Community participation in ecotourism: Evidence From Tafi Atome, Ghana.

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Abstract

One of the tenets of community-based ecotourism is to ensure maximum local participation in ecotourism development. However, there are evidences to show that local community's participation in ecotourism development can assume many forms. This paper focused on the Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary; a community-based ecotourism project in a rural community in Ghana and sought to identify what form the local community's participation in the management of the project had assumed. Data for this study was obtained from a resident survey conducted in the community between November and December, 2010. The study found out that the local community had a high degree of control over the management of the project. Nevertheless, some groups of people felt excluded from participating in decision making processes concerning the project. It was therefore recommended that the local tourism management board takes into consideration the inclusion of all identifiable sub groupings in the community is to ensure that there are all represented when decision concerning the project are to be made.

Key words: Community participation, community-based ecotourism, forms of community participation, Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary, Ghana.

Introduction

The promotion of participatory approach to tourism development has been increasing over the years as earlier top-down approaches have failed to deliver. This approach calls for the involvement of all stakeholders in the planning, implementation and controlling of developmental programmes (Tosun,

2000). Murphy (1985), one of the earlier proponents of participatory tourism development, argued that since host communities are most affected by tourism's impacts they should participate in tourism development. He further pointed

out that where local aspirations and capacities are not in consonance with tourism planning and development, the potential of the industry can be totally destroyed. Thus, the sustenance of the tourism industry, as a renewable resource industry, to a large extent is dependent on the inculcation of local capacities in planning and management of the industry (Murphy, 1985).

In recent times, this call has being reiterated by academicians and practitioners some of who are of the view that involving local communities in tourism will help control the pace of development, integrate tourism in the economy, increase tourist satisfaction, satisfy locally identified

needs, ensure the sustainability of the industry and empowerment of the local community (Simmons, 1994; Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun & Timothy, 2003). Thus in the long run, local community involvement in tourism development will both be a means to achieving an end and an end in itself.

The arguments put forward in favour of local community participation in tourism development are very laudable and promising. However, Mowforth and Munt (1998) posit that although it is easy for community participation to be promoted, the implementation process is very complex, thus resulting in participation assuming different forms. Tosun (2006) concurred with him and added that indeed community participation does assume several forms and some of these forms do not permit local communities to derive maximum benefits of tourism development. In view of this, this paper seeks to identify the form that the local community's participation has taken in the management of this community-based ecotourism project and also explore issues arising from local participation in the project.

Empirical studies on community participation in tourism continue to grow (e.g., Campbell, 1999; Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun, 1999; Timothy & Tosun, 1999; Dei, 2000; Andriotis, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Jackson & Inbakaran, 2006; Tosun, 2006; Rowat & Engelhardt, 2007; Sharma & Dyer, 2009; Sebele, 2010; Wang, Yang, Chen, Yang, & Li. 2010; Akyeampong, 2011) and this trend is unlikely to cease now. Although much research has been done in this area, it is important to note that the dynamics of local community's participation in tourism vary in space and time and evidences from multiple contexts including the findings of this paper will be very helpful in informing the development of subsequent participatory strategies. This will eventually ensure the effectiveness of local communities' participation in tourism development.

Participation within the context of community-based ecotourism

The concept of community participation has been extensively used yet it cannot boast of having a concise definition. Botes and van Rensburg (2000) describe it as an overused term which is least understood. The vagueness of this concept has also been identified by Tosun (2005) who attributes it to the provision of multiple definitions to suit specific needs and aspirations of the proponents. These multiple definitions have resulted in different forms of participation occurring.

Within the general context of development, the World Bank defines community participation as an 'active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits' (The World Bank, 1987). Hence to them, the objectives of participation dwell on issues of empowerment, capacity building, increasing project effectiveness and efficiency and project cost sharing. Stone (1989, p. 615) also describes community participation as 'designing development in such a way that intended beneficiaries are encouraged to take matters into their own hands, to participate in their own development through mobilizing their own resources, defining their own needs, and making their own decisions about how to meet them'. This goes to emphasize the point that those who development is meant for should be at the fore of these initiatives. This will not only help address the specific needs of these people but also ensure that these initiatives are sustained (Sewell & Coppock, 1977).

World Wide Fund (2001) has observed that through participatory approach to ecotourism development and management, sustainable use and collective responsibility of the natural resources have been fostered and individual initiatives within the community have been embraced. Stronza and Pegas (2008) in their study of ecotourism projects in Bolivia found out that local participation in ecotourism projects has helped local residents gain the skills of working together. They concluded that ecotourism projects which involve local communities

in their decision making and managements have a greater potential to strengthen local institutions for conservation.

The problem with local community participation is that the prerequisites needed are most often nonexistent in local communities due to a myriad of external and internal factors. To Tosun (2000), these factors are often just a reflection of the socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions prevailing in the area. Local communities are challenged with access to information, credit, adequate resources and full representation of all groups of people in the community (Pearce et al, 1996). Goodwin (1996) stated that the lack of requisite business skills of local communities render ecotourism projects commercially unviable. Dieke (2005) agreed with him and added that local communities often have limited access to credit hence cannot effectively participate in ecotourism.

Forms of community participation

Drawing from the challenges associated with the definition of the concept as well as its implementation, one can appreciate why community participation assumes several postures and forms. To illustrate the forms that community participation can assume, Arnstein (1969) developed a ladder of participation. The eight levels of the ladder; manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control have been further categorized into three groups namely; manipulative participation, citizen tokenism and citizen power. The central point in this typology according to Marturano and Gosling (2007) is the degree of power distribution, which they describe as a representation of variations of power and influence that can exist. Manipulative participation does not indicate participation in the true sense of the word. Citizen tokenism indicates some level of participation. The desired form is citizen power which signifies true participation. This is where participants decide on issues that affect them and are

in full control over the implementation of these decisions.

Pretty (1995) also identified six levels of participation. The levels, which ranged from passive participation to self mobilization and connectedness, showed the varying power relationship which could exist between the local community and external bodies or organizations. With specific reference to tourism in developing countries, Tosun (1999) also categorized forms of community participation in tourism into three namely; spontaneous community participation, coercive community participation and induced community participation.

Nance and Ortolano (2007) are of the view that measuring forms of participation by the scope of activities, the number of people involved and the overall level of authority of the residents to initiate and control their participation activities offers a better understanding of the features of community participation. To them, the forms that local communities' participation in tourism takes can change over time. This change is dependent on the levels of local communities' participation in tourism development, which could either be passive or active. They observed that dependent on the nature of the project, local communities' participation can take three main forms; involvement in planning of the project, operations management of project.

Study area

This study was conducted in Tafi Atome, a rural community is located within the Hohoe municipality. The community with a total population of 1,063 (Ghana Statistical Services, 2000) has a sex distribution of males constituting 51 % and females; 49%. It is made up of four communities; Tafi Atome No. 1, Tafi Atome No. 2 (also known as Tomefa), Dekpor and Ando. The major economic activities in the area are farming, palm wine tapping and kente weaving.

The main tourism attraction in the community is the traditionally protected Mona monkeys. These monkeys have

been revered by the local residents as they perceived them to be messengers of the gods. For over 200 years, this reverence served as protection for the monkeys until the introduction of Christianity in the area, which allegedly equated this reverence to idol worship and consequently the hunting of these animals by the new converts of the religion (Zeppel, 2006). As part of a community-based ecotourism project implemented in the community in 1996, these monkeys are now being promoted as tourist attractions. The community also offers visitors an opportunity to observe and partake in their economic activities such as palm wine tapping and also experience night life in the countryside. This they effectively do through home stay arrangements available for visitors. A simple lodging is also available in the community to accommodate tourists who will stay overnight. Visitors to the community are taken on a tour of the forest reserve where the monkeys can be found and in the evenings cultural displays are organized for them.

Methodology

A cross sectional study design, which allows for a phenomenon about a target population to be studied by taking a cross section of it, was adopted for the study (Kumar, 2005). A mixture of probability and non probability sampling techniques were used to select respondents for the study. Tafi Atome No. 1 and Tafi Atome No. 2 (also known as Tomefa) were purposively selected from the four communities on the Tafi Atome land. Tafi Atome No. 1 was selected because it was where the monkey sanctuary was situated. Tafi Atome No. 2 was the largest of the three (3) migrant communities and closest to the project, hence its selection.

Based on the sample size calculated for the resident's survey (317), a multi-staged sampling technique was employed to select individual respondents. The sample size was first divided among the two communities; Tafi Atome No. 1 (133) and Tafi Atome No. 2 (184). In the second stage, samples were proportionally allotted

to both sex groupings in each community (Tafi Atome No. 1: Male = 68, Female = 65; Tafi Atome No. 2: Male = 94, Female = 90) to ensure their representativeness. After this, the systematic sampling technique was used to select individuals from each community to constitute the sample for the survey. The multi-stage sampling technique was used because it has the advantage of presenting all sub groupings that may exist in the study population. Six additional key informants were selected for the in-depth interviews.

The study made use of interview schedules and in-depth interviews guides. The interview schedules contained both close-ended and open-ended questions. The open ended questions allowed respondents to indicate the aspects of the projects they were involved in. The close-ended questions gave them the opportunity to rate their sentiments concerning their participation. Due to the low literacy levels in the community, the research assistants used for the study read out and translated the questions into the local language for the respondents. Their responses where then written down. With the aid of recorders, in-depth interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The interviews gave information on areas available for local residents to participation and challenges that underscore their participation in the project. The consent of all respondents was sought before the instruments were administered. To ensure the anonymity of respondents, names and positions of respondents were not included in the report. A total of three hundred and two (302) survey instruments collected were found useful after editing. This was used for the analysis.

Results

Background information on respondents

Of the respondents surveyed, 41.4% were indigenes while the remaining 58.6% were non indigenes. The male constituted 52.3% of the entire sample while the females were 47.7%. The educational

level of respondents was low as only 20.9% had attained high school certificate which was the highest educational level recorded among the respondents. The entire sample had an age distribution as follows; 35 years and below (53.3%), 35 - 55 years (33.4%) and above 55 years (13.2%) with an average age being 38.2 years. Respondents who were married were 58.9% while those who were unmarried were 41.1%. Farming was the leading occupation of respondents (54.5%) followed up by petty trading (15.5%), cloth weaving (6.9%) and tourism related jobs (0.57%). The unemployed constituted 9.8 % of the total sample. Respondents' average length of stay in the community was 24.1 years. Those who had stayed for less than 6 years were 16.3%, those with stay ranging between 6 to 18 years were 25.4% and 58.3% of respondents had stayed in the area for more than 18 years.

Forms of community participation in the Tafi Atome monkey sanctuary project

Respondents were asked to indicate how they participated in the projects. The results as expressed in Table 1 showed that participation in the project mainly took the form of engagement in communal labour (42.6%), attending community meetings (20.5%), being hospitable to tourists/visitors (18.0%) and provision of goods and services to visitors/tourists (7.6%). Therefore engaging in communal labour was the commonest form of local participation in the project.

Other respondents indicated that their involvement in the project took the form of providing entertainment to tourists/visitors (3.3%), security to tourists/visitors (2.7%), land for the forest reserve (0.7%), tour guide services to tourists (0.6%), working on the management board for the project (0.4%), and protecting/guarding against the hunting of the monkeys (1.8%) as shown in Table 1.

Forms of community participation by respondents' background characteristics

The six (6) topmost forms of participation identified by respondents were further explored across the social groups. The results presented in Table 2 indicated that participation of non indigenes in the project largely took the form of engaging in communal labour (58.9%), being hospitable to tourists/visitors (56.2%), and provision of goods and services (45.1%). On the other hand, participation by indigenes 1 in the project took the form of community meeting attendance (71.0%), provision of security (61.1%) and provision of entertainment (59.1%).

Much variation was not noted among the age groups and the form their participation had taken in the project. However, respondents within the more youthful group (<35years) were more involved in every aspect of the project as compared to all other age groups (Table 2). Similarly, in terms of respondents' educational levels (Table 2), those who attained JHS/MSLC education were more involved in the project as compared to respondents in other educational categories. This was to be expected because most respondents (79.1%) have not progress beyond this educational level as shown in Table 2.

Respondents' sentiments about their participation in the project

The study attempted to explore the issue relating to local resident's participation in the project by exploring respondents' sentiments about their participation in the project. Respondents were asked to rate how they felt about their participation on a scale ranging from voluntary, obligatory to coercive. Voluntary connoted a feeling of freewill or choice, obligatory, a sense of duty and coercion, a feeling of duress. The results showed that on the whole, obligatory feelings rated high (67.9%), followed by voluntary feelings (28.8%) and feelings of coercion (3.3%).

Respondents' sentiments by their background characteristics

The sentiments expressed by respondents about their individual participation in the project were further explored in relation to their background characteristics. The result of the chi square test, which was set at a significance level of 0.05, showed significant association between respondents' native status, sex and length of stay and their sentiments (Table 3).

Significant association was also noted between respondents' native status and their sentiments. A higher sense of obligation was noted among non indigenes (84.7%) as compared to their counterparts, the indigene (44.0%) as shown in Table 3. Again, the voluntary feeling was more pronounced among indigenes (53.6%) than among non indigenes (11.3%). This implies that the non indigenes felt obligated to participate in the project whiles the indigenes voluntarily participated.

With respect to sex of respondents as shown in Table 3, the females (75.7%) felt more obligated to participate in the project as compared to their male counterparts (60.8%). Again, regarding length of stay, respondents, who have stayed in the community for a less than 6 years, felt more obligated (79.6%) to participate in the project (Table 6). On the contrary, those who had stayed for a longer period of time (>18) saw their participation in the project to be more of voluntary.

Discussion

The survey conducted showed that the main form of participation in the project could be broadly categorized into two; involvement in decision making and provision of support services for the project. In exception of attending community meetings and working on the local tourism management board, which were related to decision making, all other forms identified in Table 1 were geared towards maintenance of the sanctuary as well as providing services to tourists. This finding is consistent with the observations made by Nance and Ortolano (2007) that

local communities' participation in projects often takes the form of involvement in decision making and provision of support services. The number of people involved in providing support services (532) far outweighed those involved in decision making related activities (141). This suggests that majority of the local residents were not involved in making decisions for the project but rather were involved in providing support services for the project.

On the whole, the community's participation in this project can be equated to citizen control (Arnstein, 1969) or self-mobilization (Pretty, 1995). This is so because the community appears to be in charge of every aspect of the project and this is the desired situation. Taking a closer look at participation by various groups within the community, a vast difference was noted in respondents' participation in community meetings. Whereas the majority of the indigenes (71.0%) indicated their attendance of community meetings, only 29.0% of the non indigenes attended those community meetings. The results also showed that only indigenes were serving on the project's management board. The non participation of non indigenes in these key areas was explained by an informant that invitations to community meetings on the project were not extended to them. This brings to fore the issue of power which can prohibit participation of groups of people in aspects of the project. The project has a guiding constitution and this constitution also does not make any provision for non indigenes to be part of the project's management board. However in the case of the indigenes, each of the eight clans is made to nominate two people to represent them on the management board. Although the distinctions made between indigenes and non indigenes participation in community affairs predates the commencement of this project, the situation seems to have been further made pronounce by the project. This finding supports Pillai & Keys (2006) assertion that tourism development within a community can reinforce or enhance the subordinate position of ethnic groupings

within the community, a situation which may already be in existence.

The results on resident's sentiments about their participation showed that most residents felt obligated to participate in the project and it was mostly the case of the non indigenes (85.7%). This was to be expected as in most Ghanaian communities; the non indigenes do not have much say in community issues but are expected to abide by community regulations. This finding backs Emerson (1972)'s assertion that differing levels of influence in an exchange relation can result in imbalances where some people may be compelled to contribute their resources regardless of whether they are benefiting or not.

Conclusion

The study focused on identifying the forms that local community participation had taken in the Tafi Atome monkey sanctuary project as well as exploring issues arising out of local participation in the project. Based on the findings, the following conclusions are made. The local community has a high degree of control over the management and development of the Tafi Atome monkey sanctuary project. It is evident from the study that the project's management board is entirely constituted by the local residents. Local residents are involved in providing security, home stay services, meals, local artefacts, entertainment, and tour guide services to tourists as well as labour for the maintenance of the monkey sanctuary. In addition, community meetings were intermittently held for key decision on the project to be taken by community members.

It is also noticeable that the project is yet to achieve a broad representation of all identifiable sub-groups in the community in its management. Evidence from the study suggests that issues of power within the Tafi Atome community had resulted in the exclusion of non indigenes from participating in the management of the project. It revealed that opportunities were not created for non indigenes to attend community meetings relating to the project. In addition, the constitution guiding the project did not provide for their representation on the tourism management board. This reemphasizes the calls made by Liu (1994) and Hoggett (1997) for closer looks to be taken at the heterogeneity of local communities, the issues of power and its effect on the decision making processes in tourism development.

Overtime, developers have failed to recognize the dynamics of local communities in tourism development. Therefore organizations involved in adopting the community approach to tourism development must be mindful of the heterogeneous nature of local communities. Attention should be paid to all identifiable sub-groupings within the community and where possible their views and needs inculcated into the planning and management of community-based ecotourism projects. This will help avoid issues of exclusion of 'powerless' groups from participating and benefiting from these projects.

Sentiments of exclusion from the project expressed by non indigenes have implications for the sustainability of the project. Therefore, the local tourism management board must take into consideration the role of non indigenes in the project. Other than that, their continual exclusion could in the long run become a source of conflict and that could affect the sustainability of the project. To avoid this, changes should be done to the project's constitution that would allow non indigenes to have a representation on the tourism management board and they should also be invited for all community meetings.

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Table 1. Forms of community participation in the TAMS project

Forms	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Engages in communal labour	287	42.6
Attending community meetings	138	20.5
Being hospitable to tourists/visitors	121	18.0
Provision of goods and services	51	7.6
Provision of entertainment	22	3.3
Provision of security	18	2.7
Provision of home stay services	12	1.8
Protecting/guarding against hunting of monkeys	12	1.8
Provision of land for the project	5	0.7
Provision of tour guide services	4	0.6
Member of management board	3	0.4
Total	673*	100

*Frequency exceeds 302 because of multiple responses

Table 2. Forms of community participation by respondents' background characteristics

Background characteristics	Forms of participation					
	Communal labour	Community meeting	Hospitality	Goods /services	Entertainme nt	Security
N	287	138	121	51	22	18
Percentages (%)	%	%	%	%	%	%
Place of residence						
Indigenes	41.1	71.0	43.8	54.9	59.1	61.1
Non indigenes	58.9	29.0	56.2	45.1	40.9	38.9
Subtotal (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sex						
Male	50.5	51.4	47.1	54.9	81.8	50.0
Female	49.5	48.6	52.9	45.1	18.2	50.0
Subtotal (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Age						
<35	53.7	58.0	56.2	64.7	63.6	50.0
35-55	33.4	29.0	27.3	19.6	27.3	33.3
<55	12.9	13.0	16.5	15.7	9.1	16.7
Subtotal (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Educational level						
No formal education	15.7	11.6	15.7	11.8	4.5	11.1
Primary	25.1	19.6	23.1	15.7	13.6	11.1
Junior High School	39.4	44.2	38.8	49.0	31.8	61.1
Senior/Vocational School	19.2	21.7	20.7	23.5	45.5	16.7
Tertiary	0.7	2.9	1.7	0	4.5	0
Subtotal (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 3. Respondents' sentiment by their background characteristics

Background characteristics	Sentiments				x^2 (P-Value)
	N	Voluntary (%)	Obligatory (%)	Coercive (%)	
Place of residence					
Native Status					
Indigene	125	53.6	44.0	2.4	0.000
Non indigene	177	11.3	84.7	4.0	
Sex					
Male	158	33.5	60.8	5.7	0.005
Female	144	23.6	75.7	0.7	
Age					
<35	161	32.4	64.6	31.0	0.244
35-55	101	21.8	73.2	5.0	
>55	40	32.5	67.5	0.0	
Marital status					
Unmarried	55	33.9	62.1	4.0	0.198
Married	72	25.3	71.9	2.8	
Length of stay (years)					
<6	8	18.4	79.6	2.0	0.001
6-18	14	16.9	75.3	7.8	
>18	105	36.9	61.4	1.7	