

# **Influence of Wildlife Tourism on the Local Community of Cross River National Park**

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DOI:<https://doi.org/10.33281/JTHS20129.2015.4.1&2.6>

## **Abstract**

*The work investigated the influence of wildlife tourism on the local community of Cross River National Park. The study was guided by four research objectives which identified the level of involvement of the local community towards wildlife tourism, ascertained the benefit and negative influence of wildlife tourism on the local community and determined ways of improving wildlife tourism in the study area for sustainable development. The sample size of 397 respondents was reached using purposive random sampling and stratified sampling techniques. Data for the research was generated through a well-structured questionnaire allocated to residents of the study area. The data was analyzed using descriptive analytical tools like frequencies and percentages mean and standard deviation and ANOVA. The findings revealed that gender has significant influence on local community involvement in wildlife tourism ( $F_{cal} 11.764 > F_{tab} 2.13$ ). There is also a significant difference in the benefit enjoyed by the local community from wildlife tourism ( $F_{cal} 24.42 > F_{tab} 2.13$ ) and the influence of wildlife tourism on the local community of Cross River National Park, ( $F_{cal} 2.63 > F_{tab} 2.13$ ) at 5% level of significance. The empirical survey revealed that the null hypothesis was not true. From the study, it was recommended that effective host participation in planning and management should be encouraged as it can build support for wildlife tourism development, create new partnership, help resolve conflict between stakeholders and provide an additional source of knowledge and labour. Also, favourable park policies that allow host participation in wildlife tourism should be formulated.*

**Key words:** Influence, Wildlife, Tourism, Local Community and National Park

## **Introduction**

Tourism has made a lot of positive impact on many countries around the world. It has promoted avenues for revenue generation in such countries where it serves as a source of foreign exchange. Presently, nations and group of nations have become increasingly aware of the immense benefits derivable from tourism and are vigorously developing their tourism industry (Okpoko, 2006). Tourism in Nigeria centres largely

on events due to the country's ample amount of ethnic groups. Other attractions include rainforests, savanna, waterfalls and other natural attractions (Archibong, 2004). According to Okpoko and Okpoko (2002), tourism could be seen as any temporary movement either individually or in groups from one place to another with aim of achieving some desired objectives. A consensus definition was proposed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) cited in the United Nations World Statistical Commission (1993) where it states that "tourism comprises the activities of people travelling to and staying in a place outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purpose not related to the activities of remuneration from within the place visited" (Holden, 2008). Tourism is dynamic involving customer driven force and it is the world's largest industry if all its interrelated components are placed under one umbrella (Walker, 2002). These components include: hospitality, lodging/accommodation, conventions, expositions, meetings and events, restaurants, managed services, recreations and transportation. Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industry and a major source of income to many countries of the world and it plays a major role in framing the various services that the hospitality companies perform (Stephen, 2005).

According to the European Journal of Tourism Hospitality and Research, (2013) tourism could be classified into: (1) domestic tourism: when people take holidays, short breaks and day trips in their own country. Examples include; a couple taking a weekend break in their own country, supporters of a football team going to an away game featuring their local team etc. (2) Incoming/inbound tourism; which describes people entering the country in question from their home country, so it is a type of international tourism. Examples could be; a party of Japanese visitors coming to Europe on a trip, teams from different countries entering a country for an international event etc. (3) Outbound tourism; a term that applies when people travel away from their home country to visit other international countries for leisure or business. Examples of this could be; a family from Belgium going on holiday to Austria business people from the UK travelling to America to visit a major exhibition etc. Other types of tourism describe the various reasons or purpose why people travel: for recreation, business, leisure, sport, religion, culture, ecotourism, health, education, wildlife tourism etc.

Wildlife tourism, according to The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) (2001), is "tourism that involves encounters with non-domesticated animals either in their natural environment or in captivity. It includes a wide range of activities, such as bird-watching, whale

watching, general wildlife viewing, visiting zoos and aquaria, snorkeling to view underwater life, hunting and recreational fishing". Wildlife tourism encompasses non-consumptive interactions with wildlife, including observing and photographing animals in their natural habitats. It also has the recreational aspect of adventure and supports the values of ecotourism and nature conservation programmes (Newsome, Dowling, Moore, Susan, 2005). According to Mason (2003), tourism activities take place in a natural and man-made environment, which is extremely complex. This man-made environment consists of economic, social and cultural processes and factors, and the natural environment is made up of the natural landscape, climate, flora and fauna present in a certain space. He argues that there is a clear delimitation between the two environments, which are necessary when we talk about tourism's impacts.

The economic benefits and costs generated by tourism activity could be viewed from three sides: tourists, local community and authorities (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012, Saarinen, 2007). On one side we have the tourists, who pay to enjoy a certain form of tourism and on another side, we have the local community who enjoy the benefits (mainly financial) from the tourism activity and at the same time, they are the ones who have to face the hidden costs tourists leave behind and finally, we have the government and the local authorities. For them, tourism generates revenues through taxes, the creation of jobs and contribution to the balance of payments (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012, Saarinen, 2007). Also for investors, the benefits are solely financial, based on the incomes of the businesses they have set up in the host region. Regarding the costs, investors are immune to any other cost, than the financial one (Saarinen, 2007).

According to Archer et. al. (2005), the tourism industry seems to be the most efficient branch of the economy in generating jobs and income in less developed, peripheral countries/regions, where development opportunities are limited. In these regions, the economic impact of tourism is felt most strongly. People from these regions are generally farmers or fishermen and their involvement in tourism activity can substantially increase their household income. Also an increase in local tourism can provide an incentive for related activities such as (agricultural products or souvenirs that could be used for the accommodation and catering to thrive. According to Archer et. al. (2005), the introduction of tourism industry in peripheral regions may have a greater effect on the welfare of the resident population, compared to a more developed region in the same country. However, a number of

enabling facilities must be in place if rural tourism development will take place. These include: basic infrastructure (access roads, drinking water etc.), lodging (hotels, pensions, etc.) and other facilities and services necessary for tourism (catering, transport, etc.). At a superficial level, the economic benefits of tourism seem obvious. "In recent years an increasing number of authors have expressed reservations about the nature and extent of the benefits of tourism and expressed skepticism about the potential of tourism as a catalyst for growth and development, and as a means of maximizing the welfare of local people" (Archer et al., 2005).

The socio-cultural impact of tourism could be seen from the interactions between locals and tourists which generate the emergence of new ideas, values and motivations for social and economic progress (Bersales 2005, Nyaupane et al., 2006). The impacts could either be positive or negative. Tourism can revitalize a community's cultural life since art and traditions constitute valuable attraction for foreign visitors (Mason 2003).

According to Kreag (2001), some of the positive impacts include: improvement of life's quality, facilitating meeting of visitors (educational experience), positive changes in values and customs of the host community, promoting cultural exchange, improving understanding of different communities, preserving cultural identity of host population, increasing demand for historical and cultural exhibits, greater tolerance of social differences, satisfaction of psychological needs. The negative impacts could include: excessive drinking, alcoholism, gambling, increased underage drinking, crime, drugs, prostitution, increased smuggling, language and cultural effects, unwanted lifestyle changes, displacement of residents for tourism development, negative changes in values and customs, family disruption, exclusion of locals from natural resources, new cliques modify social structure, natural, political, and public relations calamities.

Compared with the economic impact of tourism, the environment has become a theme for studies and research recently, joining in the ecologists stream at the end of the '80s and early '90s (Holden, 2003). Consequently, when talking about the relationship between tourism and the natural environment, it is necessary to consider that this relationship is the expression of human interaction with nature, therefore, to determine the effect of tourism on the natural environment we should take into account the following: the price we attach to nature, cultural stereotypes about nature and the ethical relationship of man with nature (Holden, 2009). Sharpley (2006) believes that the environment is a

fundamental element of the tourists' experience. Tourists are looking for attractive natural resources, different and special, allowing specific tourism activities and at the same time, the development of tourism consumes resources, creates waste and requires a certain degree of infrastructure development, which in some cases can lead to the degradation and destruction of the environment. On one hand, Holden (2009) believes that the natural environment has benefited from tourism, through the conservation actions and protection of nature (natural and national parks, protected areas etc.) and also, tourism causes a deeper appreciation of the nature of the tourists and the local population. On the other hand, tourism has direct negative effects on the natural environment and it puts a high pressure on the carrying capacity of host regions. It becomes obvious that the environment of the countryside will suffer from the construction of hotels, parks, shopping malls or amusement parks. Most common consequences of tourism on the environment are: changing the structure of flora and fauna (ski slopes), pollution of water, air and soil, etc., soil erosion (landslides or disappearance of beaches), depletion of natural resources, traffic congestion and public transport, visual impact (anarchic/chaotic urbanization of seaside and mountain resorts). Unfortunately, the local population is one that has to "pay" the costs of the resulting environment degradation from tourist exploitation and the degradation is most of time observed or felt only after a period of time (Beeton 2006, Holden 2009).

A community could be seen as a group of individual living or working within the same geographical area with some shared cultures or common interest (Aref et al. 2010). This geographical definition of community is essential to enable us understand how community development is linked (Olsder and Van der Donk, 2006) or the ability of a community to improve tourism development. According to Godfrey and Clarke (2000), communities form a basic element in modern tourism as they are the focal point for the supply of accommodation, catering, information, transport facilities and services. Their local natural environment, buildings, and institutions, their people, culture and history, all form core elements of what the tourists come to see, whether as towns, villages or cities, every community has tourism at one level or the other and are affected by the growth and development of the industry. Scherl and Edwards (2007), describe local communities as group of people with a common identity and who may be involved in an array of related aspects of livelihoods. They further note that local communities often have customary rights related to the area and its natural resources and a strong relationship with the area culturally,

socially, economically and spiritually. The community a tourist visits is often termed as host community. Cook, Yale, and Marqua (2006), defined the host community as towns or cities that welcome visitors and provide them with their desired services. Smith (2001), also defined host communities as people who live in the vicinity of the tourist attraction and are either directly or indirectly involved with, and/ or affected by the tourism activities.

According to IUCN 1988, the CRNP is the largest protected forest in the moist forest zone of Nigeria, a region where more than 90% of the original forest has been lost or degraded. It represents one of Nigeria's most important natural resource assets, supporting fisheries, protecting watersheds and climatic stability. It therefore preserves genetic resources and provides opportunities for eco-tourism (Emaviwe, 2014). The park is home to 199 mammal, 63 frog and toad, 20 reptile, 380 bird 48 fish and 950 butterfly species (NTDC, 2012). Eighteen of 23, representing some 78% of primate species recorded in Nigeria are found here; two of which - the Cross River gorilla, (*gorilla gorilla deihli*) and the chimpanzee (*pan troglodytes*) are highly endangered hominids (NTDC, 2012). The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism, (2001) describes wildlife tourism as "tourism that involves encounters with non-domesticated animals either in their natural environment or in captivity. It includes a wide range of activities, such as bird-watching, whale-watching, general wildlife viewing, visiting zoos and aquaria, snorkeling to view underwater life, hunting and recreational fishing". Wildlife tourism developed rapidly after Second World War in the form of wildlife viewing in national parks and game refuge on government or state-owned land. Wildlife tourism encompasses non-consumptive interactions with wildlife, such as observing and photographing animals in their natural habitats and it also has the recreational aspect of adventure travel and supports the values of ecotourism and nature conservation programmes (Newsome, Dowling, Moore, Susan, 2005).

Butler's (2006) Tourism Destination Lifecycle Model is a significant contribution to the development of theoretical models with regard to the relationship between tourism development and residents' attitudes. Although originally proposed almost three decades ago, the model is still academically recognized. By considering that tourist areas evolve and change over time, and based upon the product cycle concept where a product sales proceed slowly at first, then a rapid rate of growth, stabilization, and subsequently decline, Butler's model suggests that tourism areas follow a similar evolution pattern. It suggests that initially the area will be visited by a small number of tourists, who may be

restricted by lack of access and facilities. However, as facilities and awareness about the area grow, the number of visitors increases as well. Thereafter, they grow rapidly due to marketing efforts, information dissemination and further facility provision. Nevertheless, the number of visitors will ultimately decline as carrying capacity is reached. According to this hypothetical evolution, which has been both supported (Akis et al., 1996) and contradicted (Dyer et al., 2007) by recent empirical studies, the stages that tourist areas experience are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, decline and/or rejuvenation. However, although the conceptual significance of the Tourism Destination Lifecycle Model has gained academic recognition (Zhang et al., 2006), certain limitations have been observed. Like Doxey's (1975) model, Butler's (2006) framework has for a long time been regarded as a unidirectional conceptual model (Ap and Crompton, 1993). Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the model assumes a degree of homogeneity of community reactions (Mason and Cheyne, 2000). According to Butler (2006), a consistent evolution of tourist areas can be conceptualized. However, it is of importance to acknowledge that, as other scholars have found (Tosun, 2002), not all areas experience the stages of the cycle as clearly as others and therefore the model should be regarded as partially applicable since the cycle experience vary for different areas.

Frequently, communities are forbidden from extracting natural resources that are important for their livelihood, and in many instances, traditional communities are removed from their land with little consultation or adequate compensation (Jim and Xu 2002, Brown 2003, and Anthony 2007). Inevitably, this has often triggered advanced social impacts on local communities, disrupting their traditional ways of living (Garcia-Frapolli et al., 2009). According to Tosun (2000), it is for this foregoing reason that local people's involvement and participation in the tourism industry serves to ensure the protection of these tourists' products and services through effective collaborative management of the industry centered towards a more community-driven planning approach that guarantees strong community support for successful tourism development. In addition, tourism occurs among the local communities and they are the ones that often bear the tourism damage and in most cases they form part of the tourist products and experience that visitors seek (Tosun, 2000, Li, 2005, Beeton, 2006).

Protected areas which exclude local communities or their participation have often caused negative relationships between protected areas and local communities, resulting in conflict and problems such as increased illegal hunting, habitat encroachment and destruction,

violence, and poverty among indigenous communities (Nepal, 2002; Choudhry, 2004; Graham et al., 2005; Romansch et al., 2011). The present study leans on the belief that if the impact of the park on its local community is not considered, tourism in that area may not thrive as the local community has a significant role to play in the continued existence of the park. These form the reason for the study of the influence of wildlife tourism on the host community of Cross River National Park.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of involvement of the local community in wildlife tourism?
2. To what extent do the local community of Cross River National Park benefit from wildlife tourism?
3. What are the negative influences of wildlife tourism on the local community of the park?
4. What are the ways of improving wildlife tourism for the sustainability of both the local community and the National Park?

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the relationship between respondents' gender and their involvement in wildlife tourism.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the benefit enjoyed by the local community from wildlife tourism.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant influence of wildlife tourism on the local community of Cross River National Park.

### **Methodology Research Design**

The study adopted a survey research design, which is often used to assess thoughts, opinions, and feelings (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Jeanne, 2011). A survey consists of a predetermined set of questions.

### **Area of Study**

The Cross River National Park (CRNP) lies between Latitude 5° 05' and 6° 29' N, and Longitudes 8° 15' and 9° 30' E. The park is situated in the south-eastern part of Nigeria in Cross River State. It is under the control of the Federal Government of Nigeria with a legal instrument promulgated through Decree No. 46 of 1991 (now Act No. 46 of 1991) in the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended in 1999. The

park covers a total area of 4000km<sup>2</sup> and segmented into two noncontinuous Divisions. The Oban hills in the Southern part of the Park covers 3000km and the Okwangwo Division in the Northern part of the Park covers 1000km<sup>2</sup>. The

park has a tropical climate characterized by a rainy season between April and November. The annual rainfall is about 2000-3000mm; relative humidity in and around the park is well over 30%. The park's temperature rarely falls below 19<sup>0</sup>C and average of about 27<sup>0</sup>C all year round. Cross River National Park (CRNP) is one of the richest areas of tropical rainforest in West Africa, it contains one of the last remaining rainforests in Nigeria and has been identified as a biodiversity hotspot (Ite, 2004).

### **Population for the Study**

The Cross River National Park consists mainly of two divisions namely: the Oban and Okwangwo divisions. The Okwangwo division is surrounded by at least 66 communities while Oban division has 39 communities. The total population is 52,000 people, according to the National Population Commission (2006). Using Taro Yamane formula, the sample size used for this study was 397

### **Techniques**

The study adopted both purposive random and stratified sampling techniques. Four (4) villages were purposively selected out of the villages that surround the park in both divisions because of their proximity (5km from the park). Residents ranging from eighteen years and above (male and female) were sampled.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The method of data collection for the study was through administration of well-structured questionnaire administered to residents of the host community. A total of 397 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, only 350 were filled and returned. The questionnaire used the five point Likert scale with the following key: 1= Agreed 2= Strongly Agreed 3= Disagreed 4= Strongly Disagreed 5= Undecided

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data generated were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research question. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis and descriptive statistics analyzed the socio-

demographic characteristics of the respondents. However, the mean was computed by assigning values to the likert scale. The decision rule was 2.5, and any mean value below 2.5 was regarded as disagree while above 2.5 was regarded as agree.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

### Research question 1

#### What is the level of involvement of the local community toward wildlife tourism?

**TABLE 1:** Mean Response on level of involvement of host community in wildlife tourism.

S/No	Participation of local community in wildlife tourism	Total score	Mean	Remark
1.	I support wildlife tourism in my community.	1446	4.1	Agree
2.	Indigenes are part of the decision making and planning process of the park.	551	1.6	Disagree
3.	Indigenes gain employment through wildlife tourism.	1158	3.3	Agree
4.	Indigenes are part of stakeholders in the park.	569	1.6	Disagree
5.	Indigenes are part of the management team.	537	1.5	Disagree
6.	Park policies restrict indigenes from participation in wildlife tourism activities.	1436	4.1	Agree
Total		5697	16.28	

Clustered mean

2.7

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**Source: Field survey, 2016.**

Table 1 above showed that the respondents agree that they support wildlife tourism, that the indigenes gain employment through wildlife tourism, that park policies restrict indigenes from participating in wildlife tourism activities with 4.1, 3.3, and 4.1 means, respectively. However, they disagreed that indigenes are part of the decision making and planning process of the park, that indigenes are treated as a part of stakeholders in the park, and that the indigenes are part of the management team with 1.6, 1.6, and 1.5 means respectively. Given the clustered mean of 2.7, it is revealed that residents of the local community are involved in wildlife tourism

### Research question 2

**To what extent is the local community of Cross River National Park benefitting from wildlife tourism?**

**TABLE 2: Mean Response on host community benefit from wildlife tourism.**

S/No	Benefit of the local community from wildlife tourism.	Total score	Mean	Remark
1.	Employment creation	1430	4.1	Agree
2.	Economic development	782	4.3	Agree
3.	Increase of disposable income.	1416	4.1	Agree
4.	Infrastructural development	986	1.3	Disagree
5.	Conservation of natural resources.	547	2.3	Disagree
6.	Improvement of quality of life.	918	2.1	Disagree
7.	Preserving cultural	642	1.6	Disagree

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	heritage.			
8.	Environmental protection.	677	1.7	Disagree
9.	Ample opportunity for learning more about other nations.	645	1.6	Disagree
10.	Increase of public security within the community.	1309	4.3	Agree
Total		9352	26.72	
Clustered mean			2.7	

**Source: Field survey, 2016.**

Table 2. Above showed that the respondents agreed that park has resulted in employment creation, economic development, increase of disposable income, increase of public security within the communities had 4.1, 4.3, and 4.3 means respectively. Nevertheless, they disagreed that it has led to infrastructural development, conservation of natural resources, improvement of quality of life, preservation of cultural heritage, environmental protection, and ample opportunity for learning more about other nations with 1.3, 2.3, 2.1, 1.6, 1.7, and 1.6 means, respectively. But the clustered mean of 2.7 indicated that residents of the local community benefit from wildlife tourism.

### **Research question 3**

**What are the negative influences of wildlife tourism on the local communities surrounding the park?**

**TABLE 3 Mean Response on negative influence of wildlife tourism.**

S/No	Negative effects of wildlife tourism on the local community.	Total score	Mean	Remark
1.	Displacement/ resettlement	1505	4.3	Agree
2.	Loss of access to resources	1448	4.1	Agree
3.	Competition/ conflict over fund distribution.	1448	4.0	Agree

		1415	4.0	Agree
4.	Degradation of natural resources.			
5.	Overcrowding of infrastructures.	1392	3.9	Agree
6.	Gradual erosion of indigenous language.	711	2.0	Disagree
				e
	Total	7919	22.6	
	Clustered mean		3.8	

**Source: Field survey, 2016.**

Table 3 above showed that the respondents agreed that the park led to displacement/resettlement, loss of access to resources, competition/conflict over fund distribution, degradation of natural resources, overcrowding of infrastructures with 4.3, 4.1, 4.0, 4.0 and 3.9 means respectively. They however, disagreed that it led to gradual erosion of indigenous language with a mean value of 2.0. Nevertheless, wildlife tourism is seen to have had a negative influence on the local community considering the clustered mean of 3.8.

#### **Research question 4**

**What are the ways to improve wildlife tourism for sustainability of the local community and the Park?**

**TABLE 4: Mean Response on ways to improve wildlife tourism for sustainability of the local community and the Park.**

S/No	Ways to improve wildlife tourism for sustainability of the local community and the Park.	Total score	Mean	Remark
1.	Involving local residents in tourism planning and decision making.	1368	4.6	Agree
2.	Respect for local traditions	1113	3.1	Agree
3.	Job opportunities for local community at all levels.	1690	4.8	Agree
4.	Formulation of park policies that are favourable to the local community.	1750	5.0	Agree
5.	Orientation on wildlife tourism benefits	1330	4.0	Agree

6.	Creating and enabling environment for local trade of cultural materials by the local communities.	1400	4.0	Agree
Total		8651	24.7	
Clustered mean			4.1	

**Source: Field survey, 2016.**

Table 4 above showed that the respondents agreed that ways of improving wildlife tourism for sustainability include: involving local residents in tourism planning and decision making, respect for local traditions, Creating job opportunities for local community at all levels, formulating of park policies that are favourable to the local community, Exposing them to wildlife tourism benefits, creating an enabling environment for local trade on cultural materials by the local communities. These variables had 4.6, 3.1, 4.8, 5.0, 4.0 and 4.0 means, respectively. This indicated that residents of the local community identify with the ways to improve wildlife tourism for sustainability, given the clustered mean of 3.8.

### Hypothesis Testing

**Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between respondents' gender and their involvement in wildlife tourism.**

**Table 5: Gender and local community involvement in wildlife tourism.**

	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F cal	F tab
Regression	13.236	6	2.206	11.764	2.13
Residual	64.318	343	.188		
Total	77.554	349			

**Keys:** Df = degree of freedom, F cal= frequency calculated, F tab= frequency tabulated.

**Decision rule:** if F calculated is greater than F tabulated, then reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Table 5 above showed that the F calculated was 11.764 while F tabulated was 2.13. Since F calculated is greater than F tabulated, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, indicating that gender has significant relationship with local community involvement in wildlife tourism.

**Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the benefit enjoyed by the local community from wildlife tourism.**

Table 6 Benefit enjoyed by local community from wildlife tourism.

	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F cal	F tab
Regression	32.471	10	3.247	24.42	2.13
Residual	45.083	339	.133		
Total	77.554	349			

Table 6 above showed that the F calculated was 24.42 while F tabulated was 2.13. Since F calculated is greater than F tabulated, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted indicating that their significant difference in the benefit enjoyed by the local community from wildlife tourism.

**Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of wildlife tourism on the local community of Cross River National Park.**

Table 7: Influence of wildlife tourism on host community

	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F cal	F tab
Regression	3.412	6	0.569	2.63	2.13
Residual	74.142	343	0.216		
Total	77.554	349			

Table 7 above showed that the F calculated was 2.63 while F tabulated was 2.13. Since F calculated is greater than F tabulated, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is significant influence of wildlife tourism on the local community of Cross River National Park.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the research showed that respondents are involved in wildlife tourism in their communities because the mean responses of their involvement were greater than 2.5. The overall mean was 2.7 which was higher than the decision rule that stated that any mean response above 2.5 should be regarded as a positive impact. Therefore residents were of the opinion that they support wildlife tourism. This is in agreement with (Kipkeu *et al.* 2014) who stated that "Participation of local people in conservation and management of wildlife resource is a function of perceived benefit sharing". According to Mannigel (2008) there are different levels of participation ranging from simple sharing of information to a full transfer of power and responsibilities. However, variables such as indigenes are part of the decision making and planning process of the park, indigenes are part of stakeholders in the park, indigenes are part of the management team did not portray local community involvement in wildlife tourism as the mean responses were less than 2.5. The problems associated with wildlife tourism as highlighted by the respondents, include; the indigenes not being part of the decision making and planning process and, indigenes not being part of stakeholders and management team. The respondents agreed that they gain employment through wildlife. The test of hypotheses showed that gender has significant relationship with local community involvement in wildlife tourism ( $F_{cal} 11.764 > F_{tab} 2.13$ ).

The findings of the research also showed that respondents agreed that they benefit from wildlife tourism through employment creation, economic development, increase in a disposable income and increase of public security within the communities because the mean responses of their benefit were greater than 2.5. The overall mean was 2.7 which was higher than the decision rule that stated that any mean response above 2.5 should be regarded as a positive impact. Therefore residents were of the opinion that they support wildlife tourism. This is in agreement with (Kipkeu *et al.* 2014) "Participation of local people in conservation and management of wildlife resource is also a function of perceived benefit

sharing". Also, according to Mannigel (2008) there are different levels of participation ranging from simple sharing of information to a full transfer of power and responsibilities. However, they disagreed that wildlife tourism has resulted in infrastructural development, conservation of natural resources, improvement of quality of life, preservation of cultural heritage, environmental protection and ample opportunity for learning more about other nations. Their mean responses were less than 2.5. The findings on the hypothesis of the research showed that there is significant difference in the benefit enjoyed by the local community from wildlife tourism ( $F_{cal} 24.42 > F_{tab} 2.13$ ). Furthermore, the findings showed that respondents agreed that the negative influence of wildlife tourism include: displacement/ resettlement, loss of access to resources, competition/ conflict over fund distribution, degradation of natural resources and overcrowding of infrastructures on the local community because the mean responses were greater than 2.5. They however disagreed that it has led to gradual erosion of indigenous language given the mean responses of less than 2.5. The test of hypothesis showed that there is significant influence of wildlife tourism on the local community of Cross River National Park. ( $F_{cal} 2.63 > F_{tab} 2.13$ ). Table 2 showed the perception of local community and benefits from wildlife tourism by respondents. (Mean 4.1) employment creation, (mean 4.3) economic development, (mean 4.1) increase of disposable income and increase of public security within the community indicated agree. While (mean 1.3) indicated disagree.

Table 3 showed the perception of local community on the negative influence of wildlife by respondents. Influence of wildlife tourism on displacement/ resettlement is higher with (mean 4.3), loss of access to resources (mean 4.1), competition/ conflict over fund distribution (mean 4.0), degradation of natural resources (mean 4.0) and overcrowding of infrastructures (mean 3.9). While gradual erosion of indigenous language was not seen as a negative effect with (mean 2.0). This is in agreement with Mvula, (2001), who outlined some disadvantages of wildlife tourism for host communities to include: dispossession (displacement/ resettlement), loss of access to resources, competition and conflict over the distribution of funds, asymmetrical power relations, degradation of natural environments.

Table 4 showed the perception of respondents on ways to improve wildlife tourism for sustainability of the local community and the Park to include: involving local residents in tourism planning and decision making (mean 4.6), respect for local traditions (mean 3.1), employment opportunities for locals at all levels (mean 4.8), formulation

of park policies that are favourable to the local community (mean 5.0), orientation on wildlife tourism benefits (mean 4.0), and creating and enabling environment for local trade of cultural materials by the local communities (mean 4.0). From the c cluster mean of 4.1, it could be deduced that the community agreed to the ways of improving conservation programmes for sustainability. This is in accordance with the views of Burns and Sofield, (2001), who stated that “both the actual and perceived impacts of wildlife tourism will influence the attitude of host community and consequently, affect sustainability as well as host values for wildlife.”

### **Conclusion**

Evidence generated from this study clearly indicate that communities in the core and support zones of the Cross River National Park are not meaningfully involved in the management of wildlife and conservation effort in the area. The literature and examples drawn upon in this research work, illustrated the relationship between the host and wildlife tourism. Through extensive tradition and in-depth local knowledge, host communities can enhance wildlife experience for tourists and positively contribute to species and ecosystem conservation, thus increasing the possibility of wildlife tourism being sustainable. It could also be concluded that revenue generated through compensation and employment from wildlife tourism, can increase host communities' standard of living thereby enhancing their interest in wildlife tourism.

However, active participation of the host community in wildlife tourism have been recognized to hold the key to host acceptance of wildlife tourism and thus, its long-term sustainability.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the conclusions reached by this study, the following recommendations are suggested to engender community involvement in wildlife conservation efforts and ensure sustainable wildlife tourism in both Okwangwo and Oban Hills.

1. Effective host participation in planning and management should be encouraged as it can build support for wildlife tourism development, create new partnership, help resolve conflict between stakeholders and provide an additional source of knowledge and labour.
2. Favourable park policies that allow host participation in wildlife tourism should be formulated.

3. Ways of meeting host community's basic needs such as infrastructural development, conservation of natural resources, preservation of cultural heritage which will increase their satisfaction as well as their interest in wildlife tourism Should be looked into by the government. Also, the host community should be given orientation on wildlife tourism benefits.
4. The negative impact of wildlife tourism such as displacement and resettlement of host, loss of access to resources, degradation of the environment, overcrowding of infrastructures should be controlled for the benefit of the host community.

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