



Community Leadership and Attitude to Impact of Ecotourism Development in Cross River State

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Abstract

The unique nature of Cross River State owing to its geographical features of ecotourism potentials makes the state a natural paradise. This paper seeks to assess communities and leadership attitude to the impacts of ecotourism development with regards to its impact on the standard of living of the people in the areas. Two communities were used in each ecotourism zone which include Afamosing and Nyaye in Cross River State National Park located in Akamkpa while in Okwango Division the two communities were Butatong and Okwa. However, four hundred structured questionnaires were used of which two hundred were distributed to each community using random sampling technique. Findings show that even though ecotourism has improved the standard of living of the people, it was not devoid of problems such as inflation and cultural diffusion. Besides, the data analyzed also revealed that community leadership has a fundamental role to play in ecotourism development in the two communities in the area. Therefore, if ecotourism must be encouraged in Cross River State, community leadership must be incorporated in ecotourism development framework of the State.

Keywords: Attitude, community, development, ecotourism, leadership

INTRODUCTION

The term ecotourism has been used as far back as 1965 (Fennel, 2003). Strasdas (2005) suggests that nature based tourism is derived from the existing of natural areas with no specific concern for their protection, whereas ecotourism is concerned with the protection of natural areas. Strasdas advocates ecotourism as a means to achieve rural economic development by enabling people who live in

rural areas to capture the economic , nonuse values derived from the natural areas. Today, ecotourism provides one way to help educate the community to protect and conserved the environment. It is often perceived as a mechanism for sustainable tourism development especially in countries with great ecotourism potentials (Weaver, 2001). Accordingly, ecotourism is the last decade has gain popularity and at the same time enveloped into a worldwide phenomenon that shows no sign of slowing down (Buchsbann, 2004). However, this form of tourism has attracted the interest of government, communities and scholars into the concept and also evaluating the link between ecotourism and environmental conservation. As the understanding of this concept of ecotourism get clearer, many scholars are now advocating on ecotourism industry to incorporate economic development as a major element of conservation (Cater, 2003). Accordingly, the rapid developing economies in developing countries, ecotourists from these countries especially Asia, North America are entering the market as consumers, hence the experience in enlarging with increase in nature travel in number of parks (Eagles, 1992). Today, community participation in ecotourism development is highly advocated by different school of thought such that emphases are highly place on community leadership and attitude as a major element that can propel ecotourism development especially in region with high ecotourism potentials protected environment (Kirk, 2004). Austen (2003), in his opinion on ecotourism development suggest that ecotourism can strive effectively if the local people are part of decision making on ecotourism development and activities. Accordingly, Kraft (2004) affirmed that without community leadership, ecotourism development cannot occur. This scenario is applicable in Cross River State as local leadership are not incorporated in ecotourism development which has hindered the smooth development of ecotourism in the area (Mary, 2003). Besides, in Cross River State, community leadership attitude to impact of ecotourism development is not much felt based on the fact that stakeholders in ecotourism development have neglected and at the same time failed to recognized community as a potential vehicle capable of strengthening ecotourism development especially in protected areas. More so, the non-recognition of community leadership in ecotourism development has

hindered effective mobilization of resources that would influence the growth of ecotourism development in Cross River State especially in region with great ecotourism potentials. It is on this note that this study seek to examine community attitude and leadership impact on ecotourism development with specific reference to assessing the impact of ecotourism development on the standard of living of the people and to assessed major indicators of community leadership in ecotourism development which many literature have failed to addressed in the content of Cross River State especially in communities around the ecotourism zones rich with fauna and flora species.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Cross River State taking into consideration two major communities each around the protected area. The two ecotourism areas were used which include the Okwangwo National Park and the Cross River National Park which are the major ecotourism zones in Cross River State. In Okwangwo division the communities selected were Butatony and Okwa while Cross River National Park Division the communities used were Mfamosing and Nyaye. However, 400 (four hundred) structured questionnaire based on the Likert scale were used of which the respondents answered each statement based on five point scales that most described the current situation in their community. However, the value of each response for these items on the questionnaire is as follows. 0=Never, 1= seldom 2= sometimes 3 =often 4=always. The Cornbach's alpha was used to test for validity of community leadership in the areas. In the ecotourism development impact analysis, the regression/stepwise regression model was adopted to determine the relationship between the standard of living of the indigenous community in protected areas (Ecotourism zone) while descriptive statistic and t-test was used to test whether there were significant differences among mean total. The item mean score of the barriers of ecotourism development were also analyzed in the area. However, the variables that explained the standard of living were summarized as follows:-

Standard of living indicators

Y	= Standard of living (dependent variable)
x ₁	= overcrowding and pollution
X ₂	= sustenance of environmental quality
X ₃	= creativity and innovation
X ₄	= encourages investment
X ₅	= destruction of tourism environment
X ₆	= negative impact on cultural identity
X ₇	= create unpleasant activities
X ₈	= it create unity among nations
X ₉	= destroyed natural ecosystem
x ₁₀	= enhances the growth of auxiliary industries

However, these variables were used in table 1 to mark the impact of ecotourism on the standard of living on communities within the protected zone.

Literature Review

has been observed that technical assistance approaches to community development is based on technical information and expertise for improving the ecotourism in local communities. More so, this approach has a downside and it can limit community capacity building because governments use the technical approach to develop ecotourism and this can disempowering local community and create dependency (Cavage, 2000). Many scholars organized that technical assistance as a fundamental element in building community capacity and increase skill (Rural Voices for conservation, Beeton, 2006. Accordingly, Zody (1980) agrees that technical assistance solves short-term problems, it can establish dependency relationship that becomes part of the problem.

Beeton (2006) in his analysis opined that technical assistance does not address a real community's capacity building. According to Cavage (2000), however the support of the government through a technical assistance can be limit building capacity. Yet at the same time, government can also develop partnerships that foster community capacity building for ecotourism development. Thus, in third world countries particularly, without the government support, community capacity cannot be achieved. The conflict approach stresses the equal distribution of resource in community and usually focuses on those with limited power. The idea of the conflict approach is to get people together to change a community (Beeton, 2006). This approach has referred to decentralized in ecotourism organization and so it can refer to community participation in ecotourism development. However, ecotourism in summary, community development literature is relevant to this study as it provides the rational and theoretical background for ecotourism development. The context of interest for this study is community leadership, and there have been sociological definitions outlined within the context. Wilkinson (1986) defines community leadership as an action enacted by individuals take specific and distinctive contributions to community action. One of the most current actions of community leadership comes from Kelinger (2002) who views it an interactive base between individuals within a common tackle. Community leadership is a specific form of the general concept of leadership. It is frequently based in place and so is local, although it can also represent a community of common interest, purpose or practice. In many localities it is provided by a combination of local volunteers, business and government (Sorenson and Epps, 1996; Anderson e al, 2002; Osborne and Gaebler, 1993). The importance and need for community leadership in community capacity building cannot be ignored. Goodman, et al (1998) labeled leadership as a dimension for community capacity building. Edwards, et al (2000) also considered leadership to be an important dimension in measuring community capacity building. In order to develop in the current economic, and social environment, communities need leaders who can help local groups, businesses and non-profits work together to address challenges and

promote local strengths (Wituk, et al 2003). Community capacity building is achieved through developing community leadership and decision –making skills in community members (Hardina, 2002; Ife, 2002). This is illustrated in the figure below.

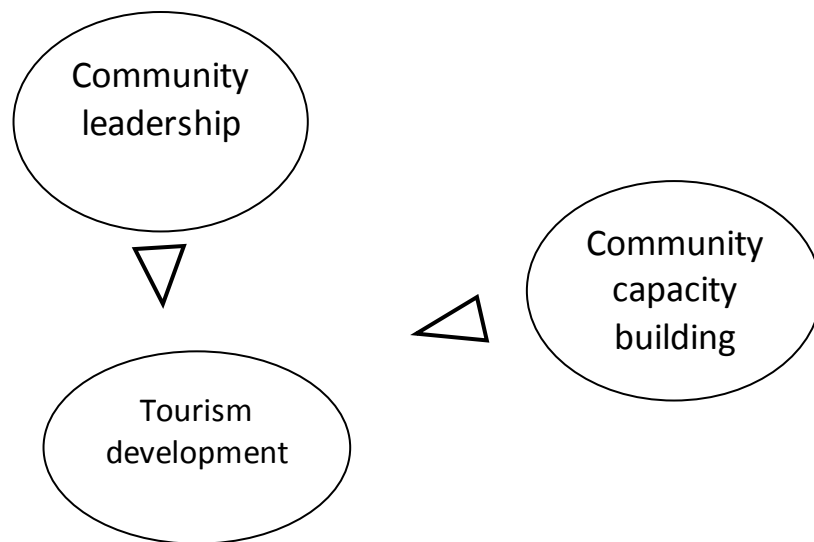


Fig. 1: Interaction between community leadership, community capacity building and tourism development

Community leaders play a vital role in handling the programs and plans toward achieving the goals of this organization. In addition, a community without leadership may not be equipped to mobilize resources or influence tourism planning. Local community like other organization leaders cannot proceed successfully without having active and dynamic leaders willing and able to take initiatives. Therefore, the success of local organization mainly depends on the quality, creativity and commitment of its leadership in maintaining its daily affairs (Uphoff, et al 1998). Community leaders can help address local challenges with useful leadership skills and concepts while increasing social capital by bringing people together. Kirk and Kraft (2004) and Mills (2005) contend that fostering local leadership to help make communities better places to live be one of the primary purposes of community development. Finally, despite the need to understand community

leadership, little is known about how to diffuse leadership throughout a community. Community leadership is important for collaborative community based tourism development (Raik 2002; Raik, et al 2003).

Findings

Ecotourism development impact

The attitudes of community leadership in Okwangwo and Cross River National Park presented using the mean score of each variables as shown in table 1 indicate a mean of 3.95 and standard deviation of 0.87 which revealed that the respondents in the communities strongly accept the fact that ecotourism development has generated, employment attracted more investment and local community development with a mean value of 3.51 and standard deviation of 0.51. Besides, it was observed that the respondents attest to the fact that ecotourism has increased the revenue base of the government with mean value and standard deviation of 3.31 and 0.65. It was noticed in table 1 that the respondents also agreed that ecotourism has aided increase in inflation in the area with a mean and standard deviation value of 2.99 and with a high rate of cultural diffusion with a value of 3.20. However, the result show that ecotourism development in the communities in Cross River State is not only a catalyst for economic enhancement of the people but it has led to investment and projects development in the areas. More so, it has also led to socio-cultural advantages in terms of national income, positive cultural exchange and increase in emerging businesses in the areas.

Table 1: Ecotourism development impact variables

Major variables	Mean	SD	Chi-square	Sign
Employment creation	3.95	0.57	556.013	0.000
Enhanced investment opportunities	3.51	0.51	841.041	0.000
Increase government revenue	3.31	0.65	801.551	0.000
Enhanced local innovation	2.77	0.61	811.444	0.000
Crease in local income	1.80	0.91	111.541	0.000
Increase in parks and recreation centres	2.10	1.10	311.610	0.000
It enhanced local culture	2.11	0.70	378.554	0.000

Increase in inflation in the area	2.99	0.51	2.151.784	0.000
Diffusion of culture	3.20	0.81	319.556	0.000
Negative on cultural identity	2.43	0.71	605.001	0.000
Impact on destination	1.95	0.81	201.111	0.000
Increase in pollution	2.11	0.87	211.222	0.000
Destruction of natural ecosystem	2.55	0.88	311.511	0.000
Causes overcrowding	2.65	0.09	591.751	0.000
Average total	2.95	0.78	-	-

Source: Data analysis (2011)

However, the result of the analysis of ecotourism impact in the standard of living of the people using the Stepwise Regression model revealed that the major independent variables affecting the people's standard of living in the communities in Cross River were observed in the (x_2) which show that ecotourism has brought investment opportunities in the areas as observed in beta value of 0.153 and with a tolerance value of 0.74 (x_1), shows that ecotourism provide employment to the locals with a beta value of 0.161 and tolerance level of 0.557 while (x_3) revealed that ecotourism has led to positive attitude of the locals and also has encourage local innovations as observed in beta value of 0.129 and a tolerance value of 0.615. This result shows that all the indicators have made meaningful contribution to the two communities. This result affirmed the empirical finding of (Eja, 2006) in his empirical findings on the impact of ecotourism in protected areas. Nevertheless, the stepwise regression model was summarized using the equation $y=3.151 +0.211x_1 + 0.201x_3+ 0.203x_2$ where y is the standard of living of the communities as presented in table 2.

Table 2: The stepwise regression model results ANOVA

	Results ANOVA unstandardized coefficient B	SE	Standardized coefficient Beta	T	Sig.	<u>Collinearity statistics</u> tolerance	VIF
Constant	3.151	0.415		8.111	0.000		
x_1	0.211	0.71	0.161	4.212	0.000	0.557	1.315
X_2	0.203	0.043	0.153	4.134	0.002	0.743	1.125
X_3	0.201	0.043	0.129	3.911	0.005	0.615	1.301

Source: Data analysis (2011)

However, the multiple regression model which was used to assessed the standard of living using the (10) variables revealed that x_2 has a beta value of 0.153 and sig at $0.004 \leq 0.005$ with a tolerance value of 0.541 in x_7 indicator had a value of beta as 0.0.141 at sig. level of 0.006 with a tolerance value of 0.625 while x_3 had beta value of 0.341 at 0.34 sig. With a tolerance value of 0.633 which made a significant contribution to the explanation of dependent variables and standard of living in the communities in Cross River State. This result also show that ecotourism has contributed to the quality of life and the socio-economic livelihood of the communities under investigation. However, the analysis in table 3 indicates that the major variables that significantly imputed are x_2 , x_7 , x_4 and x_3 explain the power of ecotourism in the wellbeing of the communities in Cross River State.

Table 3 The multiple regression model

	Results ANOVA unstandardized coefficient B	SE	Standardized coefficient Beta	T	Sig.	<u>Co linearity statistics tolerance</u>	VIF
Constant	1775	0.395	-	4.775	0.000		
x_1	-1.317E-02	0.054	-0.023	-0.314	0.695	0.682	1.455
X_2	0.181	0.065	0.151	3.101	0.004	0.541	1.411
X_3	0.201	0.067	0.102	0.811	0.014	0.564	1.333
X_4	9.418E-02	0.034	0.341	2.151	0.034	0.633	1.612
X_5	-2.617E-02	0.025	-0.145	-0.645	0.334	0.645	1.131
X_6	3.104E-02	0.033	0.124	0.812	0.251	0.635	1.154
X_7	0.171	0.066	0.141	2.551	0.006	0.625	1.294
X_8	-2.6461E-02	0.041	-0.012	-0.715	0.311	0.601	1.841
X_9	-3.714E-03	0.036	-0.064	-0.012	0.581	0.615	1.541
x_{10}	-2.331E-02	0.038	0.045	-0.645	0.341	0.715	1.154

Source: Data analysis (2011)

Community leadership in ecotourism

The level of community leadership in ecotourism development presented in table 4 indicate that the mean level of community leadership in ecotourism

development was high with a mean value of 14.29 and with a standard deviation value of 4.32. This result proved that the need for community leadership development towards ecotourism cannot be debated. Besides table 4 has shown that community leadership is a catalyst that would enable the communities to respond to improve ecotourism development. This result was affirmed in (Aniah, 2009) in his empirical finding of the role of community in tourism development in Cross River State.

Table 4: Community leadership variables in ecotourism development

Leadership variables	M	SD
Looking to alternative to problems of ecotourism development	2.01	0.68
Programmes involved in ecotourism development efforts	3.01	0.64
Information and reporting to local people	2.95	0.63
Developing mechanism that would enhance new leaders in the community	2.25	0.73
Supporting and encouraging the government and local in ecotourism development	1.97 3.10	0.75 0.89
Total	14.29	4.32

Source: Data analysis (2011)

Challenges of ecotourism development

The challenges of ecotourism development in the areas ranged from operational, structural and cultural. However, table 5 indicate that all the indicators showing the challenges of ecotourism development in the areas have a mean value of 12.47 and with a standard deviation of 6.973 at 0.05 significant level. This result indicate that all the aforementioned indicators are major challenges to ecotourism development in the area. Nevertheless, it was observed that there was lacks of understanding between the locals and government in ecotourism development in the two communities under investigation.

Table 5: Challenges in ecotourism development

Types of barriers	Barriers	Mean	SD
Operational	- Neglect of government in ecotourism zone	1.35	.854
	- Lack of understanding between the locals and government	1.25	2.119
	- Non decentralization of administration	2.30	.865
Structural	- Domination of the locals by the upper-class in the society	0.57	.695
	- Absent of locals in decision making	3.24	.895
Cultural	- The local are not interested in ecotourism development	1.25	.901
	- Inadequate awareness	2.51	.653

Source: Data analysis (2011)

Conclusion and recommendations

There is no doubt that ecotourism has not impacted negatively on the socioeconomic livelihood of the people even though it has contributed significantly on the standard of living of the people especially does within the protected zones. However, it was observed that ecotourism has the potentials of attracting investment and development in the areas. Therefore, the important of community leadership in ecotourism should not be debated because community leadership is a vital mechanism that would ensure effective participation of the locals in ecotourism activities and development. To this end, for the communities to adequately benefits from ecotourism impact, the following are hereby suggested. In order to enhanced the standard of living of the people and to maximize the profits from ecotourism development, new policies and programme must be design that would sustained the socioeconomic live of the people and

ecotourism potentials in the area. A framework should be developed by the various stakeholders in the industry, this would help sustained and improved the skills of the local people. This would also help to increase the income base of the locals. Community leadership should be incorporated into the ecotourism development network of Cross River State. This would help to motivate the communities and at the same time encourage them to participate in ecotourism activities and development in the area. However, the various stakeholder must educate the people on the need for the local people to have direct contact with tourist, this can be done through providing incentive to rural families that would enhanced their invitation of tourists to their community and residents.

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