

Perception on Ecological Tourism in Gashaka Gumti National Park, Nigeria

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Abstract - The study was conducted to investigate the perception of ecological tourism in Gashakagumti National Park. Data collection involves the use of multi-stage technique and random sampling method. Twenty, 20 communities were selected from the support zone of the National Park. Structured questionnaires were used to obtain primary data while journal, proceedings, text, brochure and manuals were used to collect information for secondary data. The Data generated were analyzed using the descriptive statistics such as, tables, mean, percentages and charts. A total of one thousand four hundred and eighty-six (1486) respondent was randomly selected for the purpose of this study. Out of this figure a total of 1207 (81.2%) respondents were aware of the ecological tourism in the park. 909 (61.2%) Indicated support for the ecological tourism in the park while 294 (19.8%) were not in support. The reason for the support towards ecological tourism in the park was topped by provision of local source of income with 361 (22.1 %) respondents followed by employment opportunities 303 (18.5 %), Education of tourist and locals 215 (13.1 %), Improved infrastructures 151 (9.2 %), Revenue generation 137 (8.4 %), Habitat preservation 109 (6.7 %), Platform for cultural exchange 73 (4.5 %), improved standard of living 61 (3.7%), cultural preservation 54(3.3 %), Development of other income stream 41(2.5 %), Maintenance of site of attraction 38 (2.3%), conservation of biodiversity 31 (1.9 %), waste management, 26 (1.6 %), and the least is mitigating climatic change 20 (1.2 %). No response stood at 15 (0.9 %). On the other side the reason for nonsupport towards ecological tourism in the park was topped by noninvolvement of the local communities on conservation matters with 172 (31.3 %) respondents followed by commercialization of cultural practices 93 (16.9 %), then change of family value 71 (12.9 %), insufficient infrastructure 68 (12.4 %), insecurity 41 (7.5 %), Environmental degradation 35 (6.4%), increased cost of living 21 (3.8 %), Drug abuse 20 (3.6 %) prostitution 12 (2.2 %) with alcohol consumption as the least with 8 (1.5 %). No response stood at 9 (1.6 %). It is recommended that the federal government should allocate more funds for the execution of developmental project in the park with her support communities and intensify efforts to bring to

an end the insecurity in the area. The park should enhance its effort in conservation education program to enable all residence of the support group zone area aware of ecological tourism. The local communities being stake holders should be involve in the management of the ecological tourism in the park. The park authority should collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide sustainable means of livelihood in the field of tourism, trade and agriculture in the support zone communities.

Keywords: Ecological, Tourism, Perception, Support, Non support.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism guarantees the sustainable use of environmental resources, while generating economic opportunities for the local people [1] Purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people [2]. Travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights [3]. Ecotourism has six characteristics: a) ecotourism involves travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas and/or archeological sites, b) it focuses on learning and the quality of experience, c) it economically benefits the local communities, d) ecotourists seek to view rare species, spectacular landscapes and/or the unusual and exotic, e) ecotourists do not deplete resources but even sustain the environment or help undo damage to the environment, and f) ecotourists appreciate and respect local culture, traditions etc. [4]. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality. A symbiotic and complex relationship between the environment and tourist activities is possible when this philosophy can be translated into appropriate policy, careful planning and tactful

practicum [5]. Most definitions of eco-tourism boil down to a special form of tourism that meets three criteria: (a) It provides for environmental conservation; (b) It includes meaningful community participation; (c) It is profitable and can be self-sustained [6]. The term "ecotourism" (pronounced "eco" as in "ecological") refers to a particular interest in region's natural history. It is also described as ethical tourism, ecological tourism and nature-based tourism. Environmental, cultural, social and economic factors are the four fundamental aspects of ecotourism. It basically involves visiting natural areas, experiencing and learning about the culture and environment of the destination, rather than just visiting for leisure or relaxation. [7]. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries, contributing more than 10% to the global GDP. Twenty-five million international tourists in 1950 grew to 166 million in 1970, reaching 1.442 billion in 2018 and projected to be 1.8 billion by 2030. The author further stated that mobilizing such a substantial human tourist's mass is most likely to trickle environmental pollution along with its positive effects on employment, wealth creation, and the economy. The local pollution at tourist destinations may include air emissions, noise, solid waste, littering, sewage, oil and chemicals, architectural/visual pollution, heating, car use, and many more. In addition, an uncontrolled, overcrowded, and ill-planned tourist population has substantial adverse effects on the quality of the environment. It results in the over-consumption of natural resources, degradation of service quality, and an exponential increase in wastage and pollution. Furthermore, tourism arrivals beyond capacity bring problems rather than a blessing, such as leaving behind soil erosion, attrition of natural resources, accumulation of waste and air pollution, and endangering biodiversity, decomposition of socio-cultural habitats, and virginity of land and [8].

Ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" [9]. The concept of ecotourism is grounded upon a well-defined set of principles including "environmental conservation and education, cultural preservation and experience, and economic benefits" [10]. Ecotourism minimizes tourism's impact on the tourism resources of a specific destination, including lessening physical, social, interactive, and psychosomatic impacts. Ecotourism is also about demonstrating a positive and responsible attitude from the tourists and hosts toward protecting and preserving all components of the environmental ecosystem. Ecotourism reflects a purpose-oriented mindset, responsible for creating and delivering value for the destination with a high degree of kindness for local environmental, political, or social issues. [11]. Sustainability aims to recognize all impacts of tourism, minimize the adverse impacts, and maximize the encouraging ones. Sustainable

tourism involves sustainable practices to maintain viable support for the ecology of the tourism environment in and around the destination. Sustainable tourism is natural resource-based tourism that resembles ecotourism and focuses on creating travel openings with marginal impact and encouraging learning about nature having a low impact, conservation, and valuable consideration for the local community's well-being [12].

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Materials

All materials are of analytical grade

2.2 Study Area

GashakaGumti National Park (GGNP) covers an area of approximately 6670 square kilometers. It is the largest National Park in Nigeria, located in the north eastern part of the country and represent an area of national and international conservation priority. The park's name is derived from two of the region's oldest and most historic settlements. Gashaka village in Taraba state and Gumti village in Adamawa State.[13]. The Park was created by the Federal decree in 1991 by the merging of Gashaka Game Reserve and Gumti Game Reserve. From the edge of the plateau in Taraba state, GGNP stretches northwards along the international border with Cameroon and into Adamawa state as far as the small town of Toungo. Geographically the area lies between 6° 55' latitude and 8° 05' longitude north and between 11° 11' latitude and 12° 13' longitude east. Despite being located in what may be classified politically and culturally as a northern state, in ecological terms, the Park bears many similarities with Nigeria's southern regions [14].

The GashakaGumti climate is broadly characteristics of Guinea savannah zone. However, the climate of the Park differs from most other central habitats because of its prolonged and marked dry season. It is not unusual to have no rain at all for up to three months. Typically, the rainy season begins in March or early April and ends in mid-November. Rainfall ranges from 1200mm in the north to nearly 3000mm in the south of the park. The high rainfall is aided by the mountains of the area since humidity from the Atlantic is forced up into higher elevations, cools down and condenses to rain-bearing clouds. This, in turn, allows the growth of moist forests. Figure 1 shows the location of GashakaGumti National Park on the Map of Nigeria [15].



Figure 1: Map Nigeria showing the location of Gashaka Gumti National Park

2.3 The Study Tools

The data for this study was derived from primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data while Journals, Proceedings, Texts, Brochure, and Manuals were used to elicit information for secondary data. A total of 1486 members of the park neighboring communities were randomly interviewed using enumerator-administered structured questionnaires. Multistage random sampling method was used. This method made use of Three (3) subdivisions (ranges) under Gashaka and Two (2) under Gumti sectors of Gashakagumti National Park. A random selection of Four (4) villages neighboring the park was done from each of the sub-division making a total of Twenty (20) villages. Under Gashaka sector the following Twelve (12) villages were selected: Bodel, Goje, Gidankara, Tuganlikwar, Mayo selbe, Bam, Mai idanu, Mataya, Dunderere, Njawai, Gidan Zaria, and Lagasso, while the eight (8) villages were selected under Gumti as follows: Addagoro, Tapare, Sabongari, Jiman-kila, Lungerimbana, Sabondali, Mayo butali, and Sangurdidi. Hence this study adopted [16] method of determining the representative sample in which, 30% of the population in each community served as sample size. Structured questionnaires were administered randomly in offices, market, schools, workshops, and homes in each village. In addition schedule interview was also employed to elicit information from the people.

2.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was employed in the analysis of data. The descriptive statistics used were: Tables, means, frequency distribution, percentages and charts. They were used to analyze the following: (i) level of awareness on

ecological tourism (ii) Perception of respondents towards ecological tourism.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Awareness of respondents about ecological tourism

The result shown in figure 2 depicts the level of awareness of respondents on ecological tourism in both sectors of the park. A total of 1207 (81.2 %) of the respondents were aware of ecological tourism while 263 (17.7 %) were not aware of ecological tourism in the both sectors of the park. 16 (1.1%) of the respondents gave no response about ecological tourism in the park.

3.2 Attitude of respondents about ecological tourism

The result in figure 3 shows the attitude of respondents in both sectors of the park toward ecological tourism. A total of 909 (61.2 %) of the respondents were in support of ecological tourism in both sectors of the park while 294 (19.8 %) were not in support of ecological tourism. 283 (19.0 %) of the respondents gave no response about ecological tourism in the park.

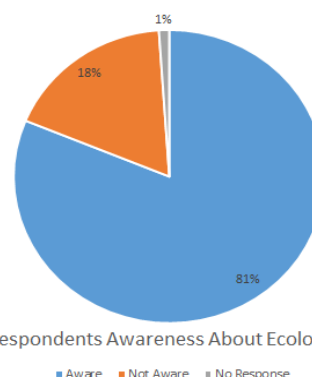


Fig. 2 Respondents Awareness About Ecological Tourism

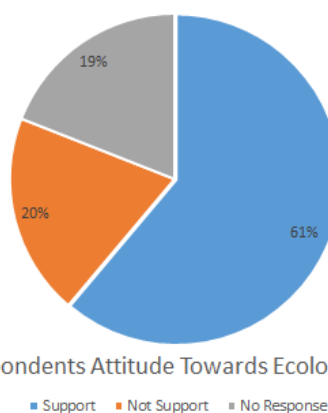


Fig. 3 Respondents Attitude Towards Ecological Tourism

The respondents in both sectors of the park stated reasons why they were in support of Ecological tourism as indicated in table 1, Provision of local source of income top the list with 361 (22.1 %) respondents followed by Employment opportunity 303 (18.5 %) then Educate tourist and locals 215

(13.1 %), Improved infrastructure 151 (9.2 %), Revenue generation 137 (8.4 %), Habitat preservation 109 (6.7 %), Platform for cultural exchange 73 (4.5 %), Improved standard of living 61 (3.7 %), Cultural preservation 54 (3.3 %), Development of other income stream 41 (2.5 %), Maintenance of sites of attraction 38 (2.3 %). Conservation of Biodiversity 31 (1.9 %), Waste management 26 (1.6 %), and Mitigating climate change 20 (1.2 %) as the least. No response stood at 15 (0.9 %).

Table 1: Reasons for supporting ecological tourism

S/N	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1	Provision of local source of income	361	22.1
2	Employment opportunity	303	18.5
3	Educate tourist and locals	215	13.1
4	Improved infrastructure	151	9.2
5	Revenue generation	137	8.4
6	Habitat preservation	109	6.7
7	Platform for cultural exchange	73	4.5
8	Improved standard of living	61	3.7
9	Cultural preservation	54	3.3
10	Development of other income stream	41	2.5
11	Maintenance of sites of attraction	38	2.3
12	Conservation of Biodiversity	31	1.9
13	Waste management	26	1.6
14	Mitigating climate change	20	1.2
15	No response	15	0.9
	Total	1635	100

The result in table 2 contains the responses made by the respondents in both sectors of the park on the reasons why they were not in support of ecological tourism in the following order. Non-involvement of communities on tourism matters 172 (31.3%), commercialization of cultural practices 93 (16.9%), change of family value 71 (12.9%), insufficient infrastructure 68 (12.4%), insecurity 41 (7.5%), environmental degradation 35 (6.4%), increase cost of living 21 (3.8%), Drug abuse 20 (3.6%), prostitution 12 (2.2%), and alcohol consumption stood at 8 (1.5%), no response were 9 (1.6%).

Table 2: Reasons for not Supporting Ecological Tourism

s/n	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1	Noninvolvement of communities on tourism matters	172	31.3
2	Commercialization of cultural practice	93	16.9
3	Change of family value	71	12.9
4	Insufficient infrastructure	68	12.4
5	Insecurity	41	7.5
6	Environmental degradation	35	6.4
7	Increased cost of living	21	3.8
8	Drug abuse	20	3.6
9	Prostitution	12	2.2
10	Alcohol consumption	8	1.5
11	No response	9	1.6
	Total	550	100

3.3 Discussion

The result in figure 1 depicted a very high level of awareness 1207 (81.2 %) of the respondents in both sectors

about Ecological tourism in the park. This indicated that the park management has done very well in educating the respondents in neighboring communities on ecological tourism in the park. It should therefore consolidate on this achievement by further keeping the neighboring communities more abreast about ecological tourism and conservation of biodiversity through its conservation education enlightenment campaign programmes. This will continue to create more awareness and understanding between the park management and her neighboring communities as observed by [17]. This creates communities more likely to follow conservation strategies for ecotourism development and sustainable natural resources management practices. In the same vein [18] stated that this will help project managers to avoid conflict with communities by understanding and incorporating the communities desires and points of view. It will also develop the communities' ability to address future development threat and take advantage of opportunities. The attitude of respondents towards the ecological tourism in the park is both of positive and negative impact. Majority of the respondents 909 (61.2%) were in support of ecological tourism in the park while 294 (19.8 %) of the respondents have shown nonsupport and 283 (19.0%) made no response. This attitude is based on the anticipation that things could change and that they will likely benefit in the future. Similar findings was made by [19] in Belize, while working on a community Baboon Sanctuary. This therefore rises the hope for sustainable ecological tourism and conservation of wildlife resources in the study area. The result obtained on the reason for support of ecological tourism in the park is in line with the report of [20] that tourism generates wide ranging benefits for the economy, community and the people. Tourism contributes to the economy through revenue generation, share responsibility with the government to alleviate poverty, creates opportunities for job, protect environment and conserve natural ecosystem and biodiversity. This finding is also in consonance with [21] who found that natural and cultural landscape values form a basis for ecotourism. These values are geographical position, microclimatic conditions, existence of water, natural beauties, vegetation, wildlife, surface features, geomorphologic structures, local food, festivals and pageants, traditional agricultural structures, local hand crafts, regional dress culture, historical events, and people, heritage appeals, architectural variety, traditional music, folk dance, artistic activities and so on. It is also in consistent with the work of [22] who stated that ecotourism guarantees the sustainable use of environmental resources while generating economic support for the local people. The result also agrees with the result reported by [23] that after conducting study of ecotourism projects in six Southern African countries where infrastructure development benefits supporting communities as a whole, demonstrated that infrastructure development in an

area will positively impact multiple sectors regardless of the reason it was developed. This infrastructure also connects the local region to nearby area, strengthening the regional economy. The negative attitude towards ecological tourism as reported by the respondents are evident in the findings of some research conducted all over the nation relating to ecological tourism development [24]. Respondents displeasure on noninvolvement of communities on tourism matters is in consonance with the reported of [25] that occasionally indigenous inhabitant will actually be relocated or disenfranchised during the attempt to make room for ecotourism development and further conservation effort. This happened in Tanzania when the locals Masai people were pushed out and lost control of their land. Similarly, [26] reported some negative impacts similar to this study such as crowding, increase cost of living, environmental destruction, changing family value, prostitution, alcoholism, commercialization of cultural practice that are associated with ecological tourism development in Namibia. It is also in consonant with the findings of [27] whom stated that tourism create change among communities such as business inflation, cultural conflict, tourism anxiety, local language change, traditional life style change, drug trafficking, increase crime violence and social conflicts. This work is also unconnected with findings of [28] who showed that tourism can also stimulate terrible habits of food eating because of international restaurant and some disease are brought from other countries to the local communities such as Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

IV. CONCLUSION

From the result of the study, the respondents reported both positive and negative perception about the ecological tourism in the study area. Majority of the respondents have shown support for ecological tourism in the park. The park management and the government should collectively work together in order to overcome the negative perception about ecological tourism. This will bring about the success of ecological tourism in the park and sustainable conservation of wildlife resources in the park.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

FUNDING

This study was funded by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) with Institution Based Research (IBR) reference number (TEFT/ DR&D/UNI/MUBI/RG/2023/VOL.1. through Adamawa State University Mubi.

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Citation of this Article:

Bode A. S., Buba Z. M., & Joseph J. (2024). Perception on Ecological Tourism in Gashaka Gumti National Park, Nigeria. *International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology - IRJIET*, 8(8), 242-247. Article DOI <https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2024.808027>
