

## CASE STUDY

# Residents' Perception of Ecotourism Impact in Ekiti State: A Case Study of Ikogosi Warm Spring

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## ABSTRACT

The perception of Ikogosi Ekiti community residents to the impact of Ikogosi Warm Spring for ecotourism development was studied. Data obtained with semi-structured questionnaire on 150 respondents randomly selected in the community were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. Majority (90.7%) of the respondents were indigenes of Ikogosi, of which 35.3% was between 31 and 40 years old. Most (70.8%) respondents agreed that government (70.8%) and the tourism staffs (19.8%) whose larger percentage were non-natives benefited most from the Warm Spring. Similarly, 64.0% of the respondents agreed that tourism development has brought some developmental changes to the community as well as positive sociocultural impacts but was small and at a slow rate. Furthermore, 90.6% of respondents agreed that protection of the natural environment for tourism will protect the continuity of plant and animal in their natural habitats. Some respondents (70%) believed that tourism prevents the local people's access to the natural resources. Therefore, despite the benefits of ecotourism development in Ikogosi Warm Spring to the Ikogosi-Ekiti community, these unequally distributed benefits have in advertently influenced their perceptions of ecotourism. Government should, therefore, create enabling environment to accommodate the natives in the day-to-day running of the ecotourism center and also provides incentives for the indigenes of the community in the form of scholarships for school pupils and vocational training to the youth.

**Key words:** Continuity, ecotourism, indigenes, perception, scholarship, sociocultural

## INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a "responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the well-being of the local people, and involve interpretation and education."<sup>[23]</sup> The key distinction between tourism and ecotourism lies in this connection with nature; tourism is not much concerned about the well-being of local people and conservation of nature, but ecotourism tries to create a minimal impact on the people and on the environment. Ecotourism has developed more rapidly than any other trade in the world.<sup>[2]</sup> It is

a significant factor in the world trade and a key element of compensation of many countries.

Quite a lot of studies have emphasized the fact that ecotourism impacts on the host communities are economic, ecological, and sociocultural among others.<sup>[21]</sup> The role of community in conservation and ecotourism development is extremely important because communities directly impact the protected areas that surround them and can either hinder or advance conservation goals.<sup>[5]</sup> Furthermore, they are directly affected by the restrictions on the use of their natural endowments that fall within the government protected areas. However, to benefit from ecotourism as an alternative income generator from these protected areas, communities must have some level of control over ecotourism development.<sup>[22]</sup> Easterling (2004)<sup>[15]</sup> and Deery

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*et al.*<sup>[7]</sup> observed that each ecotourism impact classification includes positive and negative effects even as the residents' perceptions are conflicting. The economic impact is mainly perceived by residents positively as a mean to create employment, improve local economy, increase investments and economic diversification,<sup>[24]</sup> improve local and state tax revenues, additional income, and economic quality of life.<sup>[18]</sup> On the negative side, the residents' perception includes increase in the cost of living and unequal distribution of the economic benefits,<sup>[3]</sup> causes traffic and pedestrian congestion, parking problems, disturbance<sup>[16]</sup> and destruction of flora and fauna, air and water pollution, and littering.<sup>[19]</sup> Despite the negative effect, Ayodele<sup>[4]</sup> proposed that ecotourism can be a tool to inspire environmental conservation and development.

Ekiti State has far-reaching range of ecotourism attractions of importance which includes perennial rivers (Erin Ayonigba Fish River, Erinjiyan-Ekiti), big tracks of virgin tropical forests (protected areas within the state), remarkable waterfalls (Arinta waterfall, Ipole-iloru), conducive hilltop (Oroko Ewo War Centre, Ilupeju-Ekiti, and Oke Ayaba in Ado-Ekiti), and amazingly warm and cold water springs oozing out and touching, yet preserving its thermal identification (Ikogosi Warm Spring, Ikogosi Ekiti). Other points of interest include traditional methods of lifestyles preserved in locality customs (Udiroko, Ado-Ekiti; Olosunta, Ikere-Ekiti), wealthy and sundry handicrafts (Pottery, Isan Ekiti; Mat weaving, Ogotun Ekiti), and different colorful merchandise depicting native arts (Art and carving, Oye Ekiti), lifestyle, and dance.

With most of these ecotourism attractions in their developmental stages, it is pertinent to investigate the perception of residents as an important factor which could not be overlooked in the development of these ecotourism attractions to their full potentials. Previous studies like Jimoh<sup>[12]</sup> focused on geotouristic site in Nigeria, Kayode<sup>[25]</sup> investigated tourism potentials of Ekiti State,<sup>[13]</sup> examined site that are entirely managed and funded by government while Okosun<sup>[14]</sup> studied the impact of the Ikogosi cold/Warm Spring tourist resort on community development in Ekiti State. All these authors did not consider the perception of residents as a factor in the development of ecotourism facilities across the state. This study seeks to assess the perception of the impact of

ecotourism development of Ikogosi Warm Spring on the residents.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### The study area

Ikogosi (7°35" N, 4°59" E) is situated in Ekiti West Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The state is mainly an upland zone, rising over 250 m above sea level (Cohen and Saul, 1998). Ikogosi Ekiti has the population of about 176,892 (NPC 2006) density of 669.1 km<sup>2</sup> and with a total area of 366 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>[6]</sup>

The vegetation of Ikogosi Warm Spring as described by Keay<sup>[26]</sup> is a secondary rainforest. The common fauna species found there include bushbuck, giant rat, red-flanked duiker, Maxwell duiker, pangolin, and porcupine among others and over 33 species of birds (Aves) belonging to 16 families has been identified in Ikogosi Warm Spring some of the species are grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), grey hornbill (*Tockus nasutus*), green pigeon (*Treron australis*), and African Jacana (*Actophilornis africanus*) to mention but few. The area enjoys a tropical climate with two distinct seasons, rainy season (April–October) and the dry season (November–March) (Dangel, 2008) with annual rainfall of 1500 mm, high relative humidity of between 70% and 85%. Temperatures range between 21°C and 28°C.<sup>[1]</sup>

The natural environment of Ikogosi Ekiti coupled with her rich culture and history form the basis for the community as an ecotourists' target.<sup>[27]</sup> However, it is remarkable site where two different springs flow side by side without disturbing each other: While one is cold, the other is warm, and they maintain a temperature of about 38°. The whole landscape in the area is enhanced by green vegetation. The dimension of the whole area of the Warm Spring is about 0.32 km<sup>2</sup> which is prevented from erosion by tall perennial trees which form a cover for relaxation of the ecotourists (Halirul, 2013) [Figure 1].

### Method of data collection

Semi-structured questionnaire was designed to obtain information on the perception of residents of Ikogosi Ekiti towards the impact of ecotourism using stratified random sampling techniques. In all, 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered

personally on one-to-one basis. The respondents were supervised in answering the questions while the illiterate respondents were interviewed based on the questions in the questionnaire and their answers were recorded.

**Method of data analysis**

The data collected from the field were collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

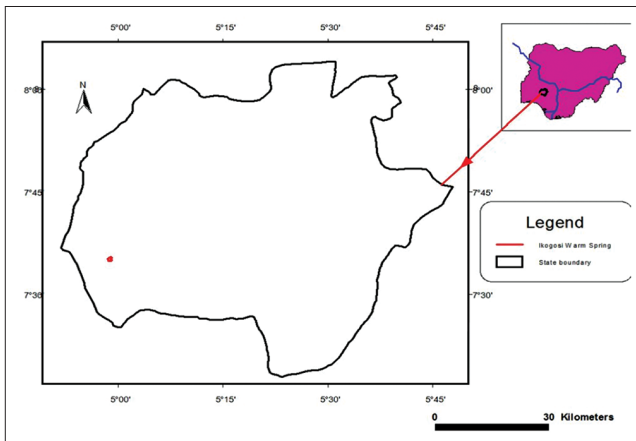
Figure 2 shows the places of origin of the respondents. Majority (90.7%) of the respondents was native of Ikogosi Ekiti, 5.3% from Igbara-Odo Ekiti and 2.7% from Erijiyan Ekiti while 1 respondent each (0.7%) was from Aramoko Ekiti and Ipole-Iloro Ekiti.

The socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The majority

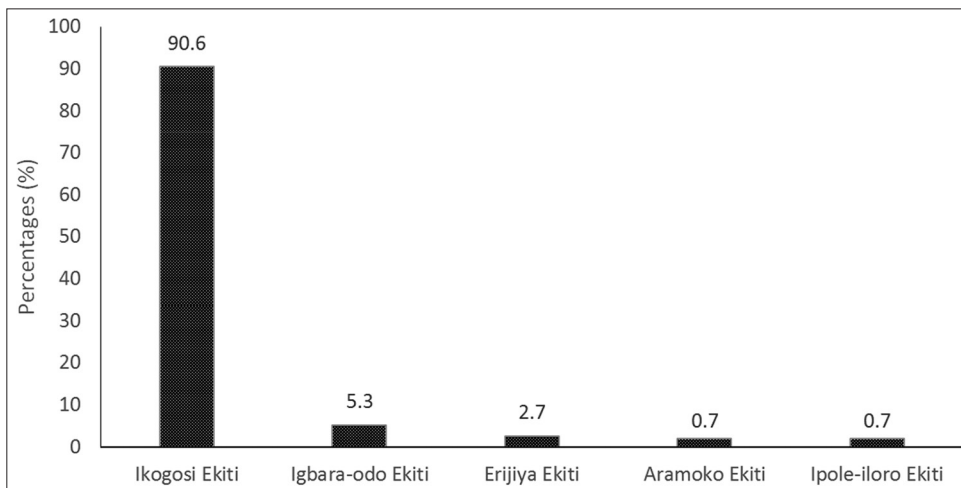
(64.0%) of the respondents was male and this is consistent with the sex ratio of the country's population of 1.06 males to one female (CIA, 2014).<sup>[10]</sup> and Digun-Aweto *et al.*, (2015).<sup>[8]</sup> The dominant (35.4%) age bracket of the respondents was between 31 and 40 years which agrees with the report of NMEC<sup>[11]</sup> that the dominant age group in Nigeria falls between ages 15 and 64 years. It also agrees with Oladokun *et al.*<sup>[9]</sup> in respect of the protection of Osun-Osogbo Grove for ecotourism development.

The marital status of the respondent shows 68.7% as married, 24.7% as single, 2.7% as divorced, and 4.0% as widow. This would indicate emotional stability of the majority of the respondents.<sup>[17]</sup> The educational status shows that 36.7% had tertiary education, 35.3% had secondary school education, and 14.0% had primary school education while 14.0% had no formal education. This result exceeds the estimated 59.57% interviewer indicated by NLS.<sup>[20]</sup> However, a large percentage (84.7%) of the respondents belonged to Christian religion, 12.0% as Muslims while 3.3% practiced traditional religion. This result differs from to the findings of Oladokun *et al.*<sup>[9]</sup> in similar work where more Muslims respondents were recorded than Christian in Oshogbo metropolis. Furthermore, the highest percentage (30.0%) of the respondents was into trading, while farmers, civil servants, artisans, hunters, and job-seeking graduates constituted 22.0%, 19.4%, 14.7%, 8.7%, 1.3%, and 4.0% of the respondents, respectively. This shows that the community's dominant economic activities are trading of various types meant to satisfy the patronage of the ecotourism visitors to the Warm Spring.

Table 2 summarizes the respondents' level of



**Figure 1:** Map of Ekiti State Nigeria showing the location of Ikogosi Ekiti



**Figure 2:** Community of respondents

**Table 1:** Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

Title	Frequency (%)
Sex	
Male	96 (64.0)
Female	54 (36.0)
Age	
11–20	5 (3.3)
21–30	38 (25.3)
31–40	53 (35.4)
41–50	30 (20.0)
51–60	11 (7.3)
61+	13 (8.7)
Marital status	
Single	37 (24.7)
Married	103 (68.6)
Divorced	4 (2.7)
Widow	6 (4.0)
Education	
Non-formal education	21 (14.0)
Primary education	21 (14.0)
Secondary education	53 (35.3)
Tertiary education	55 (36.7)
Religious	
Christianity	127 (84.7)
Islam	18 (12.0)
Traditional	5 (3.3)
Occupation	
Farmers	33 (22.0)
Civil servants	29 (19.4)
Trader/business	45 (30.0)
Artisans	13 (8.6)
Students	22 (14.7)
Hunters	2 (1.3)
Applicant (job-seeking graduates)	6 (4.0)

Source: Field survey, 2014

involvement and perception of ecotourism. More than half (56.7%) of the respondents were not involved in ecotourism activities in the community. However, Simons (1994) opined that involvement of community members in the management of ecotourism project is vital for the overall success of the project. The fact that only 45.3% of respondents indicated that they were actively involved should, therefore, be a cause for concern (Brohman, 1996). Out of the respondents involved, 55.4% were transporters while ecotourism staff in the Warm Spring and ecotourist guides was 32.3 and 12.3%, respectively. Majority of the respondents (57.3%) confirmed that they benefited from tourism while 42.7% did not. This is in tandem with the observation of Mensa and Adofo, (2013); here, he observed that

**Table 2:** Respondents' Level of Involvement in Ecotourism Activities

Title	Frequency (%)
Are you involved in ecotourism activities within the town?	
Involved	65 (43.3)
Not involved	85 (56.7)
How are you are involved in these activities?	
Tourist guide	8 (12.3*)
Staff	21 (32.3*)
Transporter	36 (55.4*)
Can you say you have benefited from tourism activities?	
Yes	86 (57.3)
No	64 (42.7)
How would you rate your benefit from tourism activities?	
Low	61 (70.9 <sup>#</sup> )
Average	23 (26.8 <sup>#</sup> )
High	2 (2.3 <sup>#</sup> )
Have you been negatively affected by tourism activities?	
Yes	40 (26.7)
No	110 (73.3)
Are you happy with the current level of tourism activities here?	
Yes	99 (66.0)
No	51 (34.0)

\*The calculation is based on 65 respondents that were involved in ecotourism activities. <sup>#</sup>The calculation is based on 86 respondents that affirm that they benefited from ecotourism activities

55% of respondent held the view that local people who were actively involved in the ecotourism benefited from it in Bobiri Forest Reserve and Butterfly Sanctuary in Ashanti Region of Ghana. Of those that benefited, 70.9% rated the benefits as low, 26.8% as average, while 2.3% rated the benefit as high. These results confirm the findings of Nkemngu (2012) that some benefit accrued to community members, no matter how minimal. However, the majority (73.3%) of the respondent agreed that they have been positively affected by ecotourism development, whereas 26.7% indicated negative effects. Most of the respondents (66.0%) were happy with the current level of development of the ecotourism center in the community while 34.0% of the respondents were not happy. Table 3 summarizes that 72.0% of the respondents believed that the community has benefited from the Warm Spring while 28.0% disagreed. Out of the respondents that believe that the community has benefited from Ikogosi Warm Spring, 33.3% rated the benefit a slow, 63.0% as average, whereas 3.7% rated the benefit as high. Similarly,

**Table 3:** Respondents' perception of community benefit from ecotourism development

Title	Frequency (%)
In your view, has the community benefited from ecotourism activities?	
Yes	108 (72.0)
No	42 (28.0)
Rate to what extent has the community benefited	
Low	36 (33.3*)
Average	68 (63.0*)
High	4 (3.7*)
Generally, who benefited most from ecotourism from the following stakeholders?	
Government	136 (70.8)
Tourism staff	38 (19.8)
Tourists	4 (2.1)
UAC company (producer of Gossy water)	6 (3.1)
The community	8 (4.2)
In your opinion who has been negatively affected by ecotourism development from the list?	
Landowner	46 (28.8)
The community	38 (23.8)
Unemployed youth	28 (17.5)
Hunter	27 (16.9)
Farmer	12 (7.5)
Dismissed worker/staff	2 (1.3)
Nobody	7 (4.4)

\*The calculation is based on 108 respondents that affirm that the community benefited from ecotourism activities

a large percentage (70.8%) of the respondents believed that most of the benefits from the tourism go to the government while 19.8% of the respondents believed that the staff working in the tourism center derives most benefits than other stakeholders, whereas 4.2% believed that the community derives the most benefit. In addition, 3.1% of the respondents perceived that UAC Company (producer of Gossy Water) benefited most while 2.1% of the respondents believed that ecotourists benefited most from the ecotourism.

On the negative effects of ecotourism developments on stakeholders, the respondents identified landowners (28.8%), the whole community at large (23.8%) and unemployed youth (17.5%) as the group that is most negatively affected by ecotourism development,

Table 4 summarizes the perceptions of respondents to ecotourism development of Ikogosi Warm Spring. The majority (59.3%) of the respondents disagreed that the existence of tourism prevented the local people their sources of livelihood while 40% agreed. A large percentage (70%) of the respondents agreed that the ecotourism center

prevents people's access to their naturally endowed resources. The opinion that tourism is good because it brings about developmental changes to the benefit of resident was not agreed on by 59.4% of the respondents. However, 62% of the respondents agreed that the existence of the Warm Spring has provided job opportunities for indigenes, and 69.3% opined that the ecotourism site has brought social amenities to the town, thereby improving the living standards of people. This observation is similar to the assertion of Lindberg and Enríquez, (1994) that the local communities benefited significantly from tourism in the protected areas nearby by selling handicrafts and by providing accommodation and other services to tourists in Belize. The majority (55.3%) of the respondents believed that the ecotourism center ensures the protection of the environment otherwise it would have been destroyed. This strengthened the view that ecotourism in Ikogosi has done more good than bad by 57.3% of the respondents, but 42.7% of the respondents thought otherwise. On whether the development of the natural is for ecotourism will protect plant and animal continuity, a large percentage (90.6%) of the respondents agreed while only 9.4% disagreed.

Table 5 summarizes the respondents' opinion on policies against antiecotourism activities within Ikogosi Warm Spring. The majority (92%) of the respondents' believed the government's prohibition of hunting activities within the ecotourism area is unfavorable, but 8.0% of the respondents agreed with the policy on hunting. This observation suggests that most respondents have a strong desire to hunt which is against the government policies and represents a potential threat to wildlife conservation inside the Warm Spring (Castilho *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, 85.3% of the respondents considered government policy on prohibition of farming within the Warm Spring as unfavorable while 14.7% agreed. On fuelwood gathering within the protected area, 91.3% of the respondents did not agree with government policy which was favorable to 8.7% of the respondents. The policy of fishing activity within the protected area is not favorable to 86.7% of the respondents while 13.3% agreed. Furthermore, the anti-grazing policy of the government with the protected area is unfavorable to large percentage (91.4%) of the respondents while 8.8% of the respondents considered it favorable. Furthermore, 58.7% of the respondents did not find the policy on strictly protecting the protected area from

**Table 4:** The perceptions of the respondents to ecotourism development of Ikogosi Warm Spring

Title	SA	A	D	SD
The existence of ecotourism site has prevented people access source of livelihood	20 (13.4)	41 (27.3)	39 (26.0)	50 (33.3)
The ecotourism site has deprived community the assess to their natural resources	35 (23.3)	70 (46.7)	34 (22.7)	11 (7.3)
Tourism is good because it brings about developmental changes to the benefit of residents	23 (15.3)	38 (25.3)	44 (29.3)	45 (30.1)
The existence of the Warm Spring has provided job opportunities for indigenes	60 (40.0)	33 (22.0)	25 (16.7)	32 (21.3)
The ecotourism site has brought social amenities to the town, thereby increases the living standards of people	72 (48.0)	32 (21.3)	22 (14.7)	24 (16.0)
The protection of the environment is good otherwise it would have been destroyed	42 (28.0)	41 (27.3)	44 (29.4)	23 (15.3)
In your view, ecotourism in Ikogosi has done more done more good than bad?	63 (42.0)	23 (15.3)	27 (18.0)	37 (24.7)
Protection of the natural area for ecotourism will protect plant and animal continuity	86 (57.3)	50 (33.3)	10 (6.7)	4 (2.7)

SA: Strongly agreed, A: Agreed, D: Disagreed, SD: Strongly disagreed. Field survey, 2014

**Table 5:** Respondents' perception of policies against antiecotourism activities within Ikogosi Warm Spring

Title	Favorable	Unfavorable
Hunting	12 (8.0)	138 (92.0)
Farming	22 (14.7)	128 (85.3)
Fuelwood gathering	13 (8.7)	137 (91.3)
Fishing	20 (13.3)	130 (86.7)
Grazing	13 (8.7)	137 (91.4)
Therapeutic and curative usefulness of the natural resource	62 (41.3)	88 (58.7)

Field survey, 2014

**Table 6:** Expectation of respondents from the government to encourage community participation

Title	Frequency (%)
Provision of employment to natives	80 (53.3)
Sensitization and training of natives	65 (43.3)
Awareness and involvement	125 (83.3)
Assess to sell their goods inside the tourism	35 (23.3)
Youth empowerment through training	107 (71.3)
Provision of social amenities	55 (36.7)
Scholarship awards to the students	23 (15.3)

Field survey, 2014

community dwellers who visited the Warm Spring for therapeutics and curative usefulness favorable while 41.3% welcomed the idea.

The expectations of respondents from the government to encourage community participation are presented in Table 6. The result shows that 83.3% of all the respondents expected that regular awareness and the involvement in the management of the ecotourism center will guarantee community participation. Similarly, the majority (71.3%) also believed that empowering youths through training would give them a sense of belonging and encourage them to participate in the management of the Warm Spring. Furthermore, 53.3% believes that provision of employment to the youth would boost their morale to protect the Warm Spring. However, 43.3% of respondents expect that sensitization and training of natives would give them a sense of belonging in the protection of the ecotourism center while 36.7% believe that the provision of social amenities would encourage community participation, whereas 23.3% and 15.3% are of the opinion that giving access to sell goods to ecotourists inside the Warm Spring and provision of scholarship awards to students of the community would encourage community participation in the protection of the Warm Spring.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence from the Ikogosi Ekiti community suggests that there some benefits accruing to community members, from the Ikogosi Warm Spring and Resorts no matter how minimal, in all spheres of sustainable development (economic, sociocultural, and environmental). Community members seem to identify more with economic benefits than with sociocultural and environmental gains which are a recognition that economic challenges are higher in the hierarchy of needs. Furthermore, ecotourism benefits from the Ikogosi Warm Spring to Ikogosi Ekiti community residents are unequally distributed, and this has an influence on the perceptions toward ecotourism development and conservation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, it is recommended that government and tourism center management should put in place strategies that could ensure fair and equitable distribution of benefits. This can be achieved by targeting training programs, alternative livelihoods, and microcredit arrangements and by ensuring that tourism development does not follow enclave practices that limit local access to the

ecotourism market. Furthermore, the government should take the lead in tourism development in the community so that significant and sustainable strides can be made.

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