

ECOPRENEURSHIP AND GREEN PRACTICES AS KEY FACTORS OF ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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This paper examines ecopreneurship and green practices as key factors of ecotourism development in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria. It investigates the factors characterizing ecopreneurship and green practices in tourism industry in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria as well as the role of ecopreneurship and green practices in fostering ecotourism in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria. Sustainability theory was adopted as theoretical framework for the study. The study is descriptive with the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Both questionnaire and in-depth interview were used to elicit information from the respondents. A total of 120 respondents comprising of visitors and staff of tourist attraction centres in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria who were selected through accidental sampling. Findings of the study revealed that at differential scales ecopreneurship and green practices promote tourism activities, businesses and economy of the region positively. Also, it was discovered that the tourist experiences were satisfying and worthwhile with the introduction of green products and eco-friendly means of transportation in the centres. Based on this outcomes, the study affirmed that both government and nongovernmental organisations should invest in ecopreneurship and green practices as key factors of ecotourism development.

Keywords: Development, Ecopreneurship, Ecotourism, Green Practices, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is imbued with numerous socio-economic potentials that can serve as key drivers of sustainable development if properly and efficiently harnessed. There are reasons to show that this assertion is not misplaced. The World Travel and Tour Council (WTTC) report shows that tourism contributed about USD7, 170.3bn (9.8%) to overall global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015, and is also projected that the share of tourism in global GDP will further increase to USD10, 986.5bn (10.8%) by 2026 (WTTC, 2016). Considering this statistical figure, it is not an understatement to say that tourism industry is imbued with huge socio-economic potentials and drivers of sustainable development. Parts of the social and economic potentials of tourism as noted by development experts are innovation, recreation, exposure and education as well as employment opportunities for both semi-skilled and skilled workers (including women) (Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012; Ezebilo, Mattson and Afolami, 2010). In a report, published by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2008 about 100,000 jobs are being created in communities where tourism sites and attractions are located (WTO, 2008).

In Africa, tourism activities had been one of the key drivers of socio-economic development. For instance, studies revealed that countries like Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius and Nigeria respectively earn greater part of their national revenue from tourism (Danglash 2010; Imikan and Ekpo 2012). In the case of Nigeria, tourism industry contributed N1.7 billion (\$ 5.5 million) — about 4.8 percent — to national income in the third

quarter of 2016 (Nigeria Hospitality Report, 2016; Jumia Travel, 2017). Nevertheless, recent studies have proved that more income or revenue can still be attained from tourism if ecopreneurship initiatives and green practices are incorporated and well-practiced. This is essential based on the growing demand for eco-friendly products and services in today's green economy (Chopra, 2014; OED, 2011; Hartmann & Ibanez, 2006). Ecopreneurship and green practices involve life-styles, initiatives, products and services that help to reduce the negative impact of human activities on environment in order to guarantee continuous sustenance of environmental resources (land, air, water and natural) from one generation to another. It also involves the use of eco-innovation to reduce, reuse and recycle waste materials into usable products in order to have more positive influence on the environment and its inhabitants (Zamfir & Corbos, 2015; Kiber, 2013; UNCTAD, 2013). Unfortunately, scholars have reported that ecopreneurship and green practices are perhaps still alien to many developing countries and the consequence of this state of affairs is increase rate of unsustainable tourism activities (uncontrolled encroachment and alteration of natural landscape, hunting, bushing burning, cutting down trees for domestic purpose as well as dumping of waste on sites) with concomitant impact on the environment and economic sustainability (Kiber, 2013; Adedoyin, Kehinde and Sodunke, 2011). As a matter of fact, evidences abound that there is increasing loss of environmental quality, cultural assets, and historical sites in many developing countries due to unsustainable tourism activities (Zamfir & Corbos, 2015; Joshi, 2009; Muhanna, 2006). For example, some authors such as Bhattacharya, Chowdhury & Sarkar, (2011) and Adedoyin, Kehinde and Sodunke, (2011) noted that some historic sites have been temporarily abandoned and poorly maintained which discourage local and international tourists from visiting them. Similarly, Zamfir & Corbos, (2015); Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, (2012) observed that there are many cultural sites and amusement parks that lack maintenance culture or eco-friendly innovations. Flowing from this mainstream, it is importance to examine ecopreneurship and green practices as key factors of ecotourism development in Ogun State, Nigeria. Specific objectives are to:

1. investigate the factors characterizing ecopreneurship and green practices in tourism industry in Ogun State
2. Examine the role of ecopreneurship and green practices in fostering ecotourism industry in Ogun State

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Ecopreneurship

Ecopreneurship is an innovative concept in business research (Schaper, 2002). It introduces eco-friendly products and procedures in rendering services to consumers. Ecopreneurship began to gain scholarly attention somewhere around 1990s when some researchers used the terms «green entrepreneur», «environmental entrepreneur» and «eco-entrepreneur» to define entrepreneurs who are conscious of the environment in

their business dealings or activities (Chopra, 2014; OED, 2011; Hartmann & Ibanez, 2006; Schaper, 2002). It is a strategic way of promoting sustainable environment and economic growth via business initiatives that focus on reducing environmental threats for the purpose of creating new job opportunities and solutions in a liveable world (UNEP, 2012). In practical terms, Volery (2002) described ecopreneurship as a process of fulfilling environmental obligation in business operations. That is to say, ecopreneurship encompasses actions which entrepreneurs who based their business philosophy on the standards of environmental sustainability practiced (Kirkwood and Walton, 2010). Another fact that can be deduced from Volery's description is that ecopreneurs do not engage in eco-friendly businesses only for profit making but also due to their strong entrepreneurial attitude for green values-social and environmental values (Gibbs, 2009). Hence, it can be said that ecopreneurship is an attempt to operate businesses that fulfill both social and environmental requirements (Chopra, 2014) in order to reduce environmental hitches and improve people's wellbeing. This may be that all the aspects or components of the business are structured in such a way that will have little or no negative impact on the environment; but just as plausibly, it might be that some aspects of the business are green, whilst other are still «brown» (Gibbs, 2009; OECD, 2011; Chopra, 2014). In addition, ecopreneurship encompasses initiatives and technical knowledge of how to start, nurture and sustain eco-friendly businesses such as recycling, urban mining, renewable energy generation, wildlife protection, mobile farming and tree planting, green artworks and green products both at community, national or global levels. Kainrath (2009) after studying several case studies of ecopreneurship reported that there are three elements promoting ecopreneurship initiatives. These include:

1. Eco-innovation: This relates to providing innovative solutions to solve environmental problems.
2. Eco-commitment: This relates to creating and implementing policies that will help create a commitment towards focusing on green activities.
3. Eco-opportunity: This relates to identifying the opportunities for innovation that will help to solve environmental problems as well as to achieve sustainability in business operations.

By and large an examination of literature reviewed that eco-innovation is the core of ecopreneurship (Klimova & Zitek, 2011; McEwen, 2013). This fact can be buttressed with the view of Singh and Panackal (2014) who posited that if business individuals want to be successful in current green economy, they need not to rely on lowering cost of commodities as their competitive advantage, but rather focus on creation of new and innovative environmental technologies, services and processes which are sources of creating value as well as competitive advantage.

Concept of Green Practices

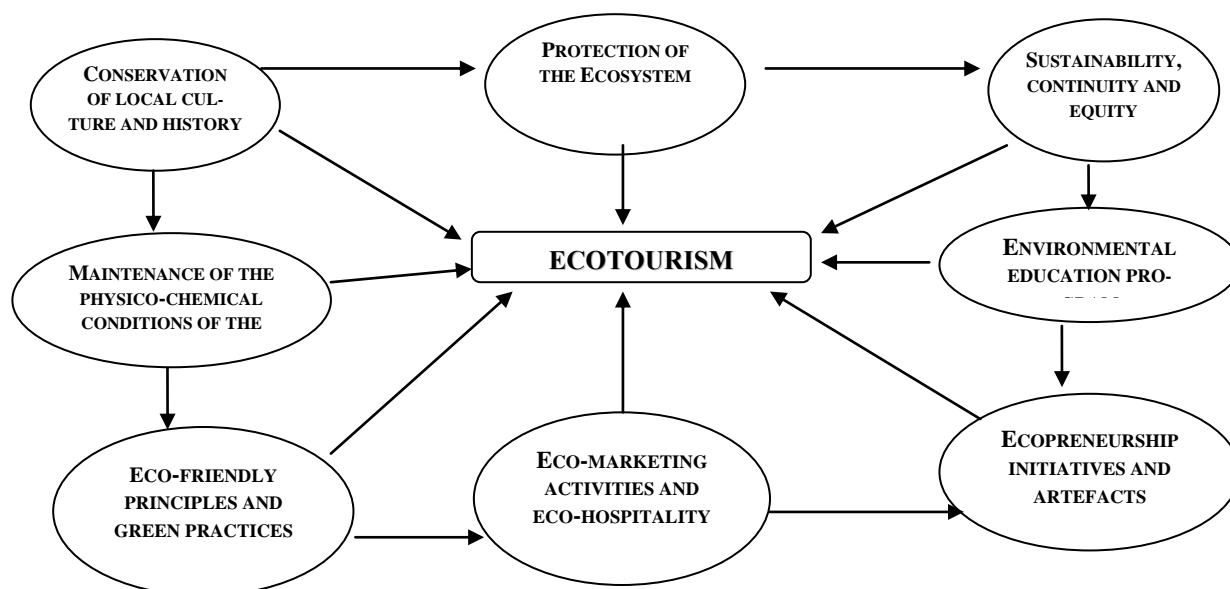
Green Practices (GPs) can be defined as processes involving the development of knowledge and practices that aim to promote environmentally friendly and ecologically

responsible decisions and lifestyles among individuals, which can also help to protect the environment and sustain its natural resources for current and future generations to meet and develop (OED, 2011; Schaltegger, 2005). Green practices are therefore include conscious efforts put together by an individual or a community in order to live life in a way that is friendly to the natural environmental settings (Hamdouch & Depret, 2012). In this regard, green practices are strategic steps (whether big or small) taken to lessen the magnitude of harm caused to the environment in the course of pursuing human and social development. Within the context of sustainable environment, green practices encompasses five strategic steps which include efforts to reduce pollution, conservation and protection of environmental resources, energy, decent consumption pattern and effective waste management mechanism (Hamdouch & Depret, 2012; Chung & Wee, 2008). By green practices, people are expected to defect from any act or behaviour that can further increase the environmental degradation, or affect ecological balance negatively. That is to say, green practices advocate for a shift from unsustainable life-styles or utilization of non-green products that contain harmful chemicals or wastes that have the capacity to contaminate soil, water or air quality. It also attempts to discourage the habit of invading green vegetation or cutting down trees to produce more and more paper for the growing number of offices, domestic or religious purposes. In other words, green practices entail act or behaviour of people exhibited in order to meet the goal of protecting the environment in a sustainable way (Dean & McMullen, 2007; York & Venkataraman, 2010).

Concept of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is an activity that involves people's movement or travelling (i.e. road, rail, sea or air) from one location to another for leisure, education, research, religious or business purposes (Nwagba, 2014; Kiber, 2013; Awodele and Ayeni 2011). It is a form of tourism that promote desirable social and economic development in terms of employment creation, income generation, education, acculturation, leisure and foreign exchange earnings that enhance the quality of life and national development (Nwagba, 2014). According to Ecotourism Society, ecotourism is a purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of that environment; and not to alter the quality of the ecosystem; as well as to create economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people (Ecotourism Society, 1991). Going by the definition above, ecotourism involves people travelling to a location based on the experience of natural surroundings; desire to learn about nature, its landscape as well as cultural artifacts of the local communities (Kiber, 2013). Furthermore, it has been observed that there are three main assumptions regarding ecotourism development in recent times. These assumptions are inherent in the fact that ecotourism (1) offers a new source of income for development or maintenance of natural or culturally important sites; (2) serves as a catalyst for local economic development; and (3) provides needed foreign exchange and national level benefits (Patterson, 2002; Rahman, 2010; Kiber, 2013). Aside these assumptions, it is obvious that ecotourism aim at promoting environmental supported tourist initi-

atives and practices in which guests or tourists explore the host communities sustainably. According to Weaver and Lawton (2007), ecotourism has some characteristics. These characteristics are diagrammatically presented with some modifications below.



Source: Weaver and Lawton (2007). Characteristics of Ecotourism.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there are basically four types of ecotourists which include:

1. **Hard Core:** This group is made up of members of tours or groups designed specifically for education and/or involvement in environmental projects, such as wildlife monitoring (Lindberg, 1991).
2. **Dedicated:** These are travelers who undertake tours to see protected areas and understand local natural and cultural history (Lindberg, 1991).
3. **Mainstream:** Mainstream tourists are primarily interested in going on unusual trips, such as to the Amazon or for gorilla viewing in Rwanda; it may also be to see elephants, lions, giraffes or the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue (Lindberg, 1991).
4. **Casual:** Casual ecotourism includes natural and cultural travel as an incidental component of a broader trip (Lindberg, 1991).

Ecotourism Development in Nigeria: A glimpse

Ecotourism development in Nigeria started as a result of global awareness of environmental conservation and judiciously utilization of tourism assets for socio-cultural and economic development (Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012). Literature has it that ecotourism development in Nigeria is growing as some aspects of ecotourism is still under exploration (Daily Trust, 2016). However, evidence on the date or year that ecotourism started in Nigeria is very challenging however; evidence revealed that both gov-

ernment and private investors embraced the ideology of ecotourism as a sustainable form of tourism in Nigeria (Appeal, 2008; Mbaiwa, 2002). Although, some studies identified challenges such as lack of facilities, finance, marketing and planning to meet international criteria threaten ecotourism development in Nigeria (Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012). According to literature review, these challenges hindered some of the potentials to attract more tourists and to enable tourism activities to contribute meaningfully to local communities and the nation at large. This invariable has implication on the development tourism sector since the income from ecotourism activities can be reinvested in environmental conservation and life support systems.

In Nigeria, ecotourism development includes availability of fine landscapes, natural ecosystems, wildlife, indigenous tradition and culture (Ayeni, 2012; Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012). To buttress this assertion, studies have established that there are many National parks (such as Chad Basin, Cross River, Gashaka-Gumti, Kamuku, Kainji Lake, Millennium Park, Okomu and Old Oyo) developed for ecotourism activities across Nigeria (Ayeni, 2012; Osunsina, Ogunjimi, Meduna and Oyeleke, 2008; Appeal, 2008; Mbaiwa, 2002). Each of these National parks has ecotourism department in charge of executing ecotourism services. For example, research report established that Kanji Lake National park has ecotourism department that renders services such as wilderness experience, park viewing, lake cruising/culture site view, game fishing and leisure recreation to tourists or guests (Ajibade, Ayodele and Adetotor, 2013). Furthermore, over eight ecotourism sites and attractions including Amurun Bird Sanctuary, Idanre Hills, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Pai River Game Reserve and Yankari Game Reserve were also loaded with diverse ecotourism services (Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012; Appeal, 2008).

The Role of Ecotourism in Nigeria's Sustainable Tourism

Within the context of sustainable tourism in Nigeria, ecotourism has contributed greatly to the development and management of various National parks sustainably with special focus on how best to reduce anthropogenic waste linked with tourism activities (Ajibade, Ayodele and Adetotor, 2013; Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012). Due to the development of ecotourism, bulks of ecotourism centres have adopted strategies and regulations to ensure that ecotourism activities are carried out in sustainable manner (Osunsina, Ogunjimi, Meduna and Oyeleke, 2008). Ecotourism development has also instigates government and local communities participation in restructuring tourism sector through licensing, cataloguing, rebranding as well as enforcement of ecotourism facilities and services for tourists satisfaction and environmental sustainability (Ezebilo, Mattson and Afolami, 2010). Ecotourism development has encouraged local and global collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation (FMCTNO) New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Africa Travel Association (ATA) and the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) in recent times (Nigeria National Park Service, 2017). Currently, there is on-going partner-

ship between Nigerian Conservation Foundation/Worldwide Fund for Nature United Kingdom (NCF/WWF-UK) and Gashaka Primate Project (GPP) to stimulate ecotourism development through publications of tourist information, multi-media involvement and contacts with various agencies in a bid to realize the socio-economic potentials of ecotourism in Nigeria's sustainable development (Nigeria National Park Service, 2017). Moreover, ecotourism creates new employment opportunities, jobs and additional source of income to the residence of host communities in Nigeria (Ajibade, Ayodele and Adetotor, 2013; Ofem, Lifu, Ogar, Eja and Ajadi, 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilized sustainability theory as the theoretical guide to examine the interaction between ecopreneurship, green practices and ecotourism development in Ogun State, Nigeria. Theory of sustainability emanated from the efforts to link the issues of economic development and environmental stability together in a sustainable manner. Sustainability theory (ST) therefore attempts to arrange and integrate social responses to environmental and cultural problems (Jekinns, 2015). In this regards, ST synthesizes polemic ideas about balancing the interaction between socio-economic factors and environmental resources in the context of attaining desirable development for present generation without denying future generations their opportunities to develop (Kate, Parris and Leiserowitz 2005; Morelli, 2011; Cerin, 2006; Stoddart, 2011). It also emphasises the idea of long-term stability of the economy and environment (Lazar & Lazar, 2008) which is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision making process (Emas, 2015). Following the proposition of sustainability theory, tourism as a socio-economic activity should be organized based on the principles of sustainable development (Popescu & Zamfir, 2011). That is, it should be done in a way that promotes positive improvement in the three distinct sustainability dimensions: environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Kozic & Mikulic, 2015). As such, tourism activities which are carried out in contrast to sustainability principles will result in disorder or dysfunction in environmental, socio-cultural and economic systems (Kiper, ozdemir and Saglam, 2011). It is thus imperative to assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism activities and ensure that they conform to sustainability standards and principles.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The adoption of this type of survey design rest on the fact that the researcher is interested in reporting the perception and experience of sample respondents on the subject matter without any attempt to manipulate or control the situation.

Study Area: A Brief Description of Ijebu Zone of Ogun State, Nigeria

The Ijebu area of Ogun state, Nigeria is among the four divisions of Ogun state. It is situated amid latitude 6°40' and 7°0'N and longitude 3°46' and 4°15'E (Osunsina, Ogunjimi, Meduna and Oyeleke, 2008). It also exists within the humid zone of West Africa and is located in the low lying forest area with an average annual rainfall of between 1250 and 1500mm (Osunsina, Ogunjimi, Meduna and Oyeleke, 2008). The rainy season is bimodal with intense rain in June and October while the dry season begins from the middle of November to the middle of March (Osunsina, Ogunjimi, Meduna and Oyeleke, 2008). Furthermore, the average temperature range of Ijebu Area of Ogun State, Nigeria is between 27°C and 32°C, while the relative humidity is between 80 - 90% (Osunsina, Ogunjimi, Meduna and Oyeleke, 2008).

Population

The population include staff and guests of selected tourism centres (namely Orisagamu stream, Iwasi ecotourism village, Otunba suna cultural centre, Yemoji tourist centre) in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Sampling Procedure

Accidental sampling method was used in selecting respondents. The rationale for using accidental sampling is that it gives the researcher flexibility in selecting participants for the study.

Sample Size

Sample size consists of 120 respondents (guests and staff) of some tourist centres in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection method is chiefly divided into two:

1. Questionnaire: this consists of a set of questions designed to gather information/data for analysis. It contained both open-ended and close ended questions to elicit the required information on the subject matter. The participants are not expected to supply their name, hence, no provision of space for names. This is done in order to avoid any embarrassment that might lead to bias in their response and also to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. The bio-data collected on the first part of the questionnaire were used for classification. This requires such information as sex, age, marital status, occupation etc. these highlighted the socio-economic background of the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire relates to the subject matter of the research work. The questions asked focused on the perception and experience of the respondents on ecopreneurship and green practices adopted in the tourist centres under study.
2. In-depth Guide: this contains unstructured questions relating to research at hand with the aim to capture the perception and experience of the participants in depth and in order to generate rich responses from interviewees

that will be used for interpretive analysis by researcher. The interviewer interacts with the interviewees by asking for more details, examples, and clarifications. The interviewer does not guide the interviewees to any type of response on particular variables. Rather, the interview often resembles a conversation between friends, and the questions asked of the interviewee are phrased to fit with the flow of the interview. In the present study, the researchers adopted the most useful method for probing people's perception on green practices and ecopreneurship initiatives.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics method (i.e. simple percentage and frequency count) were used to analyze the data collected through questionnaire administration, while content analysis was used to present the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interview.

Ethical Consideration

Before administering the research instruments on the respondents, the research guarantees all the participants' of complete anonymity and confidentiality. Confidentiality is particularly important in this study, as socio-cultural norms could have concern about disclosing sensitive information to researchers. Participants were also provided with information on the purpose of the study that was to contribute to body of knowledge. Each participant was at the liberty to discontinue participation at any point during the exercise from perceived confidentiality regarding questions believed to impinge on their privacy. The purpose of the informed consent is to secure participants willingness to take part in the study and the risks and benefits of their participation. Translators were present at each interview to ensure that all questions were clear to the interviewee; because some of the participants were not too familiar with English and the interviews commenced accordingly. After the introduction of the study objectives, the researchers seek the permission to record the interview, which was granted in each case.

DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS

This section presents the information gathered from the respondents in accordance to the research objectives. The socio-demographic variables of respondents were contained in table 2. The result shows that female respondents were 71.7% while male respondents were 28.3%. With these percentages, female respondents outnumbered the male by 43.4%. The reason for this outcome probably should be that most females like adventures and tourist exposures. Also, Nigeria being a patriarchal society promotes the culture of males taking responsibility of the cost of recreation or pleasure when it involves both sexes. As such, there is tendency to see more females than males in tourist centres in Nigeria. A total of 34.2% were single, while 30.8% were married. A total of 56.6% of the respondents did not acquire higher education. Less than half of the respondents had tertiary educational qualifications, such as national diploma or a bache-

lor's degree. It can therefore be affirmed that many of the respondents identified with a relatively low level of formal education.

The majority of the respondents (48.3%) identified with Christianity followed by 32.5% who claimed to be Muslims while 15.8% were traditional worshipers. In a way, this result depicts that majority of the people who visit tourist centres in Ijebu zone of Ogun State, Nigeria are Christians.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Female	86	71.7
Male	34	28.3
Total	120	100.0
<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Single	41	34.2
Married	37	30.8
Divorced/Separated	24	20.0
Widowed	18	15.0
Total	120	100.0
<i>Education</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
No formal education	06	5.0
Primary education	13	10.8
Secondary education	49	40.8
Tertiary education	52	43.4
Total	120	100.0
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Traditional	19	15.8
Islam	39	32.5
Orthodox Christianity	27	22.5
Pentecostal Christianity	31	25.8
Other	04	3.4
Total	120	100.0
<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
18-22yrs	17	14.2
23-28yrs	33	27.5
29-33yrs	38	31.6
34-38yrs	21	17.5
39-43yrs	08	6.7
44yrs and above	03	2.5
Total	120	100.0

Occupation	Frequency	%
Farming and Fishing	17	14.2
Artisan	28	23.3
Trading	16	13.3
Civil Servant	27	22.5
Private business	32	26.6
Total	120	100.0
Monthly Income (NGN)	Frequency	%
10,000-50,000	09	7.5
51,000-100,000	17	14.2
101,000-150,000	28	23.3
151,000-200,000	25	20.8
201,000 and above	41	34.2
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Furthermore, the result revealed that all the respondents were adults. Specifically, bulk of the respondents (31.6%) were within the age bracket 29-33years, followed by age bracket 23-28years with 27.5% and the least of the respondents were within age bracket 44years and above with 2.5%. The inference that can be drawn here is that majority of the guests at the tourism centres were still in their mid-career stage. This finding probably may be due to increase culture of recreation and pleasure among economically active population in present-day Nigeria. The occupational distribution of respondents shows that large proportion engage in private businesses. This may be due the fact that people who engage in private businesses are flexible with time for leisure than other people who are civil servant, traders, farmers and artisans. Regarding the monthly income of the respondents, those with highest income between NGN 201,000 and above constituted the big majority. This may be as a result of the volume of resources at their disposal to engage in leisure and recreational activities.

Factors Signifying Ecopreneurship and Green Practices in Ecotourism in Ogun State Nigeria

Given the information in Table 3, respondents indicated their knowledge and experience about ecopreneurship and green practices associated with ecotourism such as; green cleaning and waste management (10.8%), procurement of eco-friendly materials (8.3%), green environment and renewable energy (22.5%), green education and resource conservation (17.5), green safety signs and symbols (19.2%), green products and handi-craft items (12.5%), and eco-transportation (9.2%). All the factors aforementioned by the respondents signified the adoption of ecopreneurship and green practices in the context of promoting sustainable tourism in Nigeria.

Table 2. Factors Signifying Ecopreneurship and Green Practices in Ecotourism in Ogun State

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Green cleaning and waste management	13	10.8
2	Procurement of reusable materials	10	8.3
3	Green environment and renewable energy	27	22.5
4	Green education and resource conservation	21	17.5
5	Green safety signs and symbols	23	19.2
6	Green products and handicraft items	15	12.5
7	Eco-transportation	11	9.2
	Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

To buttress the responses above, an interviewee affirmed that:

Ecopreneurship and green practices are modern day business ideas and initiatives to produce eco-compatible products and services with the use of waste materials. It also involves manufacturing of products with natural ingredients in an environmental friendly manner (IDI/Guest/Orisagamu stream/Sagamu/2016).

Another interviewee revealed that:

Ecopreneurship and green practices started as a response to global climate change and over utilization of environmental resources for economic growth which results in serious environmental challenges facing many countries today. Ecopreneurship and green practices are ways adopted by environmentally minded people, business organizations and governments in their efforts to Go-Green. (IDI/Guest/Otunba suna cultural centre/Imodi/2016)

Interestingly, an interviewee situates ecopreneurship and green practices within the context of sustainable tourism by asserting that:

Ecopreneurship and green practices are globally acceptable eco-culture that should be incorporated into every aspect of human endeavour including tourism. In the field of tourism, ecopreneurship and green practices include avoidance of the use products package such as cans, cellophane or non-recyclable materials on the sites; proactive system of waste collection, separation and management; placement of green safety signs and symbols to direct and communicate with guests; green environmental education; conveying tourists with eco-friendly means of transportation; marketing of green artefacts and handicrafts made with ingredients that can easily be decomposed

without causing harm to the natural environment. (IDI/Guest/Iwasi ecotourism village /Iwasi/2016)

From the responses above, it can be inferred that the respondents have adequate knowledge and experience of ecopreneurship and green practices. It is also evident in their reactions that ecopreneurship and green practices are sustainable ways of promoting tourism activities without hampering the socio-cultural and environmental condition of local communities. It is presupposes that the respondents are environmental conscious tourists who are interested in eco-friendly services and products. This posture is a reflection of the level of awareness of environmental problems arising from economic activities of the past centuries. Thus, there is need to adopt eco-supported initiatives, methods and practices so as to meet the demand of increasing environmental conscious population in the context of attaining sustainable development. In this regard, all the factors reported in table 3 should be incorporated into tourism industry in order to enable tourism activities to have positive effects on the lives and businesses of individuals as adduced by various scholars and confirmed by the respondents used in this study.

The Role of Ecopreneurship and Green Practices in Ecotourism in Ogun State, Nigeria

The perception of the respondents on the role of ecopreneurship and green practices in promoting ecotourism in modern day societies were presented in this session. Responses gathered from the respondents are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. Perceived Roles of Ecopreneurship and Green Practices in Ecotourism in Ogun State, Nigeria

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Ecopreneurship and green practices increases the quality of the environment and tourism experience	36	30.0
2	The continuity of tourism activities can be guaranteed through ecopreneurship and green practices	17	14.2
3	Ecopreneurship and green practices serve as tool to balance the interaction between economy, social and environment	22	18.3
4	Ecopreneurship and green practices encourage new business initiatives and opportunities for local communities and guests	32	26.7
5	Ecopreneurship and green practices are viable source of revenue and economic development in today's green economy	13	10.8
	Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Inference on table 4 shows that ecopreneurship and green practices have prospects and benefits for socio-economic development in many ways which include; enhancing environmental quality and tourism experience (30.0%), continuity of tourism activities (14.2%), balancing the interaction between economy, social and environment (18.3%), creation of new business ideas and opportunities (26.7%), and source of revenue and economic development (10.8%). Investigating the roles of ecopreneurship and green practices further, an interviewee has this to say:

Ecopreneurship and green practices are crucial aspects of tourism development current global system. This is because they represent modern and universally acceptable ways of fulfilling the social, economy and environmental responsibility associated with tourism activities. They help to develop effective eco-tourism plans, diversify economic and ecologic activities through organized eco-tourism practices, enhancing the life quality of the locals with the economic gains provided by eco-tourism. Effort to increase the participation of habitat conservation, cultural and historical landscape values, environmental conscious and passing them onto the next generation can best be achieved through ecopreneurship and green practices. (IDI/Staff/Iwasi ecotourism village /Iwasi/2016)

More so, another respondent succinctly affirmed that:

Ecopreneurship and green practices include adoption and infusion of green innovation in natural resource conservation and the environment for benefit local communities, socio- economics prospects attached with tourism. Thus, it is very imperative for governments and private investors to engage in promoting ecopreneurship and green practices especially in tourism industry. (IDI/Staff/Yemoje tourist centre /Imagbo/2016)

Arising from the responses above, ecopreneurship and green practices are verifiable ways in which sustainable tourism goals can be met. As emphasized in the statement made by the respondents that ecopreneurship and green practices could be the most reliable strategy to guarantee unhampered environmental quality and valuable tourism experience for visitors as well as improve livelihood for members of host communities through cultural identity, poverty reduction and environmentally acceptable business opportunities. Therefore, the need to balance tourism activities with environmental protection and equitable socio-economic distribution of benefits from tourism will be fulfilled if ecopreneurship and green practices are promoted in tourism industry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines ecopreneurship and green practices as key factors of ecotourism development in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents affirmed that ecopreneurship and green practices significantly promote tourism activities and tourist's experiences in the study area. In addition, the study finds a balance between economic, social and environmental benefits of ecotourism activities. On how ecopreneurship and green practices contribute to ecotourism development, the results showed that ecopreneurship and green practices are ways to comply with international environmental policies in carrying out economic activities sustainably. In this regard, ecopreneurship and green practices include activities such as green cleaning and waste management, procurement of eco-friendly materials, green environment and renewable energy, green education and resource conservation, green safety signs and symbols, green products, food and handicraft items, and eco-transportation as evidenced in the study. The inclusion of green practices and ecopreneurship initiatives in ecotourism development in Ogun State, Nigeria are done in two ways; first is the development of eco-supported products based on the values, skills and traditional knowledge of the local communities. Second is the projection of environmental acceptable cultural traditions in tandem with the notion of careful utilization of environment and its resources for tourism activities.

Furthermore, the study revealed that in promoting ecotourism in local communities, ecopreneurship and green practices are viable tools because they enhance environmental quality and tourism experience, continuity of tourism activities, balancing the interaction between economy, social and environment, creation of new business ideas and opportunities, and source of revenue and economic development. However, it should be noted that ecopreneurship and green practices can only be effective when the three basic elements eco-innovation, eco-commitment and eco-opportunity are well satisfied. This suffices to say that for ecopreneurship and green practices to enhance ecotourism in any society there is need for local communities to engage in innovations and practices committed to promote environmental and sustainability. With this reality, the study recommends that ecopreneurship and green practices should be incorporated into ecotourism planning in the country. Finally, there should be continual practice of ecopreneurial actions and activities in order to enhance ecotourism performance in today's green economy. This is very important because much attention must be given to socio-ecological impact assessment before desirable ecotourism development can be achieved in contemporary societies.

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