

Identification of Tourism Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract:- The purpose of this survey based research is to investigate the potential and opportunities of tourism entrepreneurship in Nasarawa state. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach to investigate the potential and opportunities of tourism entrepreneurship in Nasarawa State, which when developed; it can increase local revenue in the state by literature study, interview, observation and field research. The following tourism entrepreneurship opportunities were identified; Hotel and Lodging, Food and Beverages, Tour Operators, Transportation Sector, Travel Agency Business, Sports and Recreational Sector, The MICE Sector, Handy Craft and Unique Souvenir, Event planner and Entertainment. Therefore, the above tourism entrepreneurship opportunities are recommended to both the public and private investors that will want to venture into tourism related businesses.

Keywords:- Entrepreneurship, Tourism, Tourism Entrepreneurship, Tourism Opportunities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world's fastest growing industry, experiencing many consecutive years of growth. It is also the fourth largest industry worldwide. (www.unwto.org) International tourism is the world's largest export earner and an important factor in balance of payments of many countries (www.iata.org/travel-tourism). Tourism sectors support the economy of a region by contributing to the country's revenues of over 500 billion dollars (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2002). It is a significant economic development tool which also provides distinctive business and employment opportunities for both trained and untrained individuals. (S. Rajamohan, A. Sathish 2020). In the vein, it strengthens the local economies and aid in providing better infrastructural development like telecommunications, water, power, road, airports, and transportation for more business opportunities of individual and corporate entrepreneurs (Kotler, 2002) The industry is the only industry that deals with the government departments, travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, restaurants and many associated service industries. (S. Rajamohan, A. Sathish 2020). It is interesting for entrepreneurs and new start-ups to do business in this emerging market (Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005). The tourism industry employs over 200 million people worldwide. Many tourism jobs are in smaller or medium sized, family owned businesses. Report shows that job creation in tourism is growing one and a half times faster than any other sector. (www.unwto.org). Unemployment today is a major challenge facing Nigerians but thanks to the

Federal Government of Nigeria for introducing the concept of entrepreneurship in our high institutions of learning and during the mandatory National Youth Service Corp (NYSC). Entrepreneurship in the tourism and hospitality sector abounds and has a lot of promises especially in the tourist destinations. Entrepreneurs play important role in economic growth through leadership, management, innovation, research and development effectiveness, job creation, competitiveness, productivity and the establishment of new industries (Kuratko, 2009).

Looking at Tourism as an employer of labor and income generator, the study intend to identify the Entrepreneurial opportunities existing in tourism industry of Nasarawa State, to foster its development by creating employment opportunities and to increase the revenue base of the community.

II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

This study solely relied on secondary sources of data collection. Data were collected from textbooks, journals, archives of Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism Nasarawa state, scholarly papers and websites.

III. AREA OF STUDY

Nasarawa State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria was created on 1st October, 1996 out of the present Plateau State. It is located at the North Central of Nigeria, lies in the Middle Belt region within latitude 80N to 9 0N and longitude 70C to 90E. Nasarawa State shares common borders with the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja on the West, Kaduna State on the North, Plateau and Taraba State on the East, and Benue and Kogi State in the South. It comprises of 13 local government areas namely Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keffi, Lafia, Nassarawa Eggon, Nassarawa, Obi, Toto and Wamba. Its location in the middle climatic belt generally made it very warm and humid with dry and rainy seasons. Mean temperature ranges between 250C to 350C and a mean rainfall of 1120mm to 1500mm relative humidity of 60% to 80% and falls within the guinea savannah kind of vegetation that houses a lot of merchantable trees. The area of study was suitable because, Nasarawa State is endowed with numerous tourism resources, like Farin Ruwa waterfall in Wamba local government area, Eggon Hills and caves in Nasarawa Eggon, Nzeh Mada festival in Akwanga, Odu festival in Doma, Gbagyi Gbojum in Karu. Other exciting places are Keana Salt Processing centre, Hunki lake, Akiri warm spring and crocodile lake, Gizar, Doka-gide Ria at Doma, Tunga Nupawa lake, Assakio, Natural springwater at lafia and Ogani fishing water at Oto local government. The state

is handsomely endowed with scenic beauty, and conspicuous features. Its temperate climate makes it a tourist

centre. Lafia the state capital has an enviable weather with a fascinating rocky environment.

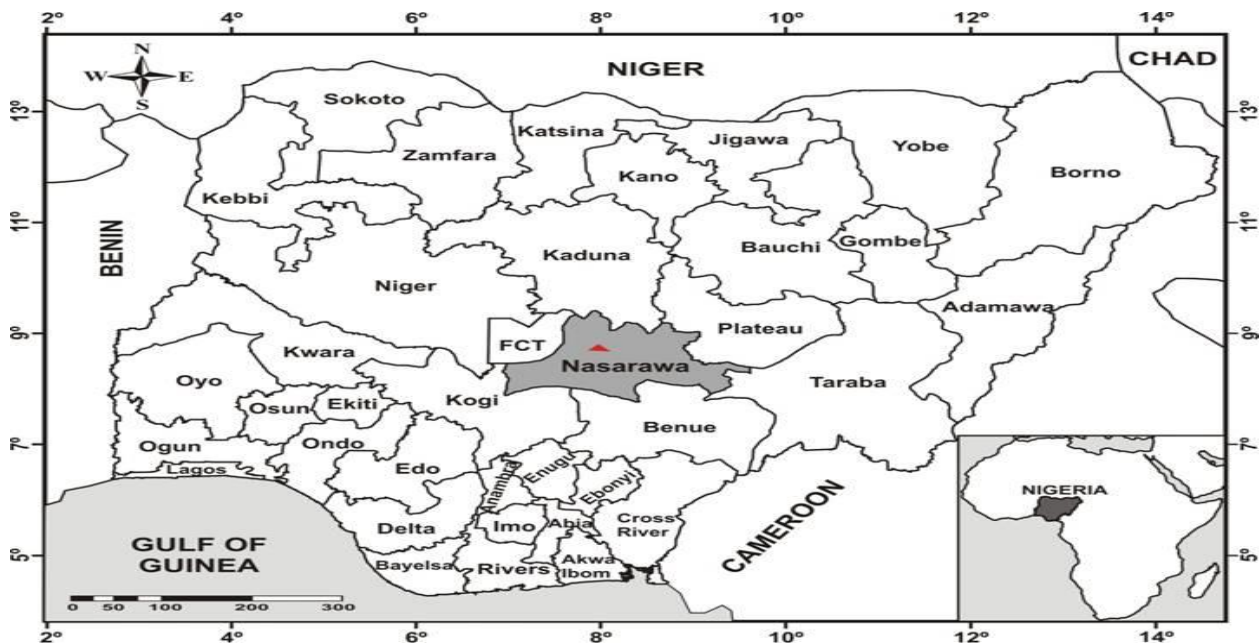


Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing Nasarawa State



Fig. 2: Map showing LGAs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Source: NPC 2010

IV. ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship, according to Jones and Sakong (1980) and Stoner (2002) as captured by Akwa and Davou (2009), is a force that mobilizes other resources to meet unmet market demands. Entrepreneurship is also defined as the process by which individuals take advantage of the opportunity to become a business man or woman. (Baringer & Ireland, 2012). According to Iuliana, Carmen Maria and Sirbu (2016), the term entrepreneurship focuses on several traits of entrepreneurs including the desires, motivations, and skills necessary to start and manage a successful business. Jhingan (2003) posits that entrepreneurship is the ability to recognize opportunities for successful introduction of new commodities, new techniques and new sources of

supply and to assemble the necessary plant and equipment, management and labor force and organize them into a running concern. While Shane and Venkatraman (2000) define entrepreneurship as a mindset that establishes different values to resources and opportunities from the general population and mindset that encourages creativity and innovation, change the game and be unique. Notwithstanding the above definitions, the researchers hereby opined that: entrepreneurship is the recognition of business opportunities and seizing them to build, nurture and grow a business in a unique way while maximizing profits. It is believing in yourself and judgment to the extent of taking the risk of employing yourself by doing something new to meet specific needs thereby making profits.

V. ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TOURISM

Tourism growth depend on serious entrepreneurship actions especially in rural and ethnic communities because many hotel chains and multinational firms of rural areas are invested for staying-up in the light of small or medium-sized enterprises for the potential markets (Chang, 2011). Tourism is an economic sector that requires a high extent of entrepreneurial activities and contributions to meet the increasing demands and huge needs amount requiring modernization and diversification of tourism products. (Saanyam and Saanyam 1998) This creates more opportunities for tourism since tourism industry constantly is growing due to the changing market demand. (Samiei & Akhoondzadeh, 2013). Tourism entrepreneurship is said to be a set of activities related to tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors by creating and operating a legal tourist's enterprise (Bagherifard, et.al, 2013). Tourism entrepreneurship is also defined as activities related to creating and operating a legal tourist's enterprise. Legal enterprises refer to those businesses that operate on a profitable basis and seek to satisfy the needs of tourists (Saayman & Saayman, 1998). Entrepreneurship helps create economic growth through various SMEs activities. Basically, entrepreneurs take initiative for these activities that can create self-employment for themselves as well as employment opportunities for others (Biswas & Rashid, 2018).

A. Tourism as an Industry

The industry called Tourism has to do with all businesses that directly provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure and leisure activities away from the home environment. It is also the set of industries which assist by providing infrastructure, products and services and make possible travelling for different purposes and travelling to places of leisure and business interests. (Kuratko, 2009) Tourism industry is all about providing necessary means to assist tourists throughout their travelling. Hotels, restaurants, tour operators and travel agency have been providing direct business opportunity to people at different level of local community.

The following are sectors of the Tourism industry:

- **Accommodation:** Accommodation is one of the fundamental needs for any tourism activity. It is important to any tourists who want to travel to another destination or on a trip as you are always going to need a place to stay such as Hotels, Guest houses, Camp sites and Caravan parks etc. Travelers and tourists need lodging for rest, while they are on a tour.
- **Natural tourist attractions:** These are God given attractions that are the very base and the driving factor for tourism industry. They include mountains, caves, waterfalls, national parks, game reserves etc
- **Man-made tourist attractions:** Man-made tourist attractions include monuments, zoos, parks etc.
- **Cultural and other festivals & events:** These include Cultural, religious or other type of events which keep taking place everywhere in the world.
- **Sports and recreational sector:** People travel around the world to attend various sports events or activities at different famous places.
- **Tourism and travel trade services:** This is the core services sector of tourism industry. It's a collective term for tour operators, wholesalers and travel agents in the industry.

Transportation sector: Transportation sector is the very base and means of tourism. The transportation sector is concerned with helping tourists to get where they need to go, via the provision of transport. This may include providing them with the means to get to their intended holiday destination in the first place, but may also include assisting them with getting around after they arrive at their destination. Included within this sector are services related to road, rail, air, space and sea travel.

- **Food & Beverages industry:** The food and beverage sector has a remarkable role within the tourism industry, providing tourists with essential refreshments at all stages of their travel experience, including during travel, when spending time in their chosen accommodation, and when they are out and about exploring the location they have travelled to.
- **The MICE sector:** The Meeting Incentives Conference Exhibitions and Event sector is a wide industry in itself that draws various visitors from across the globe.

B. SOME TOURISM RESOURCES OF NASARAWA STATE



Fig. 3: Numan Rock

Numan Rocks/Hills is found at the outskirts of Andaha town and AkwangaFadanKarshi Road in Akwanga Local Government Area of the State. The Rocks/Hills stands

spectacular with striking peaks and sceneries. From top of the hills most part of the state and part of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja could be viewed.



Fig. 4: Gwandara Cultural Dance Troupe



Fig. 5: FARIN RUWA FALLS

Farin ruwa waterfalls is found in Wamba Local Government Area of the State. It is located between the boundary of Bokkos and Wamba Local Government Area of Plateau and Nasarawa State respectively. The Farin Ruwa falls is about 120 kilometers away from Lafia the State

Capital and 30km away from Wamba the Local Government Headquarters. The nature and beauty of the fall is magnificent which is incomparable with any other in falls in Nigeria. This is because of its high level Falls, which is about 150 metres high and 50 metres wide.



Fig. 6: Keana Salt Village

There is the Keana salt village. Located in the Headquarters of the Keana Local Government Council. It is 67 kilometres away from the state Capital, Lafia. The Keana salt mining industry dates back to the twelfth century when the salt discovery attracted human settlement in the area. This is where you see Local technology in operation, a visit to the area shows that the industry is made up of huts with large pots and ridges laid out for mining of salt. Each of these huts belong to an individual whose acquisition or ownership is by inheritance.

Karofi Dyeing Centre (KOC) is located near the Emir's palace in Lafia, the State Capital of Nasarawa State Nigeria. According to history, (Sarki Karofi) KDC was established in 1867 and the dyeing activities formed part of the cultural traditions of the Kanuri people who settled in Lafia. Karofi is a Hausa word which mean a place where cloth-dyeing activities is done. Karofi Dyeing Centre in Lafia operates as a traditional skill of cloths dyeing art which is common in some parts of Nigeria. For examples, Kofarmata Dye pits in Kano, the famous Adire dyeing art in Abeokuta. The Karofi Dyeing Centre in Lafia is mostly operated by the workers who are to large extend members of the Karofi family. Their parents hand down the dyeing skills to their children.



Fig. 7: Karofi Dyeing Centre (KDC)



Fig. 8: Eggon Cultural Festival Celebration



Fig. 9: Kulere Dance Festival



Fig. 10: The house of god belief to be protecting farin Ruwa Water Falls



Fig. 11: Nature Reserve walks way Farin Ruwa

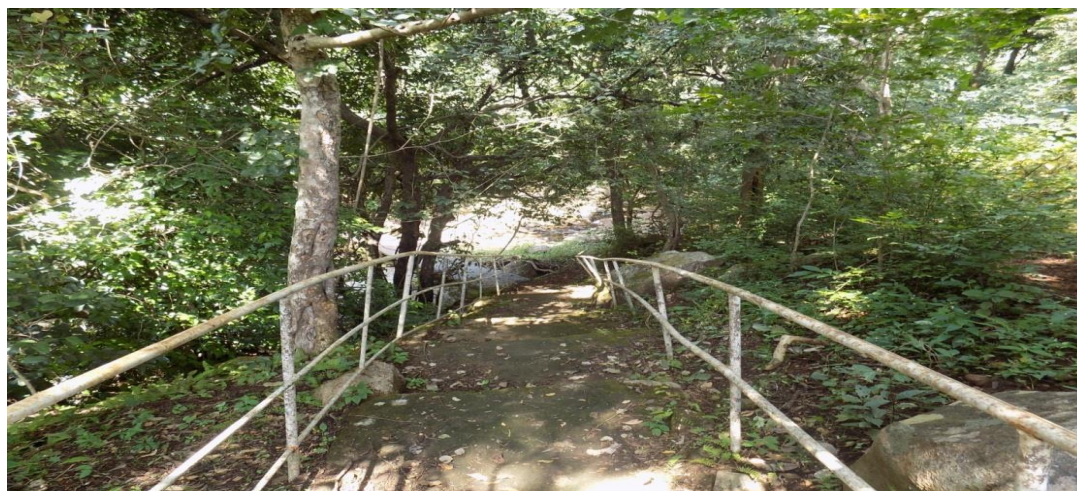


Fig. 12: Eggon Hills and Caves

Eggon Hills range over 30m and they are famous for adventure. The rocks which shaped like kopjes and inselbergs have long attracted visitors ever since the colonial rule. Europeans settled at the peak of these hills and

constructed houses beside the slow flowing streams and unique rock formation. The caves were formidable natural bunkers for the native people in times of war. Eggon hills' is an ideal place for mountaineering, wildlife.

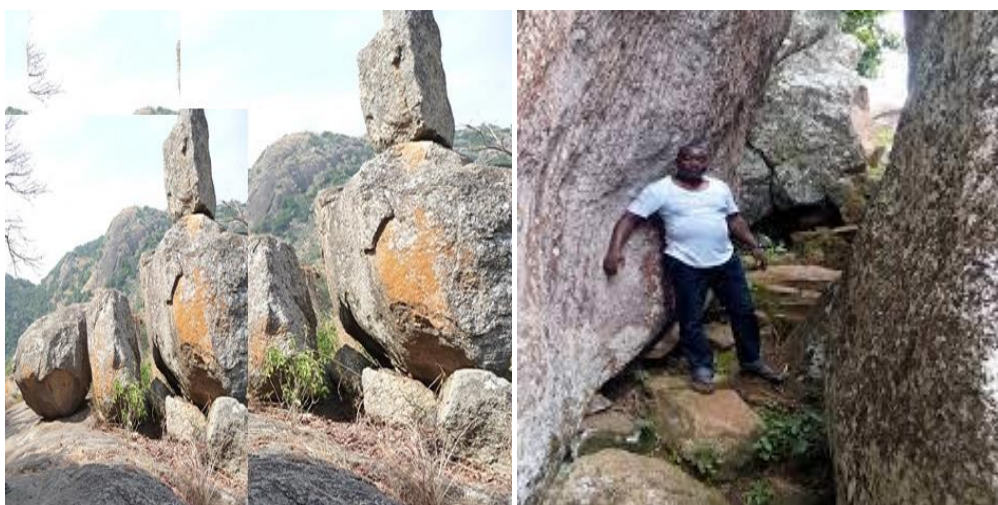


Fig. 13: DOMA DAM

Doma Dam is situated some 6km away from Doma town and it is about 30km away from Lafia. Doma is a man-made dam meant for agricultural irrigation and the dam is structured into three arms with each arm measuring more

than 2km in length and 30m in width. The surrounding of the dam is hilly with thick vegetation. Fishing is permitted by the dam, which is a popular picnic site in the state.



Fig. 14: ARA ROCK

Ara rock is located at Ara town about 12km away from Nasarawa town and 220km away from the state capital, Lafia. Ara rock with a measurement of about 120m from the ground stands magnificently like a tower overlooking Ara town.

VI. POTENTIALS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NASARAWA STATE

- **Travel Agency Business:** Travel agency business is a lucrative business in the tourism industry. Travel agency is a business that sells travel and travel related services and products to tourists and other customers on behalf of the principals. It can be transportation, accommodation, attractions etc in which commissions are given to these agents in return. They give travel advice, information and other related services too. Opportunities in this area abounds. Data have shown that the numbers of ticketing companies selling airline tickets in Nasarawa state are quite few.
- **Tour Operators:** Not too many tour packages are offered in Nasarawa state, even if offered, they are usually packaged outside the state. Tour operators tend to sell package holidays, which combine multiple travel and tour services into a single product. A package holiday might, for example, include charging tourists for flights, airport transfers, a hotel stay, and services from a local rep. It could also include holiday experiences or a set itinerary. Tour package is a promising business, because it does not require large capital. Relying on networking, entrepreneurs several services offered by lodging, transportation, tour guide, food and beverage, then packaged into a valuable tour package. This potential also opens up opportunities for new tour operators to offer innovations of tourism services that attract the attention of visitors such as giving a free photography services.
- **Tour Guides:** The demanding for tour guide is also increasing, so it opens the opportunities for the young to be a tour guides. Tour guides provide tourists with access to organized tours of local attractions, landmarks, educational buildings and other places of interest. In

doing so, they are able to offer assistance, expert insight, and context, often making the experience more enjoyable, convenient and worthwhile for the tourist(s).

- **Hotel and Lodging:** Hotel and lodging business is never enough. Nasarawa state is still growing and so there are lots of movements into the state especially for its record of safety. The hotel business is a large potential business in tourism. This potential can be seen from the tourist visits and the average length of guests stay at various tourist centers within the state, e.g Farinruwa waterfalls which lacks accommodation. A lot of meetings and conferences are usually held in Lafia the state capital and at such periods, there is usually lack of enough accommodation. This shows that opportunities abound in this area. Entrepreneurship opportunities of hospitality are not only for star hotels but also for hiker lodging categories. This shows that not only a large investor can be able to invest in this sector; the small startup also has the same opportunity.
- **Food & Beverages:** Food and beverages are primary needs that must be fulfilled, no exception in tourist attractions area. This makes food and beverage businesses have a huge opportunity, as the business is not only dominated by large investors. Small traders can also engage with this business. With the sparkling of tourism in Nasarawa state and increasing tourist visits, the demand for food and beverages is also increasing. Nasarawa entrepreneurs have the opportunity to develop local food and drink. Arabian tea is a commodity that is in demand nowadays and often bought by tea lovers or bought as gifts for their family. It can also be developed as local snack like which is packed using traditional design of our locals. There are needs for wine and coffee shops, ice cream shops etc. There are also opportunities for private and commercial cooks, food can be cooked, packaged then sell or deliver to tourists at the destinations, offices and etc
- **Transportation Sector:** The transportation sector plays an important role in tourism business and includes the transfer of tourists between local areas, inter-regions, and between countries. The potential of transportation

business in the Nasarawa state is car rental inside the city, inter villages bus, and beyond. To serve tourists who exit the state or country it can be a ticket agent of flight or sea ship. Car and motorcycle business are still a promising business opportunity in the future.

- **Sports:** The opportunity to explore this business is also widely open because many people are looking for the opportunity to unwind. Example of this includes spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, exercise, entertainment, athletic, volleyball, basket ball, sport cars and bikes etc or other similar equipment and associated accessories.
- **Recreational Sector:** Lafia, the capital city of Nasarawa State lacks recreation centers. There are serious needs and opportunities for amusement parks, picnic centers, zoos, museums and other types of recreational centers.
- **The MICE Sector:** Because of the serene and peaceful environment we are enjoying in Nasarawa state, the state has the possibility of attracting many parties, meetings, incentives; conferences and exhibitions etc. Opportunities like event centers, halls, ballrooms and others are wide. This business has a high profit because it involves high class events.
- **Souvenir and Handy Craft:** One of the tourist activities after visiting the tourist attractions is buying gifts and souvenirs. Most of the tourist attractions centers and hotels do not have souvenir shops stocked up with our local products as souvenirs. Many hand crafts are still in nuance, so there is not something unique that the tourists can bring home as a something memorable that they have visited this place. The opportunity to produce handy craft and unique souvenir from the tourist attractions is actually an interesting profitable opportunity. It is not requiring large working capital or a lot of labor. It may be benchmarking, "trade mark" and "land mark" in the form of gifts and souvenirs such as T-shirts, key chains depicting the situation or the scenery of a particular attraction, bracelet, etc.
- **Educational Area:** Opportunities are also available in the Travel and hospitality industry educational area. Private schools that specialize on travel, tourism and hospitality are rarely available in the state. Private catering schools are also a great opportunity to invest in. There is even a chance to open a tourism-related course institution e.g. language courses and guiding techniques. Additionally, schools and training programmes form part of this sub-section of the travel and hotel industry.
- **Entertainment and Event planning:** Wedding and Pre-wedding activities are more often done in the state because of the nature of our rich culture. This opens up an opportunity to venture into event planning that offers a complete wedding package starting from the pre-wedding photography and video, wedding events, arrangement of costumes, singer, MC and lots more. In addition to entertainment opportunities such as music concert, bar, karaoke, music Café is also a very good opportunity to be developed because entertainment is a complement in tourism industry. Nowadays, only a few businessmen invest in this sector.

There are still some business opportunities, aside the ones mentioned above that are less offered in the state but actually have potential and are supporting tourism sectors, such as translator and interpreter. A lot of time spent by tourists at tourism attractions such as hill climbing causes less time to be able to wash their clothes. This is also an opportunity to offer laundry services around the hotel where they stay. A tiring day of activities makes guests need to relax. Body massage, reflex and spa services are promising opportunity in the state. Selling phone credit, SMS and Internet Data Package (local and roaming) is also an opportunity, because Internet data is needed by tourists who want to access tourist information, accommodation, facilities and directions that are very helpful to tourists in this area.

Apart from the above mentioned, there are other specific opportunities in and around some of the tourism resources that investors could take the advantage to invest in, in the state. They are as follows:

- Peperuwa Lake, Peperuwa: This area would be great for Picnicking, Camping, Viewing, Hotel Business.
- Malloney Hills, Keffi: excellent for long Picnicking, Camping etc
- Oku-Akpa, Nasarawa: Long Picnicking, Mountaineering, Hunting etc
- Umaisha River, Umaisha (Toto): Large Fishing, Swimming, Boating, Regatta
- Akiri Warm Spring, Akiri (Awe): Large Curative Powers, Water Spring Plant.
- Doma Dam ,Doma: Irrigation, Fish Farming.
- Lafia Dyeing Pits and Calabash Carving Kofar Pada (Lafia): Traditional Cloth Weaving, Calabash Weaving.
- Akiri Salt Lake Akiri (Awe) Large Salt Deposits
- Hunki Ox-bow Lake Tunga (Awe)- Picnicking, Boating, Fishing, Game viewing.
- Farin Ruwa Falls Farin Ruwa (Wamba): Hydroelectricity, Water spring, Wildlife, Hotel business etc.
- Eggon Hills and Caves Nassarawa Eggon : Quarrying, Hotel Business, mountaineering, camping ground etc
- Ara Rocks Ara (Nassarawa) 150m high: Leadership Training, Camping, Mountaineering
- Keana Salt Village Keana: Large Salt Deposits
- Numan Rocks Andaha (Akwanga): Long Camping, Leadership Training, Mountaineering. (Ebuga, E. A & Yaro O. S 2014)

VII. CONCLUSION

As a developing tourism state, Nasarawa has the potential and opportunities of entrepreneurial activities that are very beneficial to both the local people and investors. Hotel, food and beverages, tour and travel business are promising businesses and there are many other opportunities in this industry that can still be developed to fulfilling the demand of tourists. Transportation business, scuba diving equipment rental, handy craft, event organizer, entertainment, MICE sector also are business opportunities that do not only generate income but also can be an attraction to increase the number of visitors and staying time duration.

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