

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ECOTOURISM IN AFIKPO NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE

Ashiegbu G. N.

Department of Rural Sociology and Extension,
College of Agricultural Economics, Rural Sociology and Extension,
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture,
Umudike, Abia State Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: gloriaashiegbu80@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33281/JTHS20129.2020.2.2>

Onyeabor E.N.

Department of Agricultural Economics, Management and Extension,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Nigeria.

Abstract

This study assessed participation of women in ecotourism in Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents were chosen for the study through purposive sampling technique, primary data collected through field survey. Result showed that 42% fell within the age bracket of 31-40 years; while few (7%) were above 51 years, (42%) were married while (30%) were single. Also, (38%) had secondary education while (8%) had no formal education. Further analysis revealed that majority (35%) had annual income ranged from 151,000 – 200,000 while (3%) had annual income of above 300,000. Also, the result of types of ecotourism activities engaged in by women revealed that (41.67%) of the women participated in ecotourism through selling of farm produce to hotels and to the tourists, followed by selling of food and drinks which account for (18.33%) of the respondents. Further analysis revealed that majority of the respondents (41.67%) used their ecotourism income for investment in agriculture, followed by family up-keep (33.33%). However, the result of the factor analysis revealed socioeconomic, environmental and financial factors as the major constraints to women participation in ecotourism in the study area. Necessary recommendation such as participation of women in ecotourism development and increasing budgetary allocation towards ecotourism development among others were suggested.

Keywords: Participation, Ecotourism, Women, Tourism

Introduction

Tourism is now generally recognized as one of the largest industries in the world and one of the most significant sources of employment especially in developing nations. Nigeria is an example of a country that presents both growth and opportunity in the field of ecotourism. Its progression in infrastructure, education and economic development has been praised as beacons of hope in Africa.

Tourism in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. The historical development of tourism and recreation in Nigeria has been traced Aniah, Eja, Iwara and Edu (2007) from the pre-colonial through colonial to the post-colonial eras of the country. The tourism industry in Nigeria is still fairly developed when compared to those found in other countries of both the developed and developing world (Aniah et al. 2007). Many developing countries have managed to increase their participation in the global economy through development of tourism.

Tourism development is increasingly viewed as an important tool in promoting economic growth, alleviating poverty, and advancing food security. Numerous studies have demonstrated that tourism can play a significant role in balanced sustainable development, and that it can be effectively harnessed to generate net benefits for the poor (UNWTO, 2002). Tourism is a principal export for 83% of developing countries, and it is the most significant source of foreign exchange after petroleum in developing countries. Developing countries' share of international tourist arrivals more than doubled from 1973 to 2000 (UNWTO, 2002). Tourism comprises a significant part of the world's growing service sector; in sub-Saharan Africa, tourism accounts for approximately 55% of service sector exports (UNWTO, 2002).

The potential of tourism development as a contributor to economic growth and poverty reduction is derived from several unique characteristics of the tourism system (UNWTO, 2002). First, tourism represents an opportunity for economic diversification, particularly in marginal areas with few other export options. Tourists are attracted to remote areas with high values of cultural, wildlife and landscape assets. The cultural and natural heritage of developing countries is frequently based on such assets, and tourism represents an opportunity for income generation through the preservation of heritage values. Therefore, tourism enables communities that are poor in material wealth but rich in history and cultural heritage to leverage their unique assets for economic development (Honey and Gilpin, 2009).

The tourism industry particularly benefits the economies of developing countries, where most of the sector's tourism jobs and businesses are being created. When done right, sustainable tourism development can be an effective tool for stimulating economic growth, alleviating poverty, conserving biodiversity, preserving culture and traditions, and creating employment opportunities for local communities. International tourism has become an attractive option for economic development for less developed countries (LDCs) in the past decade (Berno, 2001). For many LDC's tourism is an opportunistic development option offering an important opportunity for economic diversification (World Tourism Organization & International Hotel and Restaurant Association

[WTO & IHRA], 1999). It is a for-profit industry that can help reverse the trends and negative effects that non-sustainable tourism has had on local economies, culture and development. Preservation of tourism resources, environmental conservation, positive economic impact, fair trade principles, and cultural heritage preservation are all essential to ensuring that the planet and its people remain healthy and are celebrated respectfully.

Travel and tourism are among the world's fastest growing industries and are the major source of foreign exchange earnings for many developing countries. The World Tourism Organization (WTO 2004) report that receipts from international tourism grow by an average annual rate of 9% between 1988-1997. The increasing economic importance of tourism and, ecotourism in particular has captured the attention of most countries.

Although Ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable Tourism, it is believed to have a strong link to rural and culture tourism.

Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial (mass) tourism. Its purpose may be to educate the traveler, to provide funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, or to foster respect for different cultures and for human rights.

Ecotourism reportedly, creates opportunities for women through catalyzing the development of numerous ancillary business including sale of fresh farm produce, food vending, and sale of artifacts (Onyeabor, 2014). The documented strategic roles of women in environmental conservation and household economics in developing countries- two areas that form the focus of ecotourism, makes their participation in ecotourism an issue of investigation (Swain, 1990; Bolles, 1997; Scheyvens, 2000; Gupta and Shah, 1999).

Participation of women in ecotourism has been reported in several local and international studies. However, a holistic study of the issue, regarding the extent, consequences and implications seem not to have been undertaken, especially in Afikpo area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Also, the extent to which local culture and tradition as well as other socio-environmental factors affect women participation in particular in ecotourism, especially in highly ethnocentric societies like Afikpo, needs to be thoroughly understood for needed policy support and advocacy, if ecotourism development must occur in the area.

The research will therefore, seek to answer the following questions: what is the extent of women participation in ecotourism in the Afikpo area of Ebonyi state? What are the factors that influence women participation in ecotourism in the area? What are the consequences and implications of women participation in ecotourism in the area?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to analyze women participation in ecotourism in Afikpo north L.G.A. of Ebonyi state. The specific objectives include to:

- i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
- ii. ascertain the form and extent of respondent participation in ecotourism in the study area;
- iii. determine the factors that influence participation of women in ecotourism in the study area;
- iv. determine the effects of respondents participation in ecotourism on the socio-economic welfare; and
- v. make policy recommendations based on the findings.

The study is expected to produce empirical information on

- the form and extent and extent of women participation in ecotourism in the study area;
- factors that influence participation of women in ecotourism;
- socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors that influence women participation and
- the use of ecotourism income by women.

Policy makers at the local and state government levels as well as NGOs and community Development Associations (CDAs) will find this information useful in the design and implementation of evidence-based policy inventions in the area of ecotourism and community development. Researchers and general readers will also find the result of the study useful.

Background Information of the Study Area

Afikpo North lies within latitude 45⁰E and longitude 60⁰N of Ebonyi State. Afikpo North LGA is situated at North East boundary of Abia State by Cross River State in East, within the state territory. Afikpo North is bounded by Onicha LGA at the North- East, South- West by Afikpo South and South-East by Ohaozara Local Government Area (Ikwor, 2006). There are five autonomous communities that make up the Local Government Area. These communities are Akpoha, Amasiri, Ehugbo, Unwana, Ibii , Oziza and Ndibe communities. The distance from Afikpo main town to abakaliki the state capital is 59km. The National Population Census (NPC, 2006) reported that the population of Afikpo North was 156649.

Geographically, Afikpo falls within the typical belt temperature range of 70⁰F minimum and 95⁰F maximum. The variation in climate manifests the following processes: wind, temperature, pressure, rainfall, and atmospheric humidity. Afikpo is endowed with four renowned golden

beaches, caves, waterfalls and other existing natural ecosystems that make the area a tourist dreamland (Uyene and Nwani, 2014)



Figure 1: Map of Afikpo North Local Government Area Showing the Studied Sites

Research Methodology

Method of Sampling

Three most developed ecotourism sites were purposively selected, including Ndibe beach, Unwana beach, and Oziza beach. Forty respondents were systematically selected from among women service providers in each site to make a total sample size of 120. Primary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire, interview schedule and direct observation. Relevant analytical tools such as descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the objectives. Objective (i), (ii) and (iv) were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages and means. While factor analysis was used to analyze objective (iii)

Model Specifications

Factor Analysis model

Factor analysis is a statistical method used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors.

In order to obtain the factor loadings of each of the variables necessary for achieving aspects of objective iii, factor analysis presented below was used.

$$X_{ij} = \varphi_{i1}F_{i1} + \varphi_{i2}F_{i2} + \varphi_{i3}F_{i3} + \dots + \varphi_{jm}F_{iK} + e_{ij}$$

Where;

X_{ij} = Observation on variable X_j for the i th sample number

F_{ik} = Score on factor F_k ($k = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m$)

F_1 - F_m = Common factors

e_{ij} = The value on the residual variable E_j for the i th sample member

$\varphi_{j1} \dots \dots \dots \varphi_{jm}$ = Factor loadings (regression weights)

The associated assumptions will be applied accordingly while the suitable number of factors will be subjectively selected based on varimax rotated factor matrix. The exploratory factor analysis techniques using the principal factor model with interactions and varimax rotation was adopted. The factor loading under each constraint (beta weight) represents a correlation of the variables (constraint areas) to the identified constraint factors and has the same interpretation as any correlation coefficient. Kaisier's criterion using factor loading of 0.30 and above in naming and interpreting the factors and constraint variable was adopted (Child, 1978; Ogunfiditimi, 1979).

Results

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Results showed that (42%) of the respondents were within the age range of 31-40 years while 7% fell within the age range of above 51 years. The average age of the respondents was 34 years. This inferred that women participants in ecotourism services were still within their active age. Table 1 indicates that majority (42%) of the respondents were married while (30%) were single. Also, some of the respondent were widow and separated which account for 16% and 13% respectively. None of the respondents was divorced. Result revealed that majority of the respondents (46%) had secondary education while 8% had no formal education. Also 17% of the respondents had tertiary education. Their mean educational level was 5years. The result implies that the respondents were moderately literate. Result indicates that 63% of the respondents had household size range of between 5-6 persons; 21% had household size of 3-4; 7% had household size range of about 7-8 while only 1% had household size ranged between 9 persons and above. Average household size among women participants in ecotourism in Afikpo Area was 6 persons. Result revealed that (35%) earn

₦151, 000-200,000 annually while very few (3%) earn above ₦300, 000 annually. The average annual income of the respondents was ₦110650. The implication of this finding may be that women participants in ecotourism earn low income. Tables 1 showed that (38%) of the respondents were traders, while (37%) were farmers. Also reasonable percentages of the respondents were civil/public servants, students and retiree, accounting for 33%, 11% and 8% respectively. This signified that women participants in ecotourism engaged more in trading.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics.

Variables	Frequency	Percentages	Mean(X)
Age			
≤20	15	13	
21-30	22	18	
31-40	50	42	
41-50	25	21	
Above 51	8	6	34
Total	120	100	
Marital status			
Single	36	30	
Married	50	42	
Separated	15	13	
Divorced	0	0	
Widowed	19	15	
Total	120	100	
Educational level			
No formal education	10	8	
Primary education	35	29	
Secondary education	55	46	
Tertiary education	20	17	5
Total	120	100	
Household size			
1-2	10	8	
3-4	25	21	
5-6	75	63	
7-8	8	7	

Above 9	2	1	6
Total	120	100	
Annual income			
50000-100000	25	21	
101000-150000	30	25	
151000-200000	42	35	
201000-250000	19	16	
Above 300000	4	3	110650
Total	120	100	
Primary occupation			
Farming	44	36.5	
Civil/public service	8	7	
Trading	45	37.5	
Retiree	10	8	
Students	13	11	
Total	120	100	

Source: field survey, 2015

Forms and Extent of Participation in Ecotourism

Results of table 2 revealed that (41.67%) of the women participated in ecotourism through selling of farm produce to hotels and to the tourists, followed by selling of food and drinks which account for (18.33%) of the respondents. Other types of ecotourism activities engaged in by women in the study area includes; selling of general goods, entertainment, guiding visitors, providing accommodation, photography, sell artifacts, produce artifact and others (tour guide) which account for 15.00%, 5.83%, 5.00%, 4.17%, 3.33%, 2.50% and 1.67% respectively.

Table 2 Percentage Distribution on Types of Ecotourism Activities engaged in by Women.

Services	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Guide visitors	5	4.17
Produce artifacts	2	1.67
Sell artifacts	3	2.50
Sell farm produce	50	41.67
sell general goods	18	15.00
Sell food and drinks	22	18.33
Provide accommodation	6	5.00
Provide transportation	1	0.83

Photography	4	3.33
Provide entertainment	7	5.83
Others(tour guide etc)	2	1.67
Total	120	100

Source: field survey, 2015.

Factors that Influence Women Participation in Ecotourism

In order to identify constraints to women participation in ecotourism in the study area, factor analysis was done. Table 3 showed the varimax rotated component matrix on constraints to women participation in ecotourism in the Study area. From the field data collected, three (3) major constraints were extracted based on the responses of the respondents. Only variable with constraints loading of 0.40 and above at 10% overlapping variance (Ashley, et al, 2006, Madukwu, 2004) were used in naming the constraints. Variable that loaded in more than one constraint were discarded while variables that have constraints loading of less than 0.40 were not used. Factors 1 was considered and named socioeconomic constraints because of the factors that loaded high under it. These include: age (0.967), marital status (0.982), educational level (0.667), households size (0.553) and income (0.925).

Moreover, after critical consideration of the constraints, factor 2 was named environmental constraints due to the factors that loaded high under it. The factors are: Customary beliefs and community attitude towards women (0.547), Family restriction (0.927), Distance from home (0.632), Nature of tourism business (0.740), Fear of molestation or sexual harassment (0.455) and some activities are reserved for only men (0.657). Finally factor 3 was considered and named financial constraints due to the factor that loaded high under it. This is: Lack of Capital (0.635). In conclusion, three major constraints that militate against women participation in ecotourism in the study area were socioeconomic constraints, environmental constraints and financial constraints.

Table 3: Varimax Rotated Component Matrix on Constraints to Women Participation in Ecotourism in the Study Area.

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Socioeconomic Constraints	Environmental Constraints	Financial constraints
X ₁ Customary beliefs and community attitude towards women	-0.079	0.547	-0.034
X ₂ Lack of Capital	0.020	0.304	0.635
X ₃ Family restriction	-0.993	0.927	0.330
X ₄ Distance from home	-0.524	0.632	0.165
X ₅ Nature of tourism business	-0.688	0.740	0.377

X ₆ Fear of molestation or sexual harassment	-0.041	0.455	0.261
X ₇ Some activities are reserved for only men	-0.324	0.657	0.368
X ₈ Age	0.967	0.350	-0.005
X ₉ Marital status	0.982	0.073	-0.568
X ₁₀ Educational level	0.667	0.150	0.305
X ₁₁ Household size	0.553	0.242	-0.820
X ₁₂ Annual income	0.925	0.269	0.216

Source: field survey, 2015.

Effect of Respondents Participation in Ecotourism on their Socio-Economic Welfare

The result of table 4 indicate that (41.67%) of the respondents used their ecotourism income for investment in agriculture, followed by family up-keep (33.33%). Also 15% of the respondents used their ecotourism income as savings for future purposes and 8.33% used their income for purchase of vehicles like tippers for tipping sands while only 1.67% of the respondents used their ecotourism income for medication. This implies that respondents used their ecotourism income to satisfy different purposes in the study area.

Table 4 further revealed that half of the respondent (50%) ecotourism contribution to their total income was moderate, and 33.33% had low contribution to their income from ecotourism while only 16.67% of the respondents had high income contribution to their total income from ecotourism. This implies that ecotourism activities had gone a long way in shaping the lives of the people or women in the study area. The implication of this finding was that more people may be involved in ecotourism activities in the nearest future, since it was a lucrative business.

Table 4 Distribution of Respondents According to their Uses of Ecotourism Income and Contribution of Ecotourism to their Income.

Uses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family up-keep	40	33.33
Investment in agriculture	50	41.67
Savings	18	15.00
Medication	2	1.67
Purchasing of vehicles	10	8.33
Total	120	100
Contribution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	40	33.33
Moderate	60	50.00

High	20	16.67
Total	120	100

Source: field survey, 2015.

Discussion of Results

Results showed a mean educational level of 5years which implies that the respondents were moderately literate and is in consonance with the assertion of Kombo (2016) who opined that where women are educated, they perform better as ecotourism entrepreneurs. The result further shows low income level which would increase if NGOs and Governments should create more awareness and encourage more women to engage meaningfully in ecotourism (Kombo, 2016).

Result of the study shows that women dominate the ecotourism area since most of the forms at which people participate in ecotourism activities in the area were activities majorly undertaking by women in the study area, but disagrees with the findings of Kombo (2016) who observed low participation of women in ecotourism in Tanzania. However, all respondents agreed ecotourism had improved their livelihood economically and this confirms the assertion of Epler-Wood (2002), Kombo (2016) that ecotourism must bring economic benefits to local communities and direct revenue to local people living adjacent the community. The community has become popular because of the introduction of the eco village model with some stating they are aware the name of their community and its tourism related activities is now on the internet and this has made them proud and brought them together in unity (social cohesion) and this seems to exemplify Dawson's (2006) of idea of eco villagers placing lots of value on community living.

Major constraints to women participation in ecotourism in the study area, were categorized into socioeconomic constraints which include age, marital status, educational level, household's size and income. While the environmental constraints were customary beliefs and community attitude towards women, Family restriction, Distance from home, Nature of tourism business, Fear of molestation or sexual harassment and reservation of some activities men only. Notable financial constraint was Lack of Capital. Given the lucrative nature of the enterprise, it was found that more people may be involved in ecotourism activities in the nearest future, since it was a lucrative business and this is in tandem with the findings of Kombo (2016) that the enterprise positively affected income and livelihood of participants.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study had revealed that there is a high level of participation by women in ecotourism activities. That Participating in ecotourism activities has positive impact on income and wellbeing of women.

Also, the study further concludes that major constraints to women participation in ecotourism include age, marital status, educational level, household's size, income, customary beliefs and community attitude towards women, Family restriction, Distance from home, Nature of tourism business, Fear of molestation or sexual harassment and reservation of some activities men only as well as Lack of Capital and these affected their participation in eco-tourism. Thus, there should be collaboration by all and sundry to ensure prompt development and more encouragement to women for ecotourism development in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research the following recommendation was made;

1. Social capital should be provided by the host communities, state and local government as well as NGO's to build a network of local cooperation's.
2. They should be sensitization on policy implementation relating to women empowerment in the area.
3. Government at all levels should increase budgetary allocation on tourism development.
4. Small ecotourism and related supply chain business in gate way communities can be linked to protected areas and also empowering women by organizing them into competitiveness ecotourism business focused on their comparative advantages and uniqueness.
5. Finally, all destination players must work together by identifying the elements that make up the destination, beginning with the reasons tourists will travel to the area, the service available to them and the activities that support the tourist's services.

References

- Alimba, J.O. and Akubilo, C.J.C. 2002. Assessing the Consequences of Technological Change on Farm Enterprises in Southeastern Nigeria by Use of Factor Analysis. Elsevier Science (Agricultural Systems) 74(2002)257-270.
- Aniah, E. J. Eja, E. Iwara and Edu, E. (2007). Tinapa Tourism and Business resort, a model for the socio-economic development of Cross River State: constraint and Temporal Perspectives. Tropical focus, vol & N0.3, pp .131.

- Bilkis Iyabo Uneke and Christopher Didigwu Nwani (2014); Stock assessment of *Tilapia zilli* (Gervais, 1848) (Osteichthyes: Cichlidae) in a Nigerian Tropical river basin, *Zoology and Ecology*. DOI. 10.1080/21658005.2014.959283.
- Bolles, A 1997, 'Women as a Category of Analysis in Scholarship on Tourism: Jamaican Women and Tourism Employment'. *Tourism & Culture*.
- Dawson, J. (2006). *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability*, Chelsea Green Publishing Department for International Development (1999). *Sustainable Livelihood Guidance Sheets*. London, DFID.
- Drumm, A. and Moore, A. (2005). *Ecotourism Development, a Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers, Volume 1: An Introduction to Ecotourism Planning and Development* The Nature Conservancy, 196P or www.mazon.com/Ecotourism
- Honey, M. & Gilpin, R. (2009). *Tourism in the Developing World: Promoting Peace and Reducing Poverty*. Washington: United States Institute for Peace.
- Ikwor, G. (2006). *Potentials for Ecotourism Development in Ebonyi State: Case Study of Ndibe Beach in Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State*. Unpublished (B.Agric.) Project Report, Department of Agricultural Economics, Management and Extension, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria.
- Kombo, Ibum (2016). Factors Affecting Eco-Tourism Development in Zanzibar. *IJRDO-Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*. Vol. 1. Issue 8; pp 141 -166.
- NPC, 2006. Nigeria Population Commission, Nigeria.
- Nwahia, C. O., Omonona, B. T., Onyeabor, E. N. and Balogun, S. O. An Analysis of the Effect of Obudu Community Participation in Ecotourism on Poverty. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 3(8): 12-24.
- Ojo, G.J.A. (1978). *Recreation and tourism in Nigeria: patterns and trends. A geography of Nigerian development*.
- Onyeabor E.N. (2016B). Rationale and Options for Community Participation in Ecotourism Development in South East Nigeria. *Journal of Resources Development and Management*. Vol. 16. USA.
- World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2002). *Tourism and Poverty Alleviation*. Madrid: United Nations World Tourism Organization.