

**FACTOR ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE OF HOST-COMMUNITY  
CHARACTERISTICS ON ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH EAST  
NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study was undertaken to analyze the influence of host-community characteristics on the development of ecotourism in south east geo-political zone of Nigeria. Purposive and systematic sampling techniques were used to select 360 respondents from 6 communities in 3 out of the 5 States in the zone. Structured questionnaire, interview schedule and direct observation were used to collect primary data for the study. Data was analyzed using percentage distribution and Explanatory Factor Analysis. Result showed that lack/ poor state of socio-economic infrastructure, including roads, electricity, clean water and telecommunication services in host-communities slowed the rate of ecotourism development in the zone. Also, inability of host-communities to take advantage of ecotourism-induced entrepreneurial opportunities, socio-political exclusion of women, fear of erosion of culture, low level of awareness of potential benefits of ecotourism and poor sanitary conditions of sites and the general community environment, impeded the rate of ecotourism development in the area. Interventions from State and local governments, and NGOs were recommended.*

**KEYWORDS:** Host-Community Characteristics, Ecotourism Development, Community Ecotourism, Factor Analysis, South East Nigeria

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism, encompassing the whole “world-wide industry of travels, hotels, transport and facilities that serve the needs and wants of travelers/visitors” (UNWTO, 1997), has become most favored by development policy makers world-wide as a veritable instrument for achieving socio-economic progress (UNWTO, 2002; 2006; WTTC, 2010; Madzara, 2011; Barry, 2012; Wang, Zhong, Zhang and Zhou, 2014 ). This is due to its inherent capability to catalyze the development of other industries, thus, creating employment and a broadened revenue base (Chami and Semboja, 2005; Madzara, 2011; Barry, 2012). According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2006) and World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC, 2012), travel and tourism industry has become the largest business sector in the world economy and is responsible for over 230 million jobs and over 10% of the Gross Domestic Product worldwide. TIES (2006) also reported that tourism was the number one export in 60 countries and one of five top export earners in over 150 countries of the world. Eighty-three percent (83%) of developing countries and one out of three of the poorest countries of the world depended principally on tourism for foreign exchange earnings (TIES (2006). Recent reports continue to show that international travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes has become one of the fastest growing economic activities worldwide (UNWTO, 2012; 2015). The number of international tourist arrivals rose by nearly forty fold from 25 million in 1950 to 980 million in 2011. It reached 1 billion in 2012, and is expected to reach 1.56 billion by 2020 (UNWTO, 2012; 2015). According to the World Bank Group cited in TIES (2006) tourism

"appears to be one of the few economic sectors able to guide a number of developing countries to higher levels of prosperity and for some to leave behind their least-developed country status."

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

### **Ecotourism and Sustainable Development**

The degrading outcomes of conventional mass tourism on cultural and natural environment of host communities/destinations led to the invention of a "new tourism", namely, ecotourism (Honey, 1999; World Wide Fund for Nature, 2001; Drumm and Moore, 2005; Center for Ecotourism, 2006). Defined as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education' (TIES, 2015), ecotourism has become widely promoted as an ideal component of the sustainable development strategy whereby natural (cultural and historical) resources can be utilized as tourism attractions without causing harm to the environment (UNWTO, 2002; Wang, Zhong, Zhang and Zhou, 2014).

Sustainable development originated in the wake of strong criticisms of existing neoclassical development models and theories. These criticisms include the failure of neoclassical models to address key development issues such as poverty, human welfare and environmental health, and the failure of economic growth (measured by per capita Gross National Product in the neoclassical model) to translate into improved human welfare and healthier environments (Eboh, 1995). Moreover, the neoclassical development model does not take into cognizance the equitable distribution of growth benefits a key factor in economic, political and ecological stability (Eboh, 1995).

Traditionally, paradigms of sustainable development have been anchored on either economics or ecology (Todaro and Smith, 2003; Goodland and Ladec, 1987). Economic definitions focus on optimal resource management -maximizing the net benefit of economic development while maintaining the services and quality of natural resources (Barrier, 1989; Underwood and King, 1989; Markandya and Pearce 1988; Pepetto, 1986). In other words, the economists' viewpoint is that development path is said to be sustainable if, and only if, the stock of overall capital assets remains constant or rises over time (Todaro and Smith, 2003). Ecology-inclined definitions stress on using renewable natural resources in a manner that does not degrade or diminish their renewable usefulness for future generations (Goodland and Ladec, 1987). However, in the context of international development, sustainable development is now commonly understood in terms of the complex interrelation between social, economic and environmental aspects of development (Sira Kaya, Jamal and Cloi, 2001; World Commission On Environment, 1987; FAO, 1988; Ballara, 1991).

There is considerable overlap between the core principles of ecotourism and sustainable development such that the two may no longer be thought of as separate philosophies (Blamey, 2001; Wearing 2001; Buschbanm, 2004). Eboh (2000) listed the basic principles of sustainable development as equity, sustainability, food security, co-evolutionary growth and participation. On the other hand, the concept of sustainable tourism, which encompasses mass tourism as well as ecotourism, embodies exemplifies the relationship between tourism and sustainable development (Blamey, 2001). Moreover, ecotourism pursues four goals, which distinguishes it from sustainable tourism and which fit even more into the core principles of sustainable

development. These are: environmental protection, economic sustainability, cultural integrity and enhancement, and educational value.

Ecotourism as sustainable tourism, strives to meet the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (Sira Kaya et al 2001). The most important way to advance tourism/ecotourism appears to be to adhere to the principles of sustainable development and to try to maximize the probability of positive impacts while minimizing the negative impacts (Weaver, 1999; Buchsbaum, 2002).

### **Community Participation in Ecotourism**

The acknowledged effectiveness of ecotourism as a tool for sustainable socio-economic development is due to plenty backward and forward linkages with the rest sectors of the economy, which allow it to facilitate employment opportunities, create income, catalyze local economic development and enhance the quality of life (Ampumuza, Heijden, Hendriks, Klunder, Mazurek, Mosselear, Ong, Pan and Rumpt, 2008; Mowforth and Mount, 2009; Madzara, 2011; Nwahia, Omonona, Onyeabor and Balogun, 2012). However, it is argued that the extent to which these benefits accrue to a nation crucially depends on local conditions (Tosun, 2000; UNWTO, 2006; Tukamushaba and Katongole, 2008). Furthermore, it has been argued that for tourism to be sustainable the local community has to benefit directly from it which serves as incentive to the community to protect and conserve the resources upon which tourism is based (Drumm and Moore, 2005; Wang, Zhong, Zhang and Zhou, 2014). In recent years, conservationists have come to recognize the crucial role rural and coastal communities play in conserving biodiversity. Consequently, conservationists have developed mechanism to incorporate these communities, as stakeholders, into planning and management process (Drumm and Moore, 2005; Wang, Zhong, Zhang and Zhou, 2014). At the same time, the growing interest of tourists in learning from and experiencing different cultures has lead the tourism industry to incorporate communities into its activities (World Wide Fund for Nature, 2001; UNWTO, 2002; Drumm and Moore, 2005; Esuola, 2009).

The community, according to Arthur and Bailey (2000) and Bauman (2001), refers to a group of interacting people living in a common location, usually organized around common values, attributed with social cohesion within a shared geographical location and generally in social units larger than a household. According to the authors, in human communities, intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks, and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness. The World Ecotourism Summit (UNWTO, 2002) observed that many indigenous communities have values that are based on the stewardship of the earth's resources and hospitality towards visitors. These values, noted the Summit, provide a positive reason for assisting local communities to take their own decisions about the development and promotion of ecotourism and the way in which their natural resources and cultures are interpreted to visitors. Since indigenous peoples tend not only to be the poorest members of society but also to have land based economies and cultures (involving hunting, fishing and gardening), it is critical to involve them early in the process of ecotourism development (Drumm and Moore, 2005; Nwahia, Omonona, Onyeabor and Balogun, 2012 ). As noted by Drumm and Moore (2005), one of the greatest contributions of ecotourism to conservation is the degree to which it can shift community activities from "the threat" category to that of "opportunities", that is, those

activities, which contribute to sustainable development and the achievement of areas conservation goals. There is also the need to link ecotourism and rural economy to avoid leakages and maximize local economic benefits and to encourage local economic development by sourcing food and other locally produced resources (UNWTO, 2002; Drumm and Moore, 2005; Muganda, 2009).

## METHODOLOGY

The area of study was the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The zone comprises of five Igbo-speaking states, namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. Its total land area is approximately 78,612 km<sup>2</sup> and lay between longitude 4°30' and latitude 71°5' (Ebo, 1995). The population of the zone is about 11.2 million people (NPC, 2006). Farming and trading are the major economic activities. The zone is richly endowed with undeveloped historical, cultural and environmental resources that portend great future for the tourism industry. The slave routes, slave depots and slave markets are some of the important tourism resources in the area. Others are archeological sites, historical monuments and relics of colonialism. Cultural festivals, such as new yam festivals combine with ecological features including rivers, beaches, lakes, waterfalls, springs, caves, forests and various flora and fauna, to make the area a potential ecotourist haven. Rural lifestyle, traditional agriculture, crafts and arts are other tourist resources begging for developmental attention in the area.

Three (3) States were selected purposively from the five states in the zone based on the existence of relatively more developed ecotourism resources. Two (2) host communities of the most prominent ecotourism sites in each State were also purposively selected. From each host community, 60 respondents were systematically selected to make up a total of 360.

Primary data were used for the study. A set of structured questionnaire and a set of interview schedule were used to collect the data from respondents. The structured questionnaire was administered on literate community opinion leaders while the interview schedule was administered on illiterate ones. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were also conducted.

Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) based on the Common Factor Model was used to assess the constraining effects of community characteristics on ecotourism development in the communities. As a method commonly used to explore the structure of data (DeCoaster, 1998; Alimba and Akubuilu, 2000), the use of Factor Analysis here was aimed at accounting for covariance of observed variables in terms of smaller number of unobservable variables (theoretical concepts) known as factors.

If  $n$  are observations on each of the variable  $X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_p$ ,

and we suppose that 'm' is the underlying factors  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_m$ ,

where  $m < p$ , then factor analysis assumes that each  $X_j$  ( $j=1, 2, \dots, JP$ ), can be written as a linear combination of the factors and a residual variable. In effect, for each  $X_j$  we have a multiple linear regression model where  $X_j$  takes the role of dependent variable and

$F_1, F_2, \dots, F_m$  are like explanatory variables.

For example, in terms of observations, if  $X_{ij}$  is the observation on variable  $X_j$  for the  $i$ th sample member then:  $X_{ij} = \lambda_{i1}F_{i1} + \lambda_{i2}F_{i2} + \dots + \lambda_{im}F_{ik} + e_{ij}$  ( $i=1, 2, \dots, p$ ),

where  $F_{ik}$  = the score on factor  $F_k$  ( $k = 1, 2, \dots, m$ ) and  $e_{ij}$  = the value on the residual variable  $E_j$  for the  $i$ th sample member.  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_m$  are known as common factors (since every  $X_{ij}$  is written in terms for all of them) and  $E_j$  is known as a specific factor since it corresponds to  $X_j$ . All of the  $F_{ik}$  and  $e_{ij}$  are observable. The weight  $\lambda_{ji}, \dots, \lambda_{jm}$  are usually called the factor loadings (Jolliffe 1986).

The assumption to be made here about the model, in order to estimate it are: that the common factors,  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_m$  are independent of one another, and the specific factors  $E_1, E_2, \dots, E_p$  are independent of one another and of the common factors. The suitable number of factors is selected subjectively and the factors produced are rotated with the hope of finding a readily interpretable set of factors (Darlington, 1994; Leese and Luchmuller, 1994; DeCoaster, 1998; Alimba and Akubuilu, 2000).

The variables assessed in the study include:

- V<sub>01</sub> Lack of entrepreneurial spirit
- V<sub>02</sub> Poor attitude to visitors
- V<sub>03</sub> Lack of cohesiveness among communities
- V<sub>04</sub> Lack of openness to development
- V<sub>05</sub> Exclusion of women
- V<sub>06</sub> Degradation of sites
- V<sub>07</sub> Loss of sacred places
- V<sub>08</sub> Low awareness of benefits of ecotourism
- V<sub>09</sub> Poor state of roads
- V<sub>10</sub> Poor state of electricity supply
- V<sub>11</sub> Lack of access to clean water
- V<sub>12</sub> Poor state of telecommunication services
- V<sub>13</sub> Poor state of hospitality services
- V<sub>14</sub> Poor environmental sanitation

## RESULT

### **Socio-economic characteristics and distribution of infrastructure in the host-communities**

Table 1 shows the distribution of some characteristics of the studied communities as well as socio-economic facilities. Three communities namely, Ezeagu, Oguta and Nekede had functional pipe-borne water supply system. Two communities: Ndibe and Oziza sourced drinking water majorly from bore-holes. Awhum community depended entirely on bore-holes for drinking water as the community was yet to be connected to public pipe-borne water supply. Similarly, 5 out of the 6 communities were connected to public electricity supply; 2 had the presence of banking institutions; and hotels were available in 4. Telephone services were available in all the 6 communities; at least a health center was available in 5 out of the 6 communities; and all 6 communities had at least a primary and a secondary school. Distances between the communities to the nearest airports were 100 km on the average. Ndibe and Oziza communities were the farthest to the airport- about 160 km to Akanu Ibiam International

Airport in Enugu, the capital of Enugu State while Nekede community was the nearest being about 50km to Sam Mbakwe Cargo Airport in Owerri, the capital of Imo State. Each of the communities had an average of 6 other visited tourism sites. There was at least one police post in 4 out of the 6 communities. The average number of years spent in formal education by communities' members was 12; the major occupation was farming; and the average annual household income was N355, 539.692. The roads that led to two of the community sites in Ebonyi State namely, Ndibe and Oziza, were in dilapidated states. The road to Awhum community site in Enugu State and Oguta Community site in Imo State was asphalted and fair. Those that led to Ezeagu and Nekede community sites in Enugu and Imo States were undergoing reconstruction at the time of the study.

**Table 1. Distribution of some socio-economic facilities among host communities**

Characteristics	Community					
	Ndibe	Oziza	Awhum	Ezeagu	Oguta	Nekede
Source of drinking water	Majorly borehole	Majorly borehole	Borehole	Pipe-borne	Pipe-borne	Pipe-borne
Connection to electricity	Connected	Connected	Not connected	Connected	Connected	Connected
Number of banks	4	4	0	0	0	2
Number of hotels	4	0	1	0	5	3
Number of telecom services	4	4	4	4	5	5
Number of healthcare facilities	2	2	1	1	0	3
Number of educational institutions	3	4	4	3	6	6
Distance to airport (km)	160	162	60	80	100	50
Number of other tour sites	10	10	7	5	5	0
Number of police posts	2	2	0	0	2	4
Average years of formal education	12	12	10	12	11	14
Major occupation	Farming	Farming	Farming	Farming	Farming	Farming
Annual income per household (naira)	393055.59	393055.59	241686.93	220884.56	422310.50	462244.98
Average household size	6	6	7	6	6	5
State of roads	Dilapidated	Dilapidated	Fair	Under construction	Good	Under construction

Source: Field survey, December, 2011

### Result of Factor Analysis on socio-economic and cultural characteristics of host-communities and ecotourism development

Table 2 shows that there were three (3) major constraining factors to ecotourism development among host-communities in the study area. Each constraint factor was given a denomination that best described or characterized the set of variables contained in it (Alimba and Akubuilu, 2000). Factor I was critically examined and named Socio-economic Factor due to the variables that loaded high (0.3 and above) under it. These include: V09 – Poor state of roads (0.501), V10 – Poor state of electricity supply (0.444), V11– Lack of access to clean water (0.400) and V12 – Poor state of telecommunication services (0.305).

Factor II was also considered and named Socio-cultural Factor due to the variables which loaded high under it. These variables included: V01 – Lack of entrepreneurial spirit (-0.512), V05 – Exclusion of women (0.622), V07 - Loss of sacred places (-0.574) and V08 – Low awareness of benefits of ecotourism (0.325). Similarly, Factor III was considered and named Environmental Factor because of the high-loading variable under it. The only variable in this category was V14 - Lack of environmental cleanness (0.562).

**Table 2: Varimax Rotated Component Matrix on constraints to ecotourism development among host-communities in South-East Zone of Nigeria**

Variable code	Variable name	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
VO1	Lack of entrepreneurial spirit	.11	-.512	.000
VO2	Poor attitude to visitors	-.202	-.172	.214
VO3	Lack of Cohesiveness of communities	-.046	.109	-.315
VO4	Lack of openness to development	.062	.226	.262
VO5	Exclusion of women	.160	.622	-.139
VO6	Degradation of sites	-.014	.215	-.038
VO7	Loss of sacred places	-.103	-.574	.909
VO8	Low awareness of benefits of ecotourism	0.90	.325	.276
VO9	Poor state of roads	.501	-.064	-.149
V10	Poor State of electricity supply	.444	.041	.151
V11	Lack of access to clean water	.400	-.003	.013
V12	Poor state of telecom services	-.305	-.018	.187
V13	Poor state of hospitality services	.120	.135	.121
V14	Environmental uncleanness	-.479	-.307	.562

*Source: Analysis of field data, 2011*

## DISCUSSION

From the result of factor analysis, Socio-economic Factor exerts significant constraining influence on ecotourism development in the study area. The total lack or poor states of socio-economic infrastructure, including roads, electricity supply, clean water and telecommunication services in host-communities slow the rate of ecotourism development in

the Zone. Only 17% of the studied communities had the main access road to the community (and to the site) asphalted; 33% had their access roads in a state of disrepair while those of 33% of the communities were undergoing reconstruction at the time of the study. Though 87% of the host-communities were connected to the national grid however, the actual supply of power is irregular. Businesses and households who could afford them used electricity generators which created noise and air pollution and added to the cost of providing tourism services. Half (50%) of the host-communities had regular access to pipe-borne water supply while the rest depended mostly or entirely on sometimes, distant public bore-holes, rivers and streams for their water needs. Inadequate water supply invariably, discourages personal and environmental sanitation which in turn promotes risk of diseases and decreases the chances of visits by tourists and excursionists.

Socio-cultural factor, in terms of inability of host-communities to take advantage of ecotourism-induced entrepreneurial opportunities, socio-political exclusion of women, fear of erosion of culture, and low level of awareness of potential benefits of ecotourism, were also found to impede the development of ecotourism in the study area. According to Nwahia, Omonona, Onyeabor and Balogun (2012), the inability of host-community members to cease ecotourism-induced economic opportunities stemmed from lack of capital and skills. Similarly, Madzara (2011) demonstrated that exclusion of women from decision making process, especially as it affects tourism development, denies the endeavour of vital energy as women almost always constitute the greater portion of ecotourism services providers, particularly in developing economies. Host communities feared the commoditization of their cherished cultural (and sometimes, religious) sites, monuments and artifacts; and the consequent erosion of their values. For this fear, host-communities still feared to open up some sacred natural sites to visitors. Also, the general low level of awareness of host-communities on potential economic and socio-political benefits of ecotourism development meant that community opinion leaders were yet reluctant about championing the sector.

The Environmental Factor in ecotourism development in the area under study concerned poor sanitary conditions of some sites and the general community environment. This was mostly as a result of littering of refuses from foods and drinks, and poor disposal of human wastes.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, host-community characteristics influence ecotourism development in South East Nigeria. Specifically, poor states of socio-economic infrastructure, inability to maximize ecotourism-induced economic opportunities, socio-political and economic exclusion of women and poor sanitary condition of host-community environments constitute impediments to ecotourism development in the area. Governments at state and council levels should step up the provision of socio-economic infrastructure in rural areas, particularly in ecotourism host-communities, including construction and maintenance of rural roads, supply of water and electricity, and spurring telecommunication services providers to provide quality services in host-communities. Relevant State and Local Government agencies and NGOs should work in concert to provide host-community members the necessary skills and credit to take advantage of opportunities created by ecotourism in the area. The Federal Government policy of socio-economic and political mainstreaming of women as exemplified in the preference of women in the You-Win Program and the encouragement of women participation in governance should be driven to the community level through advocacy and relevant actions

by State and Local Government agencies and NGOs. Awareness should also be created among host-communities on the socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental benefits of ecotourism development as well as the need to maintain clean environment.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study have thrown up the need to also empirically investigate the influence of household characteristics on participatory ecotourism development in the zone with the aim to comparatively examine both results. Also, for a rounded policy on ecotourism development in the zone, it is needful to investigate the supply-side factors of ecotourism development.

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