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Attitudinal Perception of Residents' Towards Ecological Tourism In University of Ibadan Community, Nigeria

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Abstract

A major emphasis was on identifying those factors that resulted in the perception of the residents' communities towards the ecological tourism. This study examined the perception of community residents towards ecological tourism relating to wildlife conservation awareness in University of Ibadan campus, Nigeria. Two sets of structured questionnaire were administered to 300 respondents which comprised of students in the halls of residence and Abadina community. Randomised sampling technique was used to select samples for the study at 3% sampling Intensities. The respondents were residents of University of Ibadan community. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Results revealed that the communities' residents had good knowledge and interest of the ecotourism (79.0%) also there are high positive perceptions toward ecotourism with 67.8%. Results further showed that majority (87.3%) of the respondents identified inadequate information, accommodation and insecurity as main constraints of ecotourism. This study advocates for the publicity and conservation education awareness for attitudinal changes in the people towards ecotourism and the adoption of participatory approaches in creating and managing the ecotourism industry in Nigeria for its sustainability development.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Perception, Conservation, Community

Introduction

In recent times, many scholars qualify ecotourism even more specifically, suggesting that it also must provide direct revenue towards the conservation or protection of natural areas and educate tourists about related environmental issues (Ojong *et al.*, 2013). Today, ecotourism as "travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing opportunities that make the conservation of the natural resources beneficial to local citizens (Doan, 2000; Eagle *et al.*, 2002; Eagles and McCool, 2002). Earlier, Dixon and Sherman (1990) opined that ecotourism must provide more than mere

employment, it must foster change in the attitudes and behaviour of tourists about the protection of natural resources. However, ecotourism provides a way of educating community to ensure the protection and sustainability of their natural environment. Today, lack of local community enlightenment, awareness and positive attitude to ecotourism and the natural environment have led to the depletion of the environment through mass tourism (Doan, 2000).

The key to successful control of environmental problem lies in the planner's effort to comprehend a whole range of problems intrinsic to people's perception of their environment and their concomitant behaviour. Environment perceived clarifies the notion that it is the human mind which not only drives the human body but shapes and moves the physical world, any change in man, his value, his attitude, his goals and aspiration, open to change by those who are trained and inspired to accomplish that goal (Ebong, 1995). Mosley (1958) in his own opinion says the reason for different behaviours is the situation and the way in which things are perceived by us and others. The amount of information assimilated through our perception can affect our belief meaning that perception and behaviour as a function represent the most pertinent portion of the environment. Therefore, ecological tourism needs to be appreciated by people and to be fruitful as a thriving enterprise project, more interest and attention should be given to the problems, attitudes and the perception of both the elites and rural dwellers. Increasing recognition of the fact that, people respond not only to physical attributes of the environment also to the psychological and sociological variables when they take decision on where they locate industrial establishment or how to utilise the earth's surface (Sonnenfield, 1976). The perception of people mostly those of the elite's class and rural dwellers as regard the ecotourism in Nigeria are quite distinct. Analysing these facts, an understanding of the interactions between human society and physical environment is inevitable. In some intellectualistic quarters, the tradition of analysing society separately from the environment is fully considered. The belief that communion with natural perception was morally and spiritually uplifting became widespread. Also the perception of the environment as nature unimpaired by people became distinct in outlook. Therefore, this study focuses on the attitudinal perception of residents' community towards ecological tourism relating to wildlife conservation awareness and interest in university of Ibadan campus, Nigeria.

Description of Study Area

University of Ibadan is situated 6 kilometres to the north of the city of Ibadan. It is located between Latitude 7^o 26'' North and Longitude 3^o 54'' East at a mean altitude of 277meters above sea level. The University of Ibadan started off as the University College, Ibadan (UCI) which was founded in 1948, which covered over 2,550 acres of land. The site was generously leased by the chiefs and people of Ibadan for 999 years.

The topsoil is freely drained, fairly acidic and of moderate fertility with colluvial deposits in the valley. The geology of the area is underlined by rocks of basement complex, mostly gneiss. The University of Ibadan is located in the Northern limit of lowland rainforest zone. It lies in a transitional zone between the rainforest and derived savannah zone with annual rainfall of about 1220mm of double peak during June and August which last for almost 8months (April to October) and dry season between November and March. The vegetation of the area is rich with highly diverse species comprising of a wide variety of woody trees, shrubs, collection of herbs, palms and climbers which are well represented (UI. Handbook, 2011).



Plate1: Map of University of Ibadan
Source: Department of geography, University of Ibadan

Data Collection

The data collection methods utilized in this study includes a combination of (i) closed-ended questions: the respondents were asked to choose from a list of answers provided (ii) open-ended questions; the respondents were asked to express their views on certain issues relevant to this study. Close-ended questions have the advantages of a greater degree of uniformity of responses and are easily converted into quantitative data that can be used for comparisons. Open-ended questions on the other hand, have the advantage of allowing the interviewer to probe for more information (Rubin and Babbie, 2001).

Open-ended questions were used as follow-ups to closed-ended questions in instances where the respondent had opinions different from those provided and allowed respondents to express personal views, rendering information which might not be easily classified but which are nonetheless pertinent to this study. The inclusion of qualitative methods allows the development of a deeper theoretical understanding of the meanings of statistical findings emerging from quantitative measurement and may allow for the generation of new hypotheses for quantitative study. The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections and were administered to the University of Ibadan residents (staff and students) in their various hall of residence and staff quarters within the University, a total of 300 questionnaires were randomly administered among the residents, which investigated the level of awareness and interest in ecotourism, resident status, their opinions and attitude toward tourism travel and their willingness to participate in ecotourism activities.

Statistical analysis

Data collected were subjected to descriptive analyses using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0).

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Residents

The respondents sampled show that 79% involved and 21% not involved in ecotourism activities (Table 1). However, in reality there are a larger percentage of residents that are directly involved and have interest in ecotourism activities.

From Table 1, it showed a large number of respondent were aged between 17-43 years (94.4 %). This coincided with studies conducted by (Lucas, 1990; Ogunjobi *et al.*, 2011; Emelue and Amede, 2013; Ojong *et al.*, 2013) which reported that park visitors tended to be younger than the general population. Only 5.4% of those surveyed were above the age of 44 (Table1). There were two reasons for the younger participants; firstly, the inquisitiveness and exposure of individuals that volunteered to answer questions. Secondly, younger residents were the dominant in population of the residents which makes them likely to take an interview seriously and felt they know enough about the research topic to be able to answer the questions. Therefore, the sample is skewed toward young individuals of the community since they were the majority of people involved in social activities within the community.

The questionnaires were distributed evenly between males and females with the majority being male (62.7%) while 37.3% were females (Table 1). Most males seem to be more informed than women or they were more willing to share their views. Sixty six

percent of the respondents were single and thirty four percent were married this being that student constitute the majority of the residents in the university community.

The result showed that all of the individuals interviewed had at least primary school education, 41.3% graduated from secondary school, 16.3% obtained Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) and Ordinary National Diploma (OND), 21.3% graduated from a university and 21.0% obtained postgraduate degree from university (Table 1). The distribution of education in the sample is an artifact of the age distribution of the sample size. Since most of the sample contained individuals over twenty years of age, all were able to attend and have secondary school education while 58.6% had the opportunity to go on to tertiary institution. However, with continued development, the number of residents graduating from secondary school and university may be much higher in the future.

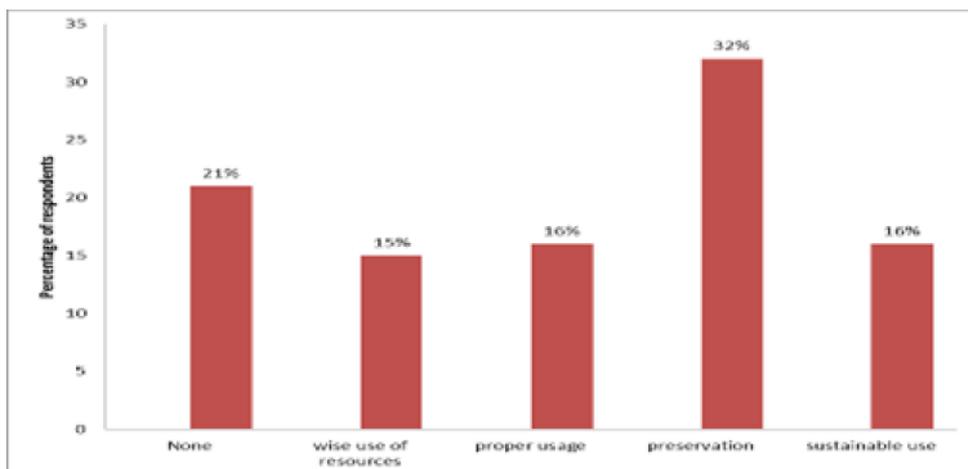


Figure 1: Respondent Knowledge of Wildlife Conservation

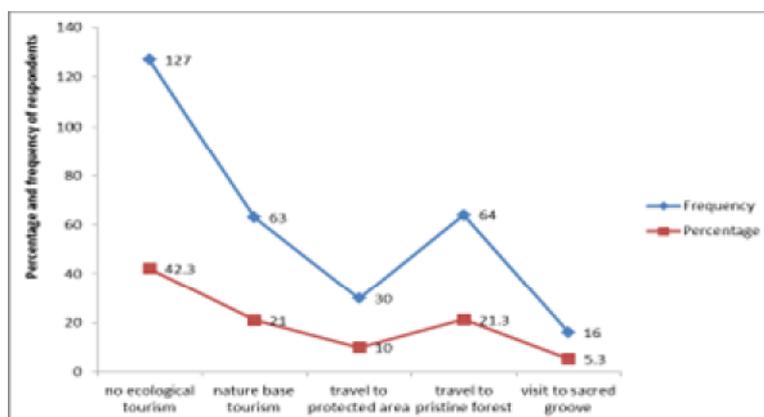


Figure 2: Knowledge and perception of ecotourism in University of Ibadan campus

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents in the study area

Variables	Percent
Community Resident (n=300)	
Hall of residents	50.0
Abadina	50.0
Ecotourism Involvement	
Involved	79.0
Not Involved	21.0
Age (years, n= 300)	
17-25	50.7
26-34	25.7
35-43	18.3
44-52	2.7
53-61	2.7
62-70	0
71+	0
Occupation (n = 300)	
Student	65.4
Staff	27.5
Self employed	5.9
Homemaker	1.2
Other	0
Gender (n= 300)	
Male	62.7
Female	37.3
Marital Status (n= 300)	
Single	66.0
Married	34.0
Highest Education Attained (n= 300)	
Secondary School	41.3
NCE/OND	16.3
B.SC/HND	21.3
M.SC/M.A/M.PHIL/Ph.D	21.0

Table 2: Residents awareness of conservation and ecological tourism

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Yes	173	57.7
No	127	42.3
Total	300	100.0

The respondents knowledge of wildlife conservation and ecological tourism is relatively high with 79.9% of the respondents have knowledge of ecological tourism while 42.7% do not have idea or knowledge of what ecological tourism is all about, with the total breakdown from (Figure 2) result showed that 21% defined ecological tourism as a

nature base tourism, 10% as travel to protected area, 21.3% as travel to pristine forest and 5.3% defined it as visit to sacred grove while 42.3% cannot define ecotourism at all.

Perceptions of Conservation and Ecotourism

From figure 2, when asked to define conservation, 21% of the residents have no knowledge of conservation or chose not be indifferent. However, there seemed to be a consensus among those that did answer. Their definition included two concepts: to protect the environment (50%) and to preserve natural resources for the future (67%). Majority of residents defined conservation as “wise use, proper and sustainable uses” but those who responded had a good understanding of the goals of conservation. In addition, this study revealed that the residents’ supports the infrastructural development and the initiative of campus tree management committee in the transformation of Awba dam into resort centre, although the community seems interested in conservation and ecotourism. This corroborated the findings of (Haddle, 2005 and Ramchurjee, 2013) which reported that people tends to have general knowledge of conservation and ecotourism.

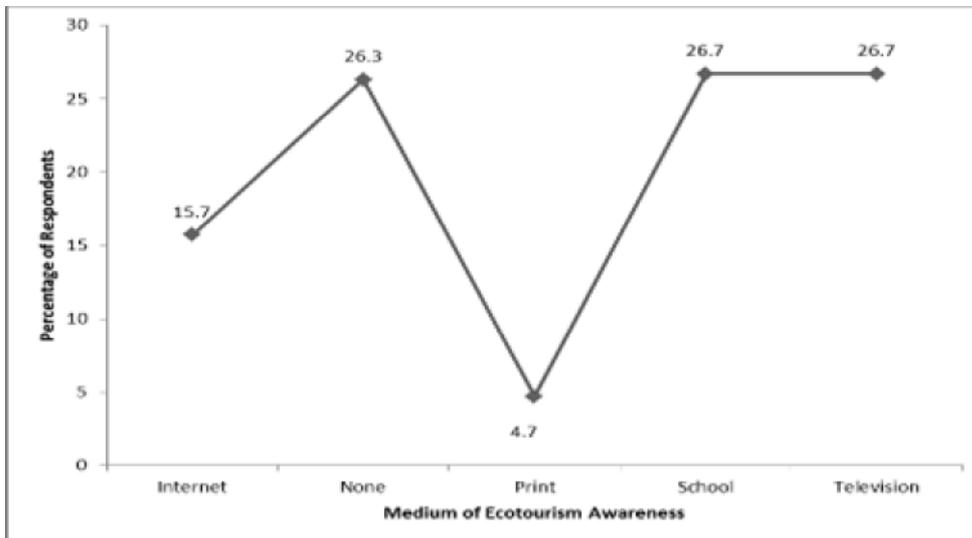


Figure 3: Percentage of respondents’ medium of ecotourism awareness

The result from figure 3 revealed that school and television (26%) are the main channels through which respondents got informed about the conservation and ecotourism activities while print media (4.7%) was the least medium of enlightenment

. Also 26.3% of the results showed that some respondents' medium was neither through school nor electronic media (Figure. 2).

However, the university resident's interest in knowing about ecotourism presented in table 3 revealed that 5.3% of the respondents in the University were both neutral and not interested in ecotourism. Nevertheless, 89.3% of the respondents in the university community were interested in taking part and want to know more about wildlife conservation and ecotourism.

Table 3: Resident interest in knowing more about wildlife conservation and ecotourism

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Interested	268	89.3
Neutral	16	5.3
Not interested	16	5.3
Total	300	100.0

The major challenges of embarking on ecotourism trip presented in table 4 revealed that 18.6%, 16.7% and 14.7% of the respondents among the residents in the university attested to insecurity, lack of accommodation and absence of knowledge about the tourist destinations were the major constraints of embarking on ecotourism trip. Although, other constraints includes inadequate infrastructure (9.6%), lack of time (7.7%), poor accessibility and inadequate transportation (7%) confronting eco-travel. Data collected showed that lack of interest in ecotourism was not the major challenge facing ecotourism, this assertion supports the findings of Ojong *et al.*, 2013 and Ogunjimi *et al.*, 2013 which reported that most problems facing ecotourism trip is induced by lack of publicity and awareness among the larger population of the society.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, resident perceptions of the impacts and management concerns are likely to adversely affect tourist experience while visiting the ecotourism centre. Unless further and appropriate action about education and publicity of ecotourism destination is provided, the community will not obtain proper information and understanding of ecotourism destination and fallacy about this form of tourism is likely to continue and hinder ecotourism development. Therefore, concerted effort should be geared towards improvement on publicity of ecotourism destinations in Nigeria and world over. If this is achieved, it will enhance the sensitivity of the tourists to the fragility of the environment and alert them to the negative impacts that can occur if they do not adhere to rules and regulations of eco-travel.

Table 4: Major Barriers involving Eco-travel in the Nigeria

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of accommodation facilities	50	16.7
Poor Accessibility and Inadequate Transportation Means	21	7.0
Insecurity	56	18.6
Lack of Interest in Tourism	18	6
Lack of Information About Ecotourism Destination	44	14.7
Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities	29	9.6
Time	23	7.7
Educational Awareness	42	14
Financial Constraint/Tour Cost	17	5.7
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

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