

## Attitudes of Local Communities Towards Tourism Development in Obudu Ranch Resort

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**Abstract:** Cross River State has in recent times experienced a significant level of tourism growth which has positively impacted on the social and economic status of the host communities. However recent reports indicate that one of the most significant tourism destination in the state- Obudu Ranch Resort is under a dysfunctional state. A questionnaire survey was carried out on 308 residents in five communities around the resort. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies and chi square test. Majority of the respondents 72.73% submitted that the local communities were hospitable towards tourist while a greater part of respondents also were of the view that the local communities supported the programmes of the resort. A very high percentage of respondents 84.73% agreed that tourism development in the resort has led to a remarkable increase in the prices of goods and services. A higher percentage of respondents were of the view that tourism has encouraged gender empowerment 80.84% and a high level of accessibility 46.42%. However majority 94.29% and 46.42% were of the perception that entrepreneurial training programmes were not put in place by the resort, management for local communities. The impact on tourism on the environment was also appreciated by majority of the respondents.

**Key words:** Obudu Ranch Resort • Host Communities • Gender Empowerment • Perception

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been considered as an avenue for improving the livelihoods of host communities with significant socio-economic opportunities for most countries [1]. The level of local communities' involvement in tourism development processes in an area can determine its successes and land sustainability. The most significant feature of the tourism industry is its capacity to promote opportunities for employment, infrastructural development, revenue and income generation in local communities [2]. In a study by Aniah *et al.* [3], regarding patronage of tourism potentials as a strategy for sustainable tourism development, it was considered that tourism is a major source of integrating people with diverse cultures and languages. Some studies have also revealed new ways of engaging in tourism based businesses with strategies that are focused on 'poverty alleviation'. This can be done by improving the social, economic, or environmental benefits while maintaining commercial returns through the inclusion of frame work for promoting and developing incentives for good practice among stakeholders [4-7]. These can be done in

a way that contributes more towards poverty alleviation by improving the social, economic, or environmental benefits while maintaining commercial returns. There is therefore the need for the private sector to get into partnerships with the local communities so that such business opportunities can be a way through which there can lift out of poverty. Partnerships can be created by engaging local people in normal business operations such as through procurement or sourcing of inputs, contract out services, providing information to guests, creating packages of local excursions, or developing new leisure facilities [5].

In Nigeria, tourism has played a major role in the community and human development with its numerous accompanying socio-economic and environmental benefits. Cross River State has indeed enjoyed significant benefits, from the tourism sector, with a steady increase in tourists' visits of about 10% annually from 2000 to 2016. Obudu Mountain Resort in Cross River State is one of the leading tourists' sites in the country with its natural and unique features, such as the climate, height, on the longest cable cars in Africa, winding path-ways, natural swimming pool, exceptional accommodation and canopy

walk-way. Consequently, the resort also experienced increased tourists' visits and patronages for some time, making the host people (Becheeve community who were predominantly farmers and hunters) very interested in tourism-related activities such as; acquiring jobs in the hotels, engaging in transportation, tour-guiding services, sales of food, drinks, honey, yoghurt, handcraft and other local products [8]. The increasing tourism activities also attracted the provision of basic amenities such as: schools, electricity, security, accessible roads, financial and communication infrastructures. However in recent times, the repairs and maintenance of most of the infrastructures in the resort have been grounded. This present development is ascribed to inadequate allocation of funds thus amenities and facilities like the Cable Car, Swimming Pool and accommodation infrastructures are in very deplorable operational condition. Furthermore the local communities are becoming restive due to their non inclusion in the overall management of the resort. Other challenges include ineffective marketing of the resort due to old tourism networking skills and tools as well as the non implementation of benefit sharing programmes.

Issues of involvement of local communities in the development of tourism has generated a high level of interest among tourism practitioners as well as researchers in recent times. The impact of tourism development on local communities is considered a key element in building a sustainable tourism strategy in view of its impacts on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental life of local communities [6]. The social exchange theory as applied in tourism states that community attitude and perception in tourism development programme is based on the economic socio-cultural and environmental benefits derived by the people [9]. Local communities expressed positive attitudes and perception towards tourism development in their regions when economic benefits accompanied this development [10-13]. Furthermore, the socio-cultural aspect of tourism development attract positive perceptions through the establishment of infrastructures by tourism agencies within the host communities [14, 15]. However, the environmental effect of tourism development is often perceived by local communities in negative terms due to the impact of the activities of tourists in the area including crowding, damage to natural habitat and environmental and noise pollution [16-20]. It has also been reported in past studies that demographic variables particularly gender, age, occupation and education as well as length of residency played important roles in determining the perception of residents towards tourism development in

their regions. In most cases length of residency in the destination is considered as a very important predictor of local community perception of tourism development. In a study by Amalu *et al.* [8], a different perception trend was established where the positive perception by the communities was more on the socio-cultural and environmental benefits than the economic benefits. The socio cultural factors were considered more important due to the high level of interaction between the local people and tourists leading to the showcasing of the rich cultural heritage of the people. Tourism helps to improve the quality of life in a destination by providing opportunities for local residence to interact with different people with diverse cultures [21].

The long term success of the tourism industry is predicated on a clear understanding and assessment of attitudes and perception of the impact of tourism development on host communities [22]. There is therefore the need to involve local communities and relevant stakeholders in the entire process from the decision making level through the planning stage to the stage of implementation. Several studies examining the attitude and perception of local residents towards tourism development have shown that perception differ from communities to communities. It was further reported that residents who enjoy tremendous benefits from the industry are likely to express more positive perception of the economic impact of tourism than those who do not benefit [23-25]. Therefore economic benefits are perceived by local communities as the most important factors in influencing their support for tourism development [26, 27]. These benefits include increase investment by local communities, improved livelihood and creation of employment to residents. However, a study by Amalu and Ajake [28] on assessment of the employment structure in Obudu mountain resort, a higher level of non indigenes were employed more than indigene and most of the indigenes employed were in the category of unskilled labor as supported by Amalu and Ajake [28] who asserted that local residents are more involved in low paid jobs due to their limited qualification. The study is therefore aimed at assessing the perception of local communities on the development of Obudu ranch resort.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study Area:** The Obudu Ranch Resort is located in Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River State and covers an area of 24 km<sup>2</sup> at an altitude of 900- 1500m above sea level it lies on longitude 6°15' N; 6° 30' N and latitude 9°15' E; 9°30' E). It is the highest elevated point in the

South eastern part of Nigeria with a maximum height of 1576m above sea level. The climate is typically temperate all year round. The dry season last from November to March. The mean annual rainfall is about 4, 300mm. The Resort has a temperature of 26°C – 32°C between November and January while the lowest temperature range of 4°C – 10°C is recorded between June and September. The topography of the landscape of Obudu Ranch Resort is rugged with North-easterly ridges separated by low lands which form valleys. The vegetation of Obudu plateau- the main physical feature of the resort is basically of two types – the grassland and forest. The grassland is more extensive and covers the level ground on the rolling hills and upper parts of the valley sides. The forest occupies the lower parts of the valleys.

**Research Design:** The study adopted a survey research design using well-structured questionnaires and direct interviews to obtain data from the Becheeve community (the host community around the resort). Two sets of questionnaires were administered to respondents during the study. Three hundred and eight questionnaires were administered to 5 purposively selected villages in Becheeve communities including: 89 in Belegete, 45 in Ikwete, 51 in Apajili, 52 in Anape and 71 in Kegol. Secondary data was collected from reports and relevant documents in Resorts office. Data collection were subjected to descriptive statistics, frequency distribution and percentages.

## RESULTS

**Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents:** A total of 308 respondents were interviewed during the study. A higher percentage of respondents 65.9% were males, while 34.09% were females. Age distribution of respondents showed that majority of the respondents (35.06%) were between 31 and 40 years followed by 25.32% that were between 21 and 30 years and 22.4% between 41 and 50 years. 9.42% were between 16 and 20 years while the least 3.89% were aged between 10 and 15 years. The majority of the respondents 45.46% were traders, while the least, 7.79% were farmers. 11.04% were civil servants including 35.71% engaged in various forms of livelihoods. 75% of the respondents were educated and the rest were illiterates. On the length of residency of respondents, 13.96% had lived in the study area for less than 5 years, 31.82% for 11 – 15 years, 21.10% for 16 – 20 years while 7.79% above 20 years (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Respondents	Percentages
Gender	Male	65.91
	Female	34.09
	Total	100.00
Age	10-15 years	3.90
	16-20 years	9.42
	21-30 years	25.32
	31-40 years	35.06
	41-50 years	22.40
	Above 50 years	3.90
	Total	100.00
Occupation	Traders	45.46
	Farmers	7.79
	Civil servants	11.04
	Others	35.71
	Total	100.00
Level of Education	Illiterates	8.12
	Primary	50.65
	Secondary	31.17
	Tertiary	10.06
	Total	100.00
Length of Residency	Less than 5 years	13.96
	5-10 years	25.33
	11-15 years	31.82
	16-20 years	21.10
	Above 20 years	7.79
	Total	100.00

**Attitudes of Local Communities Towards Tourists and Support of Orr Programmes:** Majority of the respondents 72.73% were of the views that their communities were hospitable towards tourists, 19.81% had opposing views while 7.47% were not sure. Furthermore, many of the respondents 72.97% submitted that the attitudes of local communities towards support of Orr programmes was positive, 20.77% disagreed with this position while 6.10% where not sure. Table 2

From the chi square analysis in the results,  $t_{cal} (18.77) < t_{tab} (26.37)$  for attitude of local communities towards tourists as well as  $t_{cal} (8.34) < t_{tab} (15.57)$  on attitudes of local communities towards support of ORR Programmes. Therefore the local communities supported Orr programmes and the communities' were perceived to be friendly to tourists

**Influence of Proximity on Altitudes of Local Community Towards Tourism Development:** Majority of the respondent 59.42% were of the opinion that proximity influences the attitudes of local communities toward tourism development 30.84% had a different opinion, while 9.74% were not sure. This is an indication that the further a community is from the resort the communities

Table 2: Attitudes of local communities towards tourists and support of ORR programmes

S/N	Attitude of local communities	Agreed	Not Sure	Disagreed	Df	X <sup>2</sup>
1	Attitudes of local communities towards tourists	225(72.97%)	19(6.17%)	64(20.77%)	16	18.77 <sup>ns</sup>
2	Attitudes of local communities towards support of ORR Programmes	224(72.73%)	23(7.47%)	61(19.81%)	8	8.335 <sup>ns</sup>

Table 3: Influence of socio-demographic variables on the attitudes of local communities

S/n	Variables	Type of respondent	A	NS	DA	X <sup>2</sup>	Df
1	Age	10-20 years	261(84.73%)	25(8.11%)	22(7.14%)	27.64 <sup>ns</sup>	16
		21-40 years	258(88.76%)	17(5.52%)	33(10.71%)	10.36 <sup>ns</sup>	16
		Above 40- years	205(66.56%)	17(5.52%)	86(27.92%)	16.26 <sup>ns</sup>	16
2	Gender	Male	144(46.75%)	25(8.12%)	139(45.13%)	17.63 <sup>ns</sup>	16
		Female	137(44.48%)	41(13.16%)	130(42.21%)	10.70 <sup>ns</sup>	16
3	Education	Illiterates	22(7.14%)	25(8.11%)	278(90.26%)	12.67 <sup>ns</sup>	16
		Primary school	33(10.71%)	17(5.52%)	258(88.76%)	10.36 <sup>ns</sup>	16
		Secondary school	46(14.80%)	13(4.22%)	261(84.73%)	27.64 <sup>ns</sup>	16
		Tertiary institution	12(3.89%)	18(5.84%)	258(80.81%)	22.06 <sup>ns</sup>	16

attitudes is less favorable to support for tourism development. This opinion was expressed by respondents in Belegete due to their location that is farthest to the resort when compared to the other four communities chosen for the study.

From the analysis the chi square analysis was 53.04 at 16%df, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted for the variable on proximity and rejected on the variable on educational level. Therefore, proximity has an effect on the attitudes of local communities while education does not.

#### **Influence of Socio-Demographic Variables on the Attitudes of Local Communities:**

Table 3 evaluated the influence of selected socio-economic variables including age, gender and education on support for tourism development in Orr. Tourism development in ORR among respondents with different age groups 10-20, 21-40, above 40 years were 88.76%, 84.73%, 66.56%, 46.75%, 44.48% respectively. This is an indication that there is a general positive attitude towards tourism development among the younger generations as compared to the older generations. However, the difference in opinion with age was statistically not significant. On the whole, respondents' age is a strong determinant of their attitudes towards tourism development as supported by Jaafar *et al.* [13]. Gender was also identified as a determinant of peoples support for tourism development in the resort as indicated by 84.73% of males against 44.48% females. Males probably expressed more support than females due to the involvement of men more in public life [29]. It was also indicated that education had no significant role in determining local communities attitudes towards support for tourism in the area. Support for tourism development was expressed by local communities in all levels of

educational qualifications ranging from illiterates, primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions with the following percentages 84.73%, 88.76%, 80.81%, 90.26% and 46.43% respectively. It was also revealed that the highest percentage of respondent 84.76% who supported tourism development in the area were illiterate in line with a similar study by Garau-Vadell *et al.* [17]. However in other studies positive attitudes towards tourism development was expressed by well educated residence than less educated [13, 15, 16]. This situation can be attributed to high level of educated people in the study area. The support of tourism activities by illiterates was bond out of a wide level of benefits there enjoyed including farming, operation of small retail shops as well as involvement in tourists' guide services and various forms of transport businesses.

#### **Perceptions of Local Communities on Economic Impacts of Tourism Development:**

A very high percentage of respondents (84.73%) agreed that there is a remarkable increase in the prices of goods and services as a result of tourism activities in ORR. However 8.11% were not sure while 7.14% were of the opinion that there was no change in prizes of goods and services (Table 4). It was also reported by majority of the respondents 88.76% that there is an increase in house hold income of the local communities, 5.52% objected to this position while 10.71% were not sure. 93.5% were of the opinion that in income generating project were not put in place by ORR for the communities. Results from Table 4.5 above shows that 83.76% of the respondents sampled agreed that there is an increase in household income of local communities as a result of the establishment of ORR. However 10.71% of the respondents disagreed on this position while 5.51% were not sure. On the provision of subsistence income to

Table 4: Perceptions of local communities on economic impacts of tourism development

S/N	Economic impacts	Type of response			df	X <sup>2</sup>
		Agreed	Not Sure	Disagreed		
1	Increase in prizes of goods and services	261 (84.73%)	25 (8.11%)	22 (7.14%)	16	27.64 <sup>ns</sup>
2	Increase in household income of local communities	258 (88.76%)	17 (5.52%)	33 (10.71%)	16	10.36 <sup>ns</sup>
3	Provision of subsistence income to indigenes	248 (80.54%)	6 (1.94%)	54 (17.52%)	16	14.09 <sup>ns</sup>
4	Harnessing community businesses in the area	144 (46.75%)	25 (8.12%)	139 (45.13)	16	17.63 <sup>ns</sup>
5	Providing market channels for goods and services	137 (44.48%)	41 (13.16%)	130 (42.21)	16	10.70 <sup>ns</sup>

Table 5: Perception of local communities of the social impacts on tourism development in the study area

S/N	Social impacts	Type of response			df	X <sup>2</sup>
		Agreed	Not Sure	Disagreed		
1	Tourism and gender empowerment	258 (80.81%)	13 (4.22%)	46 (14.80%)	16	22.06 <sup>ns</sup>
2	Improved level of accessibility	143 (46.43%)	31 (10.06%)	134 (43.51%)	16	7.77 <sup>ns</sup>
3	Entrepreneur training programme	0 (0.00%)	18 (5.84%)	290 (94.15%)	8	8.09 <sup>ns</sup>
4	Negative influence of indigence by tourist's	136 (44.16%)	42 (13.64%)	130 (42.20%)	16	70.28 <sup>ns</sup>
5	Provision of educational facilities through tourism	155 (86.04%)	10 (2.92%)	143 (11.04%)	16	11.49 <sup>ns</sup>

indigene, 80.54% of the respondents sampled agreed that tourism development in the area has provided real/subsistence income to the local communities in the area, 17.52% disagreed with the opinion while 1.94% were not sure. It can also be seen that 46.75% of the respondents were of the opinion that tourism has harnessed community businesses in the area 45.13% had a different opinion while 8.12% were not sure. Furthermore 44.47% of the respondents sampled agreed that tourism activities have provided marketing channels for goods and services, 42.19% disagreed while 13.31% were not sure.

The results of chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) analysis showed that increase in prices of goods and services and income generating project for communities in various areas surveyed differs significantly among the respondents. However, the results of chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) analysis on increase in household income, provision of subsistent income, enhanced resources utilization, training and capacity building and provision of market channels did not differ significantly among the various communities surveyed.

From the results above, the null hypothesis is accepted for all the variables tested. Therefore local communities are enjoying the economic benefits of tourism particularly in the areas of increase in prices of goods and services, establishment of income generating projects increase in household projects and provisions of subsistence income to indigenes. Furthermore tourism has enhanced resource utilization and marketing, provision of opportunities for training and capacity

building, harnessing of community businesses as well as provision of marketing channels for goods and services. Perception of local communities on the social impacts of tourism development in the study area on the perception of local communities on the social Impacts of tourism Development in the study area, a higher percentage of respondents 80.84% were of the perception that tourism has encouraged gender empowerment, within the local communities in the study area 14.94% disagreed with this position while 3.90% were not sure. Table 5. It was also revealed that 46.42% of the respondents were of the opinion that there was improved level of accessibility in respect to transportation and communication in the area, 43.49% of the respondents had contrary views while 10.06% were not sure of that position. Majority of the respondents 94.29% were of the perception that entrepreneurial training programmes were not put in place by the Resort management for the local communities, while 5.84% were not sure. Concerning responses on negative influence of tourists on indigenes, 39.28% were of the perception that negative influence of tourists by the indigenes was a problem 47.08% had a different opinion while 13.64% were not sure. Results further showed that respondents in Balegete and Anape perceived that there was no significant negative influence of tourists' presence on indigenes. This position was conceived by these two communities because their locations are far away from the entrance of the resort and thus there is little or no regular interaction between the indigenes and tourist. 50.33% of the respondents were of the views that tourism development in the area supported

Table 6: Perception of environmental impacts of tourism development

S/N	Social impacts	Type of response			df	X <sup>2</sup>
		Agreed	Not Sure	Disagreed		
1	Ineffective management of crowd	278 (90.26%)	18 (5.84%)	12 (3.89%)	16	1 2.67 <sup>ns</sup>
2	Local natural environment	144 (46.75%)	25 (8.12%)	139 (45.13%)	16	17.67 <sup>ns</sup>
3	Traffic congestion and noise pollution	205 (66.56%)	17 (5.52%)	86 (27.92%)	16	16.26 <sup>ns</sup>

the primary and secondary schools in the communities with education facilities. However, 46.42% were of the perception that tourism development did not provide educational facilities in the area, while 3.25% were not sure.

The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) analysis showed that tourism and gender empowerment, level of accessibility, entrepreneur training programmes, negative influence of indigence by tourists', provision of educational facilities through tourism did not differ significantly among the respondents in the selected communities. However, the chi-square ( $X^2$ ) analysis showed that negative influence on indigenes by tourists in these communities surveyed differed significantly from other variables.

From the results, the null hypothesis is accepted for all the variables tested. Therefore tourism development has not improved the level of livelihood of the local communities in the study area. Specifically the level of accessibility to the communities is poor, entrepreneurial training programmes are not organized by ORR for the communities, provision of facilities by ORR for education and infrastructure in schools within the local communities by ORR is not visible while development of skills from Protected areas tourism experience and gender empowerment through tourism development were in the communities were at low level.

From the results, the null hypothesis is accepted for all the variables tested. Therefore tourism development has not improved the level of livelihood of the local communities in the study area. Specifically the level of accessibility to the communities is poor, entrepreneurial training programmes are not organized by ORR for the communities, the communities rights/roles in resource management and peoples wisdom, knowledge and standard of living has not improved. Significantly, provision of facilities by ORR for education and infrastructure by ORR is not visible while development of skills from Protected areas tourism experience and gender empowerment through tourism development were in the communities were at low level.

**Perception of Environmental Impacts of Tourism Development:** On the perception of environmental impacts

of tourism development in the area, 90.26% of the respondents were of the opinion that management of crowd during peak periods of tourists inflow into the resort particularly during Easter and Christmas celebrations as well as Obudu Mountain Race programmes was effective, 5.84% were not sure, while 3.89% perceived that the management of crowd in the Resort during these periods was ineffective and can lead to negative impacts on the environment (Table 6). It was also revealed that 46.75% of the respondents were of the perception that the local and natural environment was not threatened by the influx of tourists, 45.12% disagreed while 8.12% were not sure. It was also reported by majority of the respondents 66.56% that traffic congestion and noise pollution were manageable particularly during peak periods 5.52% were not sure while 27.92% disagreed with this position.

The results of chi-square analysis showed that the responses by respondent on perception of environmental impacts of tourism development were not significantly different among the various communities surveyed. From the results, the null hypothesis is accepted for all the variables tested.

Therefore tourism development in ORR has no negative impacts on the environments as the management of crowd and traffic congestion as well as noise pollution by ORR during peak periods were effective. The management of the local natural environment in the study area was also perceived to be effective.

## DISCUSSIONS

The socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents are presented in the results (Table 4.1). The majority of the respondents (65.9%) were males. This is consistent with the sex ratio of the country's population of 1.06 males to one female [14] The dominant age bracket of the respondents (35.06%) was between 31 and 40 years which agree with the report of 17Lo *et al.* [16] that the dominant age group in Nigeria falls between ages 15 and 64 years. It also agrees with Kim *et al.* [30] in respect of the protection of Osun-Osogbo Grove for ecotourism development. The marital status of the

respondents showed that 68.7% were single, 24.7% married, 2.6%, divorced and 4.0% as widow. This would indicate that there exist emotional instability among the majority of the respondents as most of them are living without spouses [31]. The educational status of the respondents showed that 10.06% had tertiary education, 31.16% had secondary school education and 50.32% had primary school education while 8.11% had no formal education. On occupation of respondent the highest percentage (45.45%) of the respondents were into trading, while farmers, civil servants, artisans, others, (hunters etc) constituted 7.79%, 11.03%, 9.74% and 25.97% of the respondent respectively. This is an indication that the community's dominant economic activities is trading of various types meant to satisfy the patronage of the ecotourism visitors.

**Attitudes of Local Communities Towards Tourists and Support for Orr Programmes:** It was reported that the local communities were hospitable and accommodated the presence of tourists in the resort. Furthermore there was full support by the communities towards tourism development programmes of Orr. Local communities attitudes towards support of programmes in the resort are very critical in the success and sustainability of tourism development in the area. This is due to the fact that appreciation of communities attitudes and perceptions are vital for the planning, decision making and implementation of tourism programmes, in view of the fact that the attitudes of local people will minimize conflict between tourists and host communities as supported by Zhang *et al.* [32]. Similarly positive attitudes of local communities towards tourists created a healthy relationship that translated to a peaceful environment and the integration of different cultures in the area. This is corroborated by Kumar Das *et al.* [21] who opined that tourism provides host communities with huge opportunities to interact with tourists and learn about their diverse cultures.

**Factors Influencing the Attitude of Local Communities Towards Tourism Development:** On the influence of educational level of the communities on their attitudes towards tourism development, majority of the respondents were of the views that education had influence on the attitudes of local communities towards tourism development. This is supported by 17 Lo *et al.* [16] who reported that education will likely increase opposition to tourism development programme. However the study from Nsizwazikhona and Nduduzo [33] had a

different position which indicated that education did not have a significant role in determining attitudes towards tourism developments. And a similar study by 17 Lo *et al.* [16] reporting that education will likely increase opposition to positive attitudes.

In general, tourism development within a destination often impacts on the communities in negative and positive ways. This was the situation in the resort as perceived by most of the respondents. Consequently on the negative side, a greater percentage of the respondents agreed that there is a remarkable increase in the prices of goods and services as a result of tourism activities in the area. This development is supported by Eraqi *et al.* [34] who submitted that tourism can lead to the worsening of the living standard of the local communities because of inflation as well as increase in the prices of goods and services. However the perception of local communities on the positive impact of tourism development included increase in house whole income of local communities, provision of subsistence income to local communities, harnessing of community businesses as well as provision of market channels for goods and services, as reported by majority of the respondents. Furthermore the local communities who were predominantly farmers and hunters became interested in tourism and in tourism-related ventures including employment in the resort, engaging in transportation activities, tour-guide services, food and drink vendors, honey and yogurts businesses and other local product a situation that is also reported by Nkemngu and Acha-anyi [35]. Other studies have also reported that residents who enjoy tremendous benefits from the industry are likely to express more positive perception of the economic impact of tourism than those who do not benefit. [23-25]. Therefore economic benefits are perceived by local communities as the most important factors in influencing their support for tourism development [26, 27]. However, a study by Amalu and Ajake [28] on assessment of the employment structure in Obudu mountain resort, a higher level of non indigenes were employed more than indigene and most of the indigenes employed were in the category of unskilled labor as supported by Aref and Redzuan [36] who asserted that local residents are more involved in low paid jobs due to their limited qualification.

Tourism development also brought changes in employment opportunities, investments in entertainment facilities and wealth-creation generated in the local area. For example, investment and development spending in the area, variety of shopping facilities and variety of restaurants all were perceived to have improved.

The respondents also alluded to the fact that the residents were very satisfied with the increase in entertainment facilities (restaurants) as against increased in development spending, such as infrastructure. This suggests that residents preferred more investment in entertainment facilities to increase in infrastructural development (e.g., office space buildings) as a result of tourism development. This findings supports [9] suggesting that tourism development was beneficial to the economy of the residents. The researcher speculates that this could be a possible implication that residents prefer leisure tourism to business tourism.

This is also the position of Mensa and Styliadis *et al.* [37] who observed that 55% of respondents in his study held the views that local people benefited from ecotourism in Bobiri Forest Reserve and Butterfly Sanctuary in Ashanti Region of Ghana. A similar study by Bestard *et al.* [38] also indicated that benefits accrue to local communities no matter how meager. On the perception of local communities on the social impact of tourism development in the study area, majority of the respondents were of the perception that tourism has encourage gender empowerment and improve level of accessibility in transportation and communication, within the local communities in the study area. On the perception of respondents on the negative influence of tourist presence on indigenes, it was noted by majority of tourist that the presence of tourist had no negative impact on indigenes. Similar findings were reported in Bisotun, Iran where the community evaluated the social factors most favorably, among which the interaction with tourists was considered to be very important [39].

The positive impacts of tourism on the environment was also appreciated by most of the respondents including the preservation of historical sites, artifacts, ecotourism sites and improved areas' appearance. This is fully reflected in ecotourism resources of Beecheve nature reserve, Grotto waterfalls, Daga waterfalls, presidential and governors' lodges, Cable car and International swimming pool as reported in a similar study of Bestard *et al.* [38]. Specifically on the perception of environmental impacts of tourism development in the area, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that management of crowd was effective particularly during peak periods of tourism activities including Easter and Christmas celebrations as well as Obudu Mountain Race programmes. The local and natural environment of the resort was not threatened by the influx of tourists as reported by majority of the respondents. It was also reported by majority of the respondents that traffic

congestion and noise pollution were manageable particularly during peak periods.

## CONCLUSION

This study was initiated to investigate local communities' attitudes and perceptions towards tourism development in the Obudu ranch resort. The impact items covered in the study were related to social-cultural, economic and environmental aspects. Generally the local communities were Positively disposed to positive attitudes toward socio-cultural and economic benefits, clearly expecting that the resort will provide overall better quality of life. However, the local communities have concerns regarding lack of entrepreneurial training programmes for the local communities. Understanding Local communities attitudes can help tourism managers and policymakers assess the host community's perceptions of tourism development.

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