

# The Prospects of Ecotourism as a Conservation and Development Tool in Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary in Ghana

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## Abstracts

Despite the copious contestations depicting the inefficacies of ecotourism as a conservation and development tool, nonetheless there is increasing trend that depicts ecotourism as a potential tool for conservation and development. This article seeks to tease out the prospects of ecotourism activities on the Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary and how that contributes to the conservation of the fauna and flora in the Sanctuary and towards the development of the local community. The Sanctuary lies between latitudes 6° 40' and 6° 44' North of the Equator and longitudes 10° 15' and 10° 22' West of the Greenwich. The total area of the Reserve-for ecotourism is 54.6 sq. km and falls under the Juaso District of Ashanti Region. A total of 63 respondents from the village of Kubease were selected for the study. Questionnaires were administered and responses were analysed using descriptive statistics. Themes sought from respondents included community involvement in marketing ecotourism, development of ecotourism resources in the community, reasons for residents' enthusiasm about ecotourism and the benefits community members derive from the Sanctuary. The research found out that at the moment, there is some semblance of ecotourism based on Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary as a conservation and development tool. In addition, the study revealed that majority of the residents are enthused about ecotourism and appealed to be allowed to be more involved in the operation of the ecotourism site.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary, Conservation, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism may mean different things to different people; however the incorporation of the prefix 'eco' (from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning house or habitat) suggests that ecotourism should be ecologically responsible. Currently, ecotourism is embedded in the discourses on sustainable development, thus it seeks to achieve the twin objectives of conservation and development on what Brechin et al (2002, p.53) have termed the 'pragmatic middle ground'. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), an international body consisting of tour operators, conservation groups, local communities and governments, 'defines ecotourism as a responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people'. According to TIES (2007), ecotourism must aim at: "minimizing impact, building environmental and cultural awareness and respect, providing positive experiences for both tourists and hosts, providing direct funds for biodiversity conservation, providing economic benefits and empowerment for local residents and raising environmental awareness". Consequently, ecotourism seeks to protect the environment and natural resources as well as improving the well-being of local residents (Fennell, 2008 and Honey, 2008). Put differently, ecotourism invariably seeks to complement livelihoods in rural areas, thus providing additional earnings for them as well as letting them take pride in their offerings. There are different activities under ecotourism which may include birdwatching, diving, traipsing through rainforests, scientists (e.g. biologist, archaeologists) on research in natural areas, people in search of spiritual enlightenment, and mountaineering. Ghana has therefore embarked on the ecotourism bandwagon both for conservation and development (USAID, 2005 and Eshun, 2011).

## 1.2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Ample arguments are made on the changing role of Protected Areas (PAs) and why tourism is increasingly being based on these areas. The global PA system was inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century USA model for forest preservation (Farsani et al, 2011). By 1993, nearly 7,000 parks and other PAs covering in excess of 2,600,000

km<sup>2</sup> had been established worldwide (World Research Institute, 1995). When combined with smaller areas such as state parks and private reserves, a large proportion (currently around 12.3 per cent) of the planet's land surface receives some degree of protection (Buckley, 2009). However, according to Possiel et al (1995), it was the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro and commonly referred to as the Earth Summit, which brought the issue of biodiversity conservation into the sitting rooms of the world and helped place this critical issue on the agenda of world leaders. The Earth Summit yielded five main products namely "the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration, Forest Principles and the Convention to Combat desertification" (Fennell, 2003). During a subsequent meeting of the UN General Assembly in 1998, the UN proclaimed the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE). The IYE meetings, which culminated at Quebec, considered ecotourism within the broader framework of sustainable development. Four main motivations were to underpin activities of the IYE namely, sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources, impact minimization (mostly in terms of climate change and energy consumption), empowerment and participation of local stakeholders, and awareness raising and environmental education of travellers and hosts (Hillel 2002). The IYE was a useful preparation for the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002. The WSSD purposed to assess the state of the world and how far governments have progressed in achieving the goals of declarations and other treaties signed under the Earth Summit.

The paradigm of sustainable development gained ascendancy during the 1980s. In 1987, the report titled 'Our Common Future' also known as the Brundtland Report by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) positioned sustainable development in discourses on development and conservation. In opposition to preservationist and authoritative approaches to PAs, sustainable development seeks to gain synergy among conservationists, academic communities, development practitioners and local communities. The sustainable development paradigm offers a broader perspective of factors underlying world and international inequity, which continuously cause failure of most conservation and development projects in the South. Consequently, park management is gradually becoming integrative, on the premise that parks do not exist as ecological islands, but must be inclusive of social needs. Eagles et al (2002, p.8) stated that because of "the economic impact of tourism...the time will come when a park is understood within the framework of a park tourism system as well as an ecological system". Fennell (2003, p.47) has added, "the establishment of wilderness lands has been self-defeating, in that, they are slowly becoming consumed by poaching and adjacent farming", and thus parks must be viewed as an agent of social change. These foregoing arguments are in line with the emergence of Community-Based Conservation Initiatives, and its close alternatives such as Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs), Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNR), co-management, and community-managed or indigenous reserves. According to Hillel (2001), ecotourism is touted to contribute to conservation, development and conservation education. Eshun (2011) has stressed that ecotourism in Ghana, must be more attuned to local community needs in order to ensure conservation.

## 2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary is located about 35 km southeast of Kumasi and about 4 km off the main Kumasi-Accra road at the village of Kubease. Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary is twenty-five minutes drive from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and it is one of the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana's (FORIG's) Ecotourism Sites. It has been awarded outstanding Tourist Support in 1999 and Tourists Attraction of the Year in 2001 by the Regional Tourist Board. With its lush greenery and mystifying atmosphere, the Bobiri Forest Reserve is the largest preserve parcel of land administered by the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG). It is one of the most beautiful Forest Reserves in West Africa. The reserve was created in 1939 when it was still an unexploited primary forest. It falls within the Tropical Moist semi-Deciduous Forest Zone. The Reserve lies between latitude 60 40 and 60 44 North of the Equator and longitudes 10 15 and 10 22 West of the Greenwich. The Reserve and Sanctuary derive its name from a stream called Bobiri, which lies within the reserve.

The Reserve hosts the Bobiri Forest Arboretum- with about 100 indigenous species on 1.7 hectare of land- the Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary- with about 340 butterfly species identified and the Bobiri Guest House. Along the road, about 120 bird species have been identified. The Reserve is also rich in biodiversity, flora (80-100) plants species per acre. In short, the Bobiri Forest Reserve offers the following: adventure travel; outdoor recreational activities; avenue to learn about the environment; a chance to discover new cultures and locations; environment in which to observe nature; and desire to undertake epistemological studies on nature. Bobiri Forest Reserve has a total land area of 54.6 square km. The Reserve is situated in the Juaben District of the Ashanti, about 35 km South-east of Kumasi and about 4km off the main Kumasi-Accra road at the village of Kubease. The Reserve is surrounded by six communities— Krofofrom, Kubease, Ndobom, Koforidua, Nkwankwaduam and Tsetsekaasum. In 1936 the Juaben stool, which holds the largest portion of the Reserve land, lifted a formal ban on farming activities and the area that now contains the Bobiri Forest Reserve was partially occupied by

farmers. Due to the increased demand for logs by the government saw mills during the World War II, the Juabenhene was allowed to fell 75 Mahogany trees in the Reserve from 1943 to 1944. To reverse this burgeoning pressure by way of exploitation of the Reserve, the Forestry Commission incorporated a Working Plan between 1945 and 1950, which finally led to the areas been demarcated as the Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary. This current study seeks to find out how ecotourism based on the Sanctuary can contribute to both conservation and development objectives. The study involved 63 selected individuals from Kubease community. Questionnaire was administered to these selected individuals to tease out their views on the following themes: Community involvement in marketing of ecotourism, Development of resources in the community; Reasons for residents' enthusiasm about Ecotourism, Benefits community members derive from the Sanctuary and Forest Reserve. The data was analysed using SPSS and descriptive approach was employed.

### **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The socio-demographic characteristic of respondents on the study reflects the nature of the study populations that the research focuses on. It provides information on the background of the respondents and reflects on how these characteristics could affect the other responses on the study. The study on ecotourism at the Bobiri Forest Reserve dealt with 60.3 per cent male and 39.7per cent female. The age distribution of the respondents, range from 18 years to 36 years. Greater proportion of the study population is less than 30 years. Over half of the respondents (54.0%) living in the area are single. However, 54 per cent of those who are single have given birth ranging from one (1) to six (6) children. Majority of the respondents (87.3%) are Christians and very few of the respondents (4.8%) are Moslems and the same percentage traditionalists. The study involved over half (57.1%) of the natives of Bobiri. This category of respondents is likely to provide information on the background and the development of the resources in the area. Prominent occupation in the area is Artisan (35%) followed by trading (32%). Respondents who are farmers constituted less than ten per cent (7.5%). About 90 per cent of the respondents receive less than 600 with about 40 per cent of the total respondents receiving less than GHC 100 a month. These have been presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Socio-demographic	Frequency	Percentages
Sex of respondent		
Male	38	60.3
Female	25	39.7
Age completed		
below 20 years	13	20.6
20-25years	18	28.6
26-30years	11	17.5
31-35years	6	9.5
36 and above	15	23.8
Religion		
Catholic	6	9.5
Protestant	25	39.7
other Christians	24	38.1
Moslem	3	4.8
Traditional	3	4.8
No religion	2	3.2
How long have you continuously stayed in Bobiri?		
1-10years	24	45.3
11-20years	15	28.3
21-30years	8	15.1
31-40years	1	1.9
41 and above	5	9.4
What is the highest level of school completed?		
Koranic	1	1.6
Primary	8	12.7
Middle/JHS	23	36.5
Secondary/Vocational	12	19.0
Tertiary	6	9.5
Dropout	13	20.6
Employment status		
Employed	40	63.5
Unemployed	14	22.2
Student	7	11.1
Homemaker	2	3.2
If employed state your occupation		
Farming	3	7.5
Teaching	6	15.0
Trading	13	32.5
Artisan	14	35.0
Others	4	10.0
Approximate income (GH Cedis) per month		
Less than 100	16	40.0
100 – 199	7	17.5
200 – 399	2	5.0
400 – 599	11	27.5
600 and above	4	10.0

### 3.2 Development of Ecotourism Resources in the Community

Development of resources in community is an important factor to consider as far as ecotourism is concerned. Ecotourism resource without a community tends to gloom the whole concept of ecotourism, reduces

tourist satisfaction and shortens the lifespan of the ecotourism product. A healthy ecotourism community tends to protect the resources more than unhealthy ecotourism community. The significance of community is reinforced by the fact that ecotourism, like all other forms of alternative tourism is to ensure environmental conservation and maximizing the benefits for local communities. Differently put, ecotourism does not operate in isolation but in response to the needs of local communities, in its attempt to ensure environmental conservation. A healthy ecotourism community could be described as a community that is willing and ready to support the concept and principle of ecotourism in the area. The Kubease community where the Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary is located could be described as a healthy community. Over 98 per cent of the respondents are happy and more enthusiastic about the existence of the resources in the community. Some of their reasons for their support for ecotourism development are stated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Residents' Enthusiasm about Ecotourism**

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Income generation	11	17.5
Attraction of tourist	22	34.9
Education and learning experiences	6	9.5
Employment creation	14	22.2
Others	10	15.9
Total	63	100.0

In some communities, most residents do not visit the resources located in the community, some due to the less value placed on the resource and others are not just interested in the resource. As far as the Bobiri Forest and Butterfly sanctuary is concerned, 85.7 per cent of the respondents have ever visited the ecotourism site. Greater proportion of the respondents who admitted that they visit the site, do so very often and others somehow often. Respondents' frequency of visit to the site has been presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Rate of visit to the Sanctuary**

Frequency of visit	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	18	28.6
Often	8	12.7
Somehow often	28	44.4
Not at all	9	14.3
Total	63	100.0

Familiarity of tourism resources in community by community members is an additive factor for marketing purposes. When community members know the actual tourism product that they provide, they can easily provide additional information to tourism, interact well with tourists and satisfy curiosity of tourists. Some of the resources mentioned by respondents include the butterfly sanctuary, trees, different animal species, flowers and visitor centre in the forest. A description of some of the resources in the community shows how well the community members are familiar with the resources. *"The main resource that attracts the visitor is the Bobiri butterflies and another special 'Wawa' tree known as three sisters which has one root with three stems in the Bobiri forest reserve" [Female, Petty trader].*

Eshun (2011) stressed that local communities have often seen forests around them as their school, where they gain a lot in terms of experience, ethnobotany, and gastronomy among others. Again, respondents were asked about their livelihood options regarding the establishment of the Sanctuary. Out of a total of 63 respondents, 38.1 per cent of them said they were tour guides, 14.3 per cent chain saw operators, 9.5 per cent hospitality services, 28.6 per cent no work, 6.3 per cent was registered for others.

**Table 4: Activities of Local Residents in the Sanctuary**

	Frequency	Percentage
Tour guides	24	39.3
Chain saw operation	9	14.8
Hospitality services	6	9.8
No work	18	29.5
Others	4	6.6
Total	61	100.0

### 3.3 Benefits Community Members derive from the Sanctuary and Forest Reserve

Community members living around ecotourism sites usually benefit from the tourism activities in the area. The concept of ecotourism encourages tourists to spend and contribute to the development at ecotourism sites (Honey, 2008). The expenditure of ecotourists at any eco-destination ejects additional cash flow into the local economy of the destination, thereby increasing the income of the destination. The multiplier effect emanating from the expenditure of the tourists, creates additional economic activities which increases the income of the destination area. Respondents at the Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary are not too different from enjoying such benefits that ecotourism offers. Results from the study show that 66.7 per cent of the respondents in the area can confidently attest to the fact that they benefit from the ecotourism activities in the community. The results from the in-depth interview also support the fact that community members derive some benefits from the tourism activities in the area. *A 63 years farmer responded: "Yes, because the school buildings are renovated, electricity, boreholes have all been provided from the proceeds generated and hence all the community members are now benefiting.* The rest of the respondents differ on this case. Those who benefit from ecotourism activities benefit in cash and kind. Other members from the community are also of the view that, though they benefit from ecotourism activities in the community, the benefits do not come to all the members in the community. A female petty trader has this to say; "Frankly speaking, the main benefit goes to owner of the land, the chief, also the managers of the forest reserve sell most of the essential commodities we have here to tourists. Only few of them buy items from other people in the community, unlike in the olden days when we used to benefit from their spending [Female, Petty Trader].

However, community members would want ecotourists to spend more money in the community so as to benefit the community members in the form of employment, income, infrastructural development and other related benefits of ecotourism. The community members were relying on the forest for their survival and after the conservation; most of them are not in active job and expect to earn from the tourism activities in the community. A male student has this to say: *This is because some people have lost their jobs as a result of the conservation of the forest since people are not allowed to go to the forest to perform their activities such as snail hunting [Male, student, 20 years].* Management of the site are also expected to buy local products from the community to serve tourists as this will help reduce leakage of the tourist currency thereby harnessing the economic benefits to the locals.

### 3.4.0 Community Involvement in Marketing of Ecotourism

Marketing of the destination is a way of communicating what the destination has to offer to actual and potential ecotourists. However, for any ecotourism project to be meaningful, community involvement plays a cardinal role. The philosophy of this is the fact that the resources from which ecotourism project is developed, belong to the local community and as such they must have a say in how their resources are to be used. Local involvement is one of the ways of ensuring that the project is sustained. The study carried out in the study area to solicit the views from residents whether or not locals should be involved in the marketing of the destination reveals that 87.3 per cent of the respondents agreed that the community should be involved in the marketing of the destination. 12.3 per cent of the respondent held a contracting view. From this data, we can then say that the respondents are of the view that involving the local community is the way forward for the marketing of Bobiri as an ecotourism-site.

### 3.4.1 Ways through which the community can market the Forest and the Butterfly Sanctuary

The study further tried to find out from residents what strategy they think could be used to market the destination to attract more tourists to the destination. Strategies such as advertising, cultural performances, involving the community, education, among others were given as the strategies that could be used to market the site and make it more vibrant for tourism. However, these strategies vary in their importance. According to respondents, 38.9 per cent, 9.3 per cent, 25.9 per cent and 18.5 per cent were respectively given to the strategies mentioned above. This means that most of the respondents are of the view that advertising, involving the community and education are/will be the most successful strategies for marketing the destination. Details of the responses of respondents are presented in the table 5.

**Table 5 Ways of Marketing the Destination**

Options for marketing	Frequency	Percentage
Advertising	21	38.9
Cultural performance	5	9.3
Community involvement in marketing	14	25.9
Education	10	18.5
Others	4	7.4
Total	54	100.0



### 3.4.2 Willingness of Community Members to Undertake Cultural Activities

Involvement of the community in any ecotourism project requires that community members take active part in the activities regarding ecotourism at the destination. The researchers tried to ascertain the willingness of community members to partake in the performance of cultural activities as a way of marketing the destination to attract more ecotourists to the destination. It was noticed that 90.5 per cent of the respondents responded “yes” and 9.5 per cent “no” to whether or not they will be willing to participate in any cultural activity at the destination. This means that there is much willingness on the side of residents to embrace cultural activities that will be introduced to the destination as a way of marketing the destination. This high willingness of the respondents to take part in the performance of cultural activities as a way of marketing the destination means that the cultural component can be added to the already existing ecological-based resource. This further means that the destination will have a lot to offer to meet the varied needs of tourists “*If taking part in cultural activities is what will bring more tourists to this village so that tourism will benefit everybody in the village, why not? [Male farmer, 35 years]*”. The above statement is the words of one of the respondents to reiterate his willingness to participate in any cultural activity that would be organised as a way of marketing the destination. Refer to the Table 6 for more details on the response of respondents on this issue.

**Table 6: Willingness to undertake cultural activities**

Willing	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	57	90.5
No	6	9.5
Total	63	100.0

### 3.4.3 Type of Cultural Activities to be undertaken at the Destination

Ecotourism like all other forms of sustainable tourism take place within a cultural context. Thus, culture plays a significant role in taking the ecotourism product in most destinations. The study reveals that the following cultural activities can be made available at the destination (Bobiri and its surrounding areas) so as to market it. Refer to the table below for details of the type of cultural activities available at the destination and their relative popularity according to the respondents. From Table 7, it can be realized that organizing festivals and cultural performance are the most preferred types of cultural activities that can be organised at the destination to add some cultural dimensions to the current ecotourism resources at the destination to enhance its marketing potentials for tourism.

**Table 7: Type of cultural activities at the destination**

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Organising festivals	14	24.6
Cultural performance	28	49.1
Display of artifacts	8	14.0
Organising puberty rite ceremonies	2	3.5
Others	5	8.8
Total	63	100.0

## 4. CONCLUSION

The paper examines the ecotourism resources of Bobiri and how that can be used as a tool to promote economic empowerment of the people of Kubease and its surrounding communities. The purpose of this study was to find out the views of respondents on the Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary as an ecotourism destination and how best it benefits the people of Kubease. Sixty-three residents were selected from the village and various questions were posed to them in accordance to the objectives of this study. The study reveals that there is healthy ecotourism community at Bobiri as over 98 per cent of the respondents are more enthusiastic about the existence of the ecotourism resources in the community. Income generation, attraction of tourists and employment creation are some of the reasons given for the embracement of tourism in the area. Also, most of the residents (85.7%) of them claimed they had ever visited the Sanctuary. This revelation is in sharp contrast to what happens in most similar destinations where locals do not visit the centres because of them not placing much value on the resource or for lack of interest in tourism. In addition, the study reveals an interesting and contradicting stands of respondents. Whereas some of the respondents are of the view that the community benefits from the activities of tourism because proceeds from tourism were used in renovating dilapidated school buildings, drilling boreholes, extending electricity to the community, others were also of the view that the benefits go to individuals in the community.

The chief (the owner of the land) and the manager of the site were mentioned as the specific individuals in the community that take the chunk of the proceeds from the ecotourism activities in the village. Some also claimed that tourism has made them lose their jobs as they can no longer enter the forest for snail

hunting and other activities they used to undertake in the forest. The study made an attempt to look at how best to market the destination to attract more tourists to the destination. Advertising, cultural performance, involving the community and education were identified as some of the ways of marketing the destination. Here, organizing cultural activities is seen as one of the main tools for marketing and most of the respondents have shown their willingness to participate in any cultural activity that is directed at attracting more tourists to the destination. Involvement of the community in developing and marketing is also seen as one of the major ways of ensuring benefits to the local people as well as sustaining ecotourism at Kubease.

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