly reserved for men; however, traditionally, the people do not forbid women from carving mortars”.¹⁸ From her position, women’s low participation in mortar making is attributed to the tedious nature of its processing. This activity requires a great deal of energy. However, the trading of produced mortar is largely carried out by women across the area in internal or external trade.

The production of mortar is depended on crude implements such as cutlass, adze, file, wooden mallet, as well as different sizes of chisels. The raw material is mainly hard wood of different types like Iroko, oil bean, and Kade. Presently, due to scarcity and the expensive nature of hardwood

¹⁶ Jahangard, “The Role of Rural Products in Iran’s Economy” ..., 5

¹⁷ Jahangard, “The Role of Rural Products in Iran’s Economy” ..., 5

¹⁸ Interview: Kefas Bichi, F, 58, Trade in mortar, Wamba, 17/07/2023



largely caused by deforestation, carvers sometimes use mango and native pear woods to produce mortar. Although, these types of woods are not reliable because of poor durability of products made from them. Hard woods are most times bought from people who fell down trees. Occasionally, mortar carvers go deep into the forest to cut down trees, which are communally owned and controlled by the local community council.¹⁹

The production of mortar comprised of several processes. The first step is identifying what a carver intends to produce. The next step is to cut these woods into desired sizes of log. Then the carver uses a machete to peel the bark of the log until the shape of the mortar is revealed. After this, he then uses an improvised hammer (mallet) and a foot-long chisel with a heavy wooden head to start digging out the mortar. Here, the carver puts the log in between his legs and holds it with his feet to maintain balance, after which he places the chisel on the part he wants to open and hits it with the mallet to penetrate into the wood.²⁰ This process is continued until the wood is hollowed enough to use an adze on it. The adze is used to scrap out the rough shaft accrued from the activities of the chisel and mallet and when this is done, the carver smoothens the hollowed part of the mortar, thereby giving it a finishing touch.

Drum Carving

Within the carving craft industry is the drum carving. The production of drum depends on the same implements like the ones used in the production of masks and figurines in addition to the animal skin. This activity is carried out among the inhabitants of Wamba, particularly, the Gwandara ethnic groups found in the area. The process of carving a drum is synonymous to that of mortar. This is because all wood carvings follow similar carving process and techniques in their initial stages. After the wood must have dried, the carver then removes the bark of the wood before using a machete to give the outer part of the wood the desired shape for the drum. Thereafter, he then uses the big and small chisels with the aid of a wooden mallet to make the wood hollow all through, usually in the form of a tunnel.²¹ Thereafter, he uses the adze to smoothen both the outer and inner parts of the drum before he paints the outer part and leaves it to dry. When this is achieved, he puts the unfinished drum in between his legs (for balance) and covers the head of the drum (usually the wider end of the carved log) with a goat or sheep skin and then uses a well braid raffia vein to hold the animal skin tightly against the body of the drum so that it does not shift.²² To ensure the tightness and further strengthening of the skin, the carver ties another raffia vein on the drum; this

¹⁹ M. Mustafa. Potential of sustaining handicraft as a tourism product in Nepal. *International Journal of Business and Social Studies*, 2011; 2(2), 145-152.

²⁰ Mustafa. Potential of sustaining handicraft as a tourism product in Nepal ..., 145-152.

²¹ Oladipo, Joseph, and Ijeoma Nwosu. "Cultural Significance of Traditional Musical Instruments in Central Nigeria." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 31, no. 3 (2019): 215–230.

²² Ecoma, C. E. "Traditional Wood Carving and Its Relevance in Contemporary Nigerian Society." *Nigerian Journal of Arts and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2016): 112–126.



time, he brings the vein a lit lower from the mouth of the drum, and then uses rope to connect the upper raffia vein to the lower one. Thereafter, he fixes a sort of wood tightener in between the lower raffia vein and the body of the drum. Once this is done, the animal skin will not shift or weaken, no matter how hard its player beats on it.²³

Farin Ruwa Tourist Site at Wamba

In Wamba, one of the major tourist sites is the Farin Ruwa Waterfall. The waterfall provides opportunities for tourists and the inhabitant to appreciate nature and understand the historical development of the area and its people. The major activities carried out at Farin Ruwa Waterfall is influenced by the nature of the geographical terrain. Some of the activities are discussed below: Firstly, the Farin Ruwa waterfalls provides the environment for sporting activities such as hiking. This is possible because of rock and hilly nature of the area. This activity is usually carried out among group of one or more persons using shoes, eye glasses, water bottle, and bags among others. The hills and rocks give a better view of the geographical location of the area.²⁴

Also, the presence of the waterfall provides swimming environment for the inhabitant and tourist. Just like hiking, swimming is a recreational and sport activity. Some of the tourist and local people swim within the water logs usually deep and wide for people to swim. At the same time, some of the tourist and the indigenous people, swim and play around the falling water because of how it splashes.²⁵ The Farin Ruwa tourist site provides lodging and accommodation services for tourists intending to stay for more than a day. This is in addition to sales of various kinds of foods, drinks, and meats. This infrastructure has helped in attracting tourist from different part of the country and foreign tourists. The lodge and accommodation are controlled by staffs employed purposely to serve tourist demands.²⁶

There are various infrastructures in the site used to support these activities listed above. The essence of the infrastructure is to ease tourists during their tour. The nature of infrastructure in the area comprised of over 8 lodges and accommodation, road network, staircases, fence and gate, security post, and bridges. The tourist site has standby generator used to provide power in the absence of electricity. Road network in the area is worth discussing. This is because transportation is significant in the development of any society. The road network at Farin Ruwa can be explained in two sense. The first is the major road linking the area to Wamba. Along the road there are numerous houses, shops, and farms which describes the nature of the peoples' activities. The next is the road network linking within the Waterfall. There are foot paths that are cleared with cutlasses and also some cemented paths most especially around the stair case area leading to the main

²³ Oladipo and Ijeoma. "Cultural Significance of Traditional Musical Instruments ...", 215–230.

²⁴ Interview: Elder Akumo, Abati

²⁵ Interview: Elder Akumo, Abati

²⁶ Interview with Sunday Jatau



waterfall. The tourism management board of Nasarawa State has considerably made some significant progress in the road networks within the site.²⁷ The constructed stairs have helped people to walk freely during the wet season. However, the problem with all these bridges and stairs is that they do not support vehicles or motorcycle. Thus, the only means to easily tour the site is by foot.

Also, during the wet season, the road is not easily accessible because of mud and water. It should be pointed out that there are over three bridges from the Farin Ruwa junction carefully separated among the villages to the waterfall. More so, the bridge is not wide enough to enable more than two users at the same time. This description is further buttressed by Ijeoma who opines that there are five streams in Wamba while on transit to Farin Ruwa Waterfall from Sisimbaka community.²⁸ Three out of the five streams had no culverts. Hence, transportation infrastructure is low in Farin Ruwa area.²⁹ However, the present governor of Nasarawa State A.A Sule has showed interest in revitalizing the Farin Ruwa waterfall. His first attempt towards revamping the tourist site was the reconstruction of roads which was started by the former governor of Nasarawa State Alhaji Tanko Almakura.

Relationships between Local Handcraft Industries and Farin Ruwa Waterfall

The relationship between handcrafts and tourism industry is numerous. This is because they contribute directly and indirectly within the community by contributing and stimulating regional interactions and economic development. The improvement in the traditional crafts enhances not only the people's social life, but also acts as a catalyst to other investments, which contribute to sustainable development and inter-group relations within the region and beyond.³⁰ There are two approaches to revitalizing local areas which are the exogenous and endogenous.³¹ While the exogenous development entails a way to promote economic prosperity by introducing investments or resources from the outside, especially from foreign companies in developing countries. A strong argument has been made by scholars like Jahangard “that development dictated from outside rather than anchored in the knowledge base of the target population is in principle modernization disguised and not fully concerned with local needs.”³² Imposed development path is central and biased towards economic progress yet development should be considered as a gradual transition of society to a strong socioeconomic status. Evident, throughout the developing world, economic activities, specifically industrialization, tend to be concentrated in large cities, as opposed to being

²⁷ Interview: Daniel Likita,

²⁸ Ijeoma and Alao “Assessment of Ecotourism Development at FarinRuwa Water Fall...”, 173

²⁹ Ijeoma and Alao “Assessment of Ecotourism Development at FarinRuwa Water Fall...”, 173

³⁰ T.T Mkhonta and P.E Zwane, “Post-harvest, handling, processing and Marketing of Sisal Fibres and Crafts in the Shiselweni District of Swaziland” *Journal of Social Sciences* 6(2). 2004: 39-47.

³¹ S. Mundle, and V. B Arkadie, “The Rural-Urban Transition” in *VietNam:SomeSelectedIssues*. (Manila:

³² Jahangard, “The Role of Rural Products in Iran’s Economy”..., 7.



evenly dispersed throughout a country. Handicrafts are a good example of an endogenous approach to development. This explains why Limkriengkrai, argues that handicrafts play an important role in the development of national economy in general and rural economy in particular.³³

Meanwhile, the endogenous approach has to do with the concept of economic growth due to factors that are internal to the economy and not because of external ones, in this case exogenous.³⁴ This can also be seen as a variety of coordinated efforts through programs by governmental, philanthropic, environmental, religious and /or financial organizations to promote the wellbeing of the indigenous populations, usually via development efforts. This endogenous approach towards development is guided by the idea that improvements in innovation, knowledge, and human capital lead to increased productivity, positively affecting economic outlook.³⁵ From this position, local crafts industry has an important position since it involves the use of innovation, skills, and understanding acquired from the available crafts centers.³⁶ This means that for internal development of any area, local industries if functional, are key to its improvement and are predicated on variables such as tourism which serves as a centripetal factor.

Thus, in Wamba, just like other parts of Nigeria, there are both local industries and tourism which works better when they are functional and readily available to meet the demand of the large population. However, in the presence of the available natural and human resources, there are limited domestic markets which are necessary for the development of handicrafts industry and thriving tourist sites as compared to other advanced nations.³⁷ This therefore implies that tourism, such as Farin Ruwa at Wamba, where there are large number of handicrafts industry can only have access to good market base if the tourism site is functional because of its benefits in attracting tourists from other parts of Nigeria and the larger international communities. In essence, this helps in establishing and improving the economic structure of Wamba through the influx tourists and in the process provides employment and generate income to local communities, the state, and the country as a whole.³⁸ It is apt to point that the socioeconomic transformation of Wamba and its tourist site has not been successful, regardless of its components and the distribution of employment through other sectoral activities that thrives in the area. This is subject to the parameters of labor and capital where handicrafts can be among the most important solutions to fight unemployment in the area due to the excellent properties such as investment and saving, hardworking, participation of women in production, diversifying sources of household income, reduced income risks, use of internal concepts and many other economic and cultural factors such

³³ J. Limkriengkrai, "Pottery and prosperity: handicrafts and rural development in Thailand" Ph.D thesis, Durham University. 36

³⁴ Mohi-ud-din and Bhushan, "An analysis of current scenario and contribution of handicrafts.., 7579

³⁵ Asian Development Bank. 1997), 7

³⁶ Interview: Bulus Usman, M, 67, Trader, Farin Ruwa, 26/07/2023

³⁷ Interview: Bulus Usman,

³⁸ Interview: Daniel Likita,



as high value-added, preservation of culture and indigenous origin, transmission of indigenous and local culture and other components and will have longterm effect on the economic and social development.³⁹ Hence, the handicraft products around the globe are the torchbearers of a community's identity in terms of its local culture, history, and tradition. Needless to say, consolidation of this industry would only extend the economic viability of those communities.

Limitations and Prospects of Handcraft Industries and Farin Ruwa Waterfall

There are various challenges that hampered the improvement of local handicrafts industries such as wood carving and tourism like Farin Ruwa Waterfall at Wamba. These limitations have undermined the relationship between wood carving industry and Farin Ruwa Waterfalls and their impact on the inhabitants of Wamba. These challenges are discussed as follows; Firstly, the inability of formulating, implementing, and monitoring of policies has been one major problem affecting the above endogenous development sectors. This problem is manifested in the poor level of infrastructures and inability to maintain the old structures. Particularly, the road network linking Farin Ruwa Waterfall to Wamba is bad and unmotorable. Until the administration of Senator Tanko Al-Makura the former government embarked on road construction. Prior to this time, several projects were awarded for the construction of roads around the area but the poor policy nature of the government resulted to its neglect.^{40, 109} This problem of policy failure affected the renovation and maintenance of the tourist site. This problem has affected the handcraft industry as well because of the failure of the government to implement policies that would contribute to the development of infant local industry. To some extent, policies directed to the empowerment of local apprentices engaged in local handicrafts were not involved in some of the training schemes because of the problem associated with monitoring of policies in Nasarawa State. This problem of policy failure is associated with the poor nature of the Nasarawa State Broadcasting Service which has led to poor circulation of information about the tourist site at Wamba. As such, the public city has been poor and has limited the awareness of Farin Ruwa Waterfall.⁴¹

Furthermore, the problem of policies reflected in mismanagement of the tourist site. This are manifested in the poor number of staffs without adequate training and skills needed to improve the tourist site. Aside from the problem of adequate staff, the leadership of the tourist site from the State Government has been poor. This is seen in the mismanagement of funds made for improving the area was swindled as a result of corruption and unaccountability. Hence, the problem of power

³⁹ 108 P.E Zwane, M.T Masarirambi, and T. Seyoum, "Natural Fibre Plant Resources of Economic Value Found in Wetlands of Swaziland: a review. Luyengo. University of Swaziland. *African Journal of Agricultural Research* 6(4):, 2011, 77

⁴⁰ Interview: Usman Bala, M, 67, retired civil servant, Farin Ruwa area, 27/07/2023

⁴¹ Interview: Sunday Jatau,



supply and pipe borne water which are basic amenities required in such sectors were not available. These problems led to decline of the Farin Ruwa Area.

Other problems were the problem of economic constraints manifested in the form of poverty has limited the purchase power of the tourist consideration transportation and other feeding materials required for comfort. This problem led to the decline of local industries because of absence of patronage from tourist. This problem of financial constraints led to the problem of insecurity such as armed robbery and kidnapping where huge amount ransom would be requested by the culprits for the release of any abducted individual. This problem forced tourist patronage of the tourism site to decline. Security is key in the continuity of socio-economic activities because of the fear of loss of lives and properties. This case is worst around the Farin Ruwa interiors as there are scanty bikes and cars that can convey tourist to the tourist site.

In spite of the challenges that has limited the development of handicrafts and tourism industry at Wamba, the prospect of handicrafts and tourism industry is still viable and its impact benefited by the citizens. As observed earlier, apart from revenue generation, indigenous crafts create employment directly and indirectly within the community as well as stimulate regional interactions and economic development. The improvement in the traditional crafts enhances not only the people's social life, but also acts as a catalyst to other investments, which contribute to sustainable development and inter-group relations within the region and beyond. Thus, if the government can invest in the renovation and transformation of the tourist site by making accessible roads, power supply, and adequate qualified man power, the site would be function. The reason for the bright prospect of handicrafts and tourism at Wamba is because of the non-transferable natural resource which fits into tourism such as rocks and flowing river; while the handicrafts are practice and perfected overtime by the people in the area. If the prospect are put into better perspective and its implementation, the benefits of handicrafts and tourism sites as observed above can contribute immensely to the development of the area.

Prospects of Handicraft and Tourism in Wamba

Nestled in the Massange village of Wamba Local Government Area in Nasarawa State, Farin Ruwa Waterfall is one of Nigeria's most spectacular natural attractions, cascading approximately 150 m from the Jos Plateau as "white smoke" over the escarpment.⁴² Its stunning height and dramatic spray provide a powerful base for ecotourism and cultural tourism development. Yet, its full potential remains largely untapped due to poor infrastructure, limited facilities, and inadequate

⁴² Muhammed, Umar (2021-04-25). "Farin Ruwa Waterfall: Where humans, animals enjoy nature". Daily Trust. Retrieved 2023-05-18.



promotion.^{43, 112} Given its proximity to Abuja (about 190 km), Lafia (120 km), and Wamba town (30 km), the site is well positioned for growth as a major tourism hub if proper access, accommodation, and services are developed.⁴⁴ One of the compelling prospects lies in linking indigenous handicraft production with tourism experiences. Surrounding communities including the Kulere speaking settlers of Massange and later Arum and Kantana ethnic groups¹¹⁴ possess traditional skills in pottery, weaving, beadwork, and carving. Presenting these crafts at markets, live demonstration pavilions, or souvenir shops at the waterfall site can create additional visitor value while preserving cultural heritage. Tourists drawn to the falls could enjoy immersive cultural encounters purchasing locally made handicrafts while engaging with artisans, thereby generating direct income for rural families and women's cooperatives.

Economic studies underscore the socio economic benefits that concerted attention could unlock. Research by Obadiah, Angbashim, and Dayang finds that development of ecotourism at Farin Ruwa could raise living standards in host communities through job creation, micro enterprise opportunities, and improved infrastructure support.⁴⁵ When handicraft artisans are integrated into tourist circuits, they become value chain participants in tourism's ripple effects craft stalls, guide services, hospitality helpers, even cultural performances enhance the economic multiplier.

Moreover, Nasarawa State government has shown intent to transform the site through public private partnerships. High level visits from the Minister of Culture and Culture and Tourism officials in 2021 highlighted plans for road upgrades, a film village resort, and hydroelectric development around Farin Ruwa aimed at positioning it as a Nollywood filming and holiday destination.⁴⁶ These infrastructural improvements would make the waterfall more accessible and attractive for organized tours, creating opportunities for combining nature tourism with craft markets, artisanal exhibitions, and on site cultural storytelling.

Nevertheless, challenges remain: poor road access, seasonal variation in water volume, and lack of amenities have hindered tourism growth so far.^{47, 117} Addressing these issues through phased

⁴³ L. Chukwu. Farin Ruwa Waterfall: Harnessing Nature's Gift In Nasarawa. TheGuardian. 31 Jan 2015. https://guardian.ng/sunday-magazine/cityfile/farin-ruwa-waterfall-harnessing-nature-s-gift-in-nasarawa/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#google_vignette

⁴⁴ Sunday Magazine. Farin Ruwa Waterfall: Where humans, animals enjoy nature. DailyTrust. Sun, 25 Apr 2021 3:43:31 WAT. https://dailytrust.com/farin-ruwa-waterfall-where-humans-animals-enjoynature/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴⁵ O. Bashayi, B. Angbashim and F. J. Dayang. Socio-Economic Impacts of Farin Ruwa Waterfall Ecotourism Development in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) [Volume VI, Issue XI, November 2022]ISSN 2454-
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⁴⁶ B. C. Onochie. Farin Ruwa Waterfalls: Tourist attraction seeking global attention. TheGuardian. Abuja. 2021. https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/travel-a-tourism/farin-ruwa-waterfalls-tourist-attractionseeking-global-attention/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴⁷ Onochie. Farin Ruwa Waterfalls: Tourist attraction seeking global attention ...,



infrastructure delivery, community training in hospitality and artisan marketing, and branding strategies could significantly elevate the tourism handicraft interface. Collective marketing platforms such as festivals showcasing local crafts at the waterfall during peak rainy season when flow is dramatic could draw domestic and regional visitors.

Thus, Farin Ruwa Waterfall holds huge promise not only as an ecotourism landmark but as a center for indigenous handicraft entrepreneurship. By synchronizing natural beauty with cultural creativity and ensuring community inclusion, the site can evolve into a sustainable economic engine. If roads, utilities, visitor facilities, and artisan support systems are implemented, Farin Ruwa stands to become not just a waterfall, but a living destination where tourism and handicrafts intertwine to uplift local livelihoods and promote Nasarawa's rich cultural heritage.

Challenges of Handicraft and Tourism in Wamba

In Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, the development of indigenous handicrafts is closely tied to the growth and functionality of its major tourism asset, the Farin Ruwa Waterfall. This ecotourism site, recognized for its impressive height and natural beauty, holds immense potential to serve as a springboard for local economic activities, particularly handicraft production. Handicrafts, which include wood carving, basketry, pottery, weaving, and blacksmithing, represent not only a means of livelihood for the Wamba people but also a critical aspect of cultural preservation.⁴⁸ However, due to the continued neglect and underdevelopment of the Farin Ruwa site, these crafts have remained largely invisible on the national and international stage. The lack of tourism traffic has meant limited exposure and commercial viability for local artisans, thereby stagnating growth in the sector. As such, the underutilization of Farin Ruwa directly hinders the potential of handicrafts to flourish as a viable cultural and economic industry within the region.

One of the primary challenges facing handicraft development in Wamba is the poor infrastructure leading to Farin Ruwa Waterfall.⁴⁹ Access roads to the site are largely unpaved, narrow, and in various states of disrepair, making it difficult for tourists to visit the location, especially during the rainy season. The absence of well-developed transportation facilities significantly reduces foot traffic, which is essential for sustaining a market for local crafts.⁵⁰ Artisans who depend on visitor purchases have little incentive to produce in volume or diversify their crafts, as the opportunity for sales is sporadic at best. Without a steady stream of tourists, craftspeople face low income, limited reinvestment capacity, and a declining motivation to maintain traditional techniques. Moreover, the lack of basic amenities such as electricity, security, and rest areas further discourages potential entrepreneurs or cultural investors from setting up craft markets or cooperative centers near the

⁴⁸ S. A. Umana. Tourism and socio-economic development in Nigeria. Monograph. University of Calabar Nigeria. Unpublished. (2010).

⁴⁹ V. B. Agbu. Marhai Forest Reserve, Bureau for Lands, Survey and Town Planning, Lafia, Nasarawa State. 2000.

⁵⁰ Agbu. Marhai Forest Reserve, Bureau for Lands, Survey and Town Planning ..., 10



site.⁵¹ Thus, the infrastructural deficits surrounding Farin Ruwa have translated directly into economic stagnation for Wamba's artisan communities.

The condition of Farin Ruwa Waterfall has also contributed to the absence of formal market platforms and promotional structures for handicrafts in Wamba. In thriving tourist destinations, organized spaces such as craft villages, souvenir stalls, and cultural pavilions serve as meeting points between artisans and consumers. However, the underdevelopment of Farin Ruwa has meant that no such market hubs exist in or around the site. As a result, artisans have limited avenues to showcase their work to outsiders, confining their sales to local markets with low purchasing power. Additionally, the lack of visibility for the waterfall has meant that Wamba remains excluded from regional or national tourism circuits, which could otherwise draw interest to its handicrafts. There is also little to no promotional material brochures, websites, or travel features connecting Wamba's cultural products to external markets. This marketing vacuum has left local craftspeople disconnected from potential buyers and unaware of how to price, present, or package their works for broader appeal.

The neglect of Farin Ruwa is emblematic of a broader absence of institutional support for heritage-based development in Wamb.⁵² Despite its recognition as a potential tourism goldmine, successive state and local governments have failed to make meaningful investments in transforming the site into a functioning ecotourism destination. This lack of political will has had a domino effect on the handicraft sector. With no public-private partnerships, training initiatives, or grants targeted at artisan development, most craftspeople operate informally and in isolation. Many have never received technical training in product refinement, business management, or value addition key factors that could make their work more competitive if tourism were thriving. Furthermore, the lack of formal registration for artisan cooperatives means that many are excluded from access to credit, exposure to exhibitions, or inclusion in trade fairs. In short, the neglect of Farin Ruwa has deprived Wamba artisans of a supportive ecosystem necessary for growth and sustainability.

Another challenge emanating from the stagnant condition of Farin Ruwa is the gradual erosion of interest in traditional crafts among the younger generation in Wamba. In the absence of tourism-based demand and recognition, indigenous handicrafts are increasingly seen as outdated or economically unviable. Younger people tend to migrate to urban areas in search of more stable income, leaving behind a dwindling population of older artisans. Without tourism-driven platforms to elevate and celebrate these crafts, they are often overlooked in education, local festivals, and cultural programming. As a result, the intergenerational transmission of skills is breaking down, with few apprentices to replace aging craftsmen and women. Moreover, many of the raw materials

⁵¹ Agbu. Marhai Forest Reserve, Bureau for Lands, Survey and Town Planning ..., 12

⁵² A. Tunde. Harnessing tourism potentials for sustainable development. A case study of Owu Waterfalls in Nigeria. *Journal of economic and sustainable development*. 5(10). 2012. 115-123



traditionally used for these crafts are becoming harder to source sustainably due to environmental degradation and lack of government regulation further discouraging youth from taking up the practice. Thus, the continued underdevelopment of Farin Ruwa is accelerating the disappearance of both the skills and the cultural pride associated with indigenous craftsmanship.

Finally, the failure to develop Farin Ruwa Waterfall as a tourist attraction has caused Wamba to miss out on both economic and cultural benefits that could otherwise arise from a vibrant handicraft-tourism interface. Across Nigeria, sites like Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Obudu Cattle Ranch have demonstrated how tourism can stimulate local economies, enhance cultural expression, and preserve indigenous knowledge systems. In Wamba, however, these opportunities remain unrealized.

The community continues to grapple with poverty, youth unemployment, and low economic diversification challenges that a developed tourist sector could help mitigate. Furthermore, without the kind of national and international attention that Farin Ruwa could attract, Wamba's unique crafts risk being lost to obscurity. Reversing this trend would require a multi-sectoral strategy involving infrastructure development, artisan training, cultural programming, and promotion of Farin Ruwa as a central tourism anchor. Until such interventions materialize, Wamba's handicraft sector will remain stifled, unable to reach its full potential or contribute meaningfully to the local and state economy.

Conclusion

The paper looked at the interdependence between local handicraft and tourism in Wamba from 1996 to 2020, and has shown a great cultural heritage in relations to the craft industry with momentous but largely harness prospective for economic and social development. Handicrafts such as weaving, pottery, carving, and blacksmithing not only embody the identity and traditions of the Wamba people but also represent viable assets for enhancing tourism, particularly in connection with attractions like the Farin Ruwa Waterfalls. Despite their cultural and economic value, these crafts have faced persistent challenges including poor infrastructure, insecurity, weak institutional support, and inadequate promotion, which have constrained their integration into the tourism sector. Nevertheless, the resilience of local artisans has ensured the continuity of these traditions, preserving them as cultural symbols and livelihood sources. This underscores the need for deliberate investment, policy intervention, and strategic promotion to reposition indigenous handicrafts as drivers of cultural preservation, tourism growth, and sustainable rural development in Wamba.



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