



## **Residents' Perception And Acceptance Of Tourism Development**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined residents' perception and acceptance of tourism development of the Kyabobo national park. Four communities namely: Shiare, Odomi, Gekorong, and Keri were selected for the study. The study revealed positive relationship between residents' perception and acceptance of Kyabobo national park development. Government informed the park-fringe communities about its intention to establish the park and their opinions were sought and factored into the Kyabobo national park development plan.*

**Key words:** Ecotourism, Involvement, Expectations, Livelihoods, Biodiversity, Conservation, Park-Fringe Communities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study examined residents' perception and acceptance of tourism development of the Kyabobo national park. Four communities namely: Shiare, Odomi, Gekorong, and Keri were selected for the study. The study revealed positive relationship between residents' perception and acceptance of Kyabobo national park development. Government informed the park-fringe communities about its intention to establish the park and their opinions were sought and factored into the Kyabobo national park development plan. However, the park-fringe communities were not partners in the development of the park. Trade in local crafts, employment and ecotourism improved in the park-fringe communities as expected. However, physical infrastructure in the communities was poor.

Recommendations were made that Kyabobo national park should involve fringe communities as partners in the development of the park and employ qualified residents. Government should provide modern physical infrastructure in park-fringe communities as promised before establishment of the park to support residents and ecotourism development

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Contextual Background**

Literature review of residents' perceptions and acceptance of tourism development focused specifically on: perception of park-fringe communities before the creation of national parks; perception and acceptance of park-fringe communities after the development of national parks; park-fringe communities' expectations of benefits from national parks; and effects of national parks on livelihoods of park-fringe communities. Conceptual framework which guided this study has been included.

#### **Intent for creating national parks**

National parks across the world served as habitat and protection for biodiversity to prevent their disappearance from the surface of the earth (Cobbinah, 2015). In line with these objectives, the Ghana Government established the Kyabobo national park in 1993 under the Executive Instrument No.20 to restrict Ghanaians from poaching on the Fazao-Malfacassa national park in the Republic of Togo (IUCN-PACO, 2010). Creation of the park became imperative following a complaint by the government of the Republic of Togo against the Republic of Ghana at the International

Criminal Court (ICC) in early 1990s. Ghanaians illegally hunted game in the Fazao-Malfacassa national park (IUCN-PACO, 2010). Consequently, the ICC directed Ghana to establish a national park on its side of the border to control Ghanaians from poaching on the national park in Togo and to ensure peace between the two neighbouring countries. Ultimately, the Ghana Wildlife Division expected Kyabobo national park to attract ecotourists, earn revenue for Ghana and create employment for the fringe communities (IUCN-PACO, 2010).

Policies on national parks were not unique to Ghana. The South African and the Tanzanian national parks also had similar legal mandates to preserve cultural heritage, natural resources of their countries, habitats of wildlife as well as the quality of wilderness for the enjoyment and benefit of the people (Bruku, 2016). In addition, the policies required the national parks to maintain a high degree of integrity as true, accurate and unspoiled resources. Consequently, the parks developed management plans to enhance quality visitor experience instead of the mass tourism which destroys park resources. The parks were to ensure maximum revenue to their countries and employ residents of fringe communities as a means to reducing poverty in the park-fringe communities. The Yellowstone National Park Act of 1872 created the world's first national park in the United States of America as a "pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" (Allendorf, 2007).

#### Perception of park-fringe communities before the creation of national parks

Perception of communities which existed before the establishment of national parks were evident in their deep respect for biodiversity (Dudley, Higgins-Zogib, & Mansourian, 2005; Yannick, 2010). Such communities attached spiritual importance to biodiversity as was evident in their rituals, oral history and cultural artefacts such as totem poles. Those cultural beliefs were demonstrated in communities' attachment to wildlife, plants, landscape features and other parts of the ecosystem (Blackburn & Anderson, 1993; Dudley et al., 2005; Yannick, 2010).

In many countries, communities that existed before national parks were created showed conservation attitudes. For example, the Maori tribe of New Zealand developed a rich culture in which several other tribal groups derived taboos and norms which guided their forest conservation efforts (Ntiamoah-Baidu, 2005). Forests in New Zealand had specific taboo that stopped over-exploitation and ensured strict conservation. Particularly of concern at that time was the danger of reducing livelihood opportunities of communities in the long run while satisfying other needs. Through conservation, the communities felt closer to nature in a gesture that symbolised deep respect for spirituality in nature.

According to Ntiamoah-Baidu (2005) and IUCN-PACO (2010), non-adherence to traditional belief systems in Ghana today was due largely to the influence of Western technology and religion which down played traditional beliefs. Higher academic education, ineffective traditional rules on migration, rapid urbanisation and resettlement of communities in pristine areas affected conservation. In other parts of the world, fear of punishment for encroaching on parks decreased through familiarity with traditional authorities who enforced sanctions (Bruku, 2016).

#### Perception and acceptance of park-fringe communities after the development of national parks

The creation of national parks and interactions with park staff have influenced park-fringe communities' perception and their acceptance of the parks (Allendorf, 2007; Ormsby, & Kaplin, 2005). Understanding perception and acceptance of park-fringe communities were keys to improving park-community relations in the effort to achieve park objectives (Allendorf, 2007; Ormsby et al., 2005). Other factors which exposed the perception and acceptance of park-fringe communities included: history of park management, degree of awareness of park's existence, benefits from the parks, level of education of the local people in park-fringe communities (McClanahan, Davies, & Maina, 2005) and concerns for the future generations (Bauer, 2003). Those factors were crucial in understanding perception and acceptance of park-fringe communities as means to improving biodiversity conservation of national parks.

In Ghana, many park-fringe communities did not know community development priority of national parks. That starkly contrasted the notion that development projects such as wells, latrines and schools in park-fringe communities were duties of national parks. When management of Mole national park changed, the fringe communities were hardly informed about the objectives and priorities of the new managements (Ormsby at el., 2005). Such notices were necessary to modify perception of park-fringe communities to accept national parks. Fiallo and Jacobson (1995) had suggested that change in park management often resulted in negative perception toward national parks and conflicts with staff of parks.

Acceptance by park-fringe communities for the development of national parks after independence in many African countries was encouraged by material incentives such as salary which were introduced by national parks. For instance, until 1993, the creation and subsequent management of the Pendjari national park in Benin did not involve residents in the Pendjari national park-fringe communities (Tiomoko, 2007). As a result, the Pendjari national park-fringe communities felt unjustly treated and thought the government robbed them of their natural resources. The centralised management approach caused the Pendjari national park-fringe communities to develop negative perception and attitudes toward the park. Fortunately in Benin today, cooperation between Pendjari national park and the fringe communities has helped to achieve Pendjari national

park goals. Participatory management of parks in many countries encouraged fringe communities to appreciate the objectives of national parks.

Perception of park-fringe communities to accept national parks were affected by the degree of trust in park staff. Trust affected effective communication between park staff and park-fringe communities (Hough, 2008). As a result, park-fringe communities which had experienced positive interactions with park staff such as regular community meetings and conservation awareness activities tend to support the protection of national parks. But park-fringe communities which had negative experiences such as rude behaviour and violent confrontations with the park staff tend to hate parks (Allendorf, 2007).

Furthermore, it was suggested that park personnel were often not trained in community outreach or in educating the public on conservation. Park staff only acted as law enforcers leaving park-fringe communities unclear on the roles of park staff. Based on research in South Africa, Infield (2008) expressed the view that changes in perception could be achieved by shifting some of the resources spent on policing to integrating park-fringe communities into conservation programmes through public education. In Tanzania, park employees visited villages to shop and that resulted in positive interaction with the park-fringe communities thereby influencing their acceptance of the parks (Igoe, 2006).

Access to development projects such as pipe-borne water, employment on parks and availability of forest resources to park-fringe communities resulted in positive perception and acceptance of the parks. When development projects expected by park-fringe communities were not met, perception of the communities became negative. For instance, in the Cross River national park in Nigeria and in the Richersveld national park in South Africa, Ite (2006) had stated that perception of the fringe communities was negatively affected largely because they felt betrayed and robbed by the promises of enhanced development projects that never materialised.

#### Park-fringe communities' involvement in the management of national parks

Efforts to promote national parks after independence in many countries did not succeed because the programme failed to include park-fringe communities in park management. Prior to 1993 in Benin, the Pendjari national park was centrally managed by government using coercion to keep fringe communities away from the park. Today, incorporation of park-fringe communities in the management of parks had been seen as a means to satisfying vital ethical empowerment of local people and ensuring successful conservation (Dei, 2008). Besides, participatory management led to positive support for national parks and renewal of mindset of park-fringe communities necessary to save national parks from encroachment.

Indeed, involvement of park-fringe communities in the creation and management of national parks was crucial to legitimising parks. Conflicts erupted between park authorities and fringe communities when the natives perceived parks as projects that served the interests of outside elites and foreigners (Chan, Pringle, Ranganathan, Boggs, Chan, Ehrlich, Haff, Heller, Al-Khafaji, & Macmynowski, 2009). Hence, participation of park-fringe communities in park management had helped to diffuse such tensions. Besides, traditional knowledge of park-fringe communities in park ecology became important in scientific understanding of ecological functioning of national parks. In the past, natural scientists that were in charge of national parks lacked complete understanding of social issues which affected national parks. As a result, involvement of park-fringe communities in management brought such ecological information to the fore in addition to the needs of the communities which needed to be addressed by park management.

Involvement of park-fringe communities in the management of national parks was a broad decentralisation strategy which was adopted by governments to enhance efficiency in management of government projects.

#### Typology of park-fringe communities' involvement in park management

National parks in Ghana have been managed in different ways. These included: government managed, co-managed, privately managed and community managed. Government managed regime, probably, was well known because of its dominance in early post independence era. A Ministry or Park Agency was granted authority and responsibility to determine park objectives and report directly to government. In this management type, government was not bound by legal obligation to consult identifiable stakeholders such as park-fringe communities in establishing or enforcing park management decisions. Until recently, government managed approach constituted conventional method of conservation in Ghana. The Mole national park is a good example of government-managed national park.

Co-managed type of national parks has become popular because it recognised and guaranteed the rights of park-fringe communities. Moreover, established institutional mechanisms were used in the management of the parks. Authority and responsibility transcended from national to local government level and park-fringe communities. Various stakeholders in the management system recognised the legitimate entitlements of various government agencies and park-fringe communities to manage national parks. Examples in Ghana included the Tafi-Atome and the Buabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuaries.

Enserink and Koppenjan (2007) continued their description of management regimes with privately managed type. According to them, privately protected area management dated back to history. For example, aristocracies in Europe protected large tracts of land for hunting wildlife over 1,000 years ago during renaissance. Similarly in India, areas were set aside for protection in pre-historic time.

Privately managed parks came under individuals and non-profit cooperative organisations in which park-fringe communities were not stakeholders and had no interest in such parks. Privately protected areas had intrinsic value to the owners. Hence, access by the general public was restricted.

Under the community-managed approach, park management was by indigenous members of the park-fringe communities. People had always shaped their livelihood activities and lifestyles in response to challenges and opportunities presented by natural resources and their surroundings. Park-fringe communities organised themselves into associations such as non-governmental organisations to manage their biodiversity resources. Authority and responsibility of park management rested with the park-fringe communities using agreed rules. In this approach, park managers were accountable to the park-fringe communities other than governments. The community-managed approach recognised customary practices, collective land rights and livelihood incentives provided by the park-fringe communities. As long as the community-managed approach remained accountable to the park-fringe communities, it was considered different from privately managed type.

Involvement of park-fringe communities in biodiversity conservation served the good of the park-fringe communities and promoted their development. Integration of park-fringe communities in park management helped to achieve park objectives.

#### Relevance of community involvement in park management

“As destinations become popular, residents often pass from a state of euphoria over tourism to one of antagonism” (Asiedu, 2002). The objectives of national parks were achieved when parks were considered as community industry and the views of park-fringe communities were included in the processes of planning and management. Again, Bruku (2016) pointed out that “the term community industry acknowledges decision making beyond the narrow confines of the business sector to consider interest of the host communities on which the industry is so dependent”. Park-fringe communities were involved in park management as a way of reducing the impact of their exclusion from ecotourism activities. Much of the park revenue obtained through entrance fees were taken away by the government to the neglect of park-fringe communities. There was need for empowerment of local people to have a share in benefits of parks in their communities. Levels of empowerment included economic, social and psychological.

Economic empowerment of park-fringe communities was judged by the trickle down effects of benefits on the communities. Unfortunately, revenue which was retained in few park-fringe communities often entered pockets of few leaders, elites and businessmen in park-fringe communities resulting in misunderstanding among members of the communities on how the money was used. Again, when payments of royalties to chiefs in park-fringe communities were

irregular and unreliable, it resulted in confrontation between parks and fringe communities. Indeed, most park-fringe communities never obtained reasonable development projects as compensation for the loss of arable lands.

Studies in communities around the Kakum national park in Ghana had confirmed that Seidukrom, Kruwa, Abrafo, Onomakwa, Bediako, Afiaso, Antwikwaa among other communities had no significant infrastructural benefits from the establishment of Kakum national park. The situation contrasted sharply with promises and assurances of good road network, health infrastructure and potable water to the communities before the establishment of Kakum national park (Asiedu, 2002).

After the establishment of national parks, park-fringe communities were banned from taking natural resources from national parks. Restrictions imposed on residents in park-fringe communities disempowered them economically. Such resentment existed among the park-fringe communities of Kalakpa Natural Resources Reserve near the Volta Regional capital, Ho (Haligah, 2008). Hence, prostitution, begging for alms, and drug trafficking were allowed to flourish. Socio-economic and psychological empowerment were lost. Eventually, the number of visitors to national parks reduced because the fringe communities became unattractive to tourists.

#### Expectations of park-fringe communities about national parks

Residents in park-fringe communities expected national parks to employ them in the management of the parks because they owned the lands which house the parks. They expected such employment to hold back the employed youth from migrating to urban centres in search of white collar jobs. Most residents in park-fringe communities developed positive perception about parks when youth in their communities were employed upon establishment of national parks. According to Dugelby and Libby (1998), Segbefia (2008), and Vodouhe, Coulibaly, Adegbidi, and Sinsin (2010), national parks provided employment to fringe communities without destroying the environment and local economy. Again, park-fringe communities expected park authorities to promote trade in local artefacts, accommodation and local dishes through advertisement on television, radio and in ecotourism magazines. Local tourists were also expected to patronise local dishes and accommodation facilities in the communities because of their relatively cheaper prices.

In addition, the communities expected good roads, electricity, pipe-borne water and health posts immediately parks were established. Provision of infrastructure was to make their communities very attractive to tourists. In similar studies, Allendorf (2007) and Ite (2006) stated that park-fringe communities felt robbed when promises of infrastructure never materialised. Park-fringe communities expected parks to project cultural values of their communities to outsiders. The cultural practices included: mode of greeting, local meals, traditional clothing and dances. Similarly, they expected tourists to learn more about their cultural practices at first-hand.



According to Dei (2008), national parks had become a development strategy of many countries with ecotourism potential through which they demystified cultural misinformation.

Park-fringe communities expected biodiversity of the parks to be helpful to scientists and researchers. More importantly, the creation of national parks was to conserve forests and improve on biodiversity because of restrictions on entry into the parks. Finally, national parks were expected to control cross-border crimes such as cocoa and fuel smuggling through strict enforcement of laws which prohibit illegal entry into the parks and help to sustain friendship between neighbouring countries.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample description and technique*

A Systematic literature review of a range of data basis has been carried out to undertake this research. PRISMA methodology with keywords, exclusion, and inclusion criteria has been used to shorten the sample and then interpret the information.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

### **Expectations of park-fringe communities that have been achieved**

Establishment of national parks had enhanced the quality of life of residents in park-fringe communities through recreation. Residents and visitors enjoyed fresh air as they walked or relaxed in national parks. Outdoor activities in national parks were considered antidote to the ills of modern living such as obesity, heart diseases, diabetes and cancers which were often due to modern sedentary living. Physical exercises in parks reduced stress and attention disorders in people (Igoe, 2006). Recent evaluations of national parks and other protected areas had discovered intangible benefits that were not known in the past. Such benefits included: “recreational values, spiritual values, cultural values, identity values, existence values, educational values, research and monitoring values, peace values and therapeutic values” (McLaughlin, 2011). National parks had many valuables in the past which were difficult to estimate in monetary terms.

Moreover, national parks attracted tourists to park-fringe communities. The visitors spent large sums of money on transportation, food, accommodation and other services. Consequently, McLaughlin (2011) had observed that national parks had become a development strategy of many countries with ecotourism potential. For his part, Dei (2008) had stated that ecotourism attracted visitors to virgin areas and the revenue realised assisted in the development of many countries since “It is an industry that potentially involves billions of dollars”.

Moreover, national parks had offered employment to park-fringe communities as rangers, tour guides, accountants and field biology assistants (Dugelby et al., 1998). Segbefia (2008) had observed that creation of national parks provided jobs without dominating or destroying the local economy and environment of park-fringe communities. For their part, Vodouhe et al. (2010) had illustrated how park activities resulted in dividends to park-fringe communities and other stakeholders when park authorities handled the management aspect properly. In their view, the arrival of tourists offered park-fringe communities who sold artefacts unique opportunities. According to Dei (2008), the impact of tourism on local communities was positive particularly when park-fringe communities participated in the day-to-day management of parks. He contended further those parks encouraged the development of income generating activities, enhanced finances and standard of living of the local people.

The commonly held belief among residents of park-fringe communities in Ghana was that they expected parks to help regulate local climate and make rainfall very reliable. In addition, national parks acted as haven for wildlife and prevented wildlife invasion of fringe communities while attracting tourists to the fringe communities (Gilligham & Phyllis, 1999). Nearly 50 years ago in 1961, the first President of Tanzania, Julius Mwalimu Nyerere recognised the importance of wildlife in that country. At a symposium in September 1961 on the Conservation of National Resources in Tanzania, he delivered a speech that had been known as Arusha Manifesto where he intimated that:

*“The survival of our wildlife is a matter of grave concern to all of us in Africa. These wild creatures amid the wild places they inhabit are not only important as a source of wonder and inspiration but are an integral part of natural resources and our future livelihood and well being. In accepting the trusteeship of our wildlife, we solemnly declare that we will do everything in our power to make sure our children’s grand children will be able to enjoy this rich and precious inheritance. The conservation of wildlife and wild places call for specialist knowledge, trained manpower and money and we look to other nations to cooperate with us in this important task- the success of which not only affects the continent of Africa but the rest of the world as well”.*

The implication of the speech was that national parks had been acknowledged worldwide because of their role in facilitating conservation strategies, their historical and intrinsic relationship with human beings. It was important to protect national parks and other protected areas for species management and for sustainable use of natural resources. According to Allendorf (2007), national parks were powerful economic forces in the development of rural communities.

### **Effects of national parks on livelihoods of park-fringe communities**

One major effect of national parks was the displacement of local communities. Park-fringe communities were usually forced off their lands with little or no compensation paid to them. The communities were also denied access to park resources. By such dispossession, park-fringe communities were faced with extreme marginalisation (Igoe, 2006). Eviction of villages often led to loss of right to natural resources, lands and residence (Adams & Hutton, 2007). According to

McLaughlin (2011), “Studies revealed that in a number of cases, the creation of a national park or protected area had resulted in increased risk of impoverishment, landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, economic marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality rates, and loss of access to common property and environmental services”.

Laws establishing national parks affected livelihood of park-fringe communities. Restrictions on the use of lands housing national parks deprived farmers of their expected harvests. With reduced earnings from agriculture, there was a possibility of people engaging in criminal activities such as petty thefts, armed robbery and poaching as a means of survival. Moreover, the ban on hunting increased population of wild animals in national parks. Stray wildlife cause extensive damage to livestock and farm crop. Refusal of park-fringe communities to farm because of destruction of crop by stray animals resulted in famine in park-fringe communities.

Finally, local conflicts resulted among park-fringe communities which depended on common natural resources due to restrictions imposed on the use of park resources (Pathak & Kothari, 2003). Structural violence resulted due to competition for available natural resources beyond park boundaries. There were instances where park authorities used fear and violence to enforce park regulations in park-fringe communities. In a study by Fortwangler (2003), chiefs in park-fringe communities who refused to cooperate with park regulations were threatened with incarceration.

#### **Effects of national parks on livelihoods and communities’ resistance**

In spite of the economic importance of national parks, McLaughlin (2011) had observed that there was still a lot of public debate on whether national parks truly benefited all the stakeholders involved particularly the park-fringe communities. National policies of many developing countries on protected areas had been implemented in many cases by top-down approach. Such centralised approach disrupted the means of livelihood of park-fringe communities through State takeover of natural resources. Policies on environmental conservation and development had often created misunderstanding between governments and park-fringe communities.

According to McLaughlin (2011), “Local people and indigenous groups have often been subjected to social injustices, human right violations, economic and social marginalisation following the establishment of parks”. Furthermore, opposition from local communities and high rates of non-compliance with regulations regarding resource use had contributed to the widespread failure of many conservation goals. Despite numerous mention of overall benefits of national parks, Vodouhe et al. (2010) had stated that attempts made by many governments in developing countries to conserve biodiversity had often been resisted by the park-fringe communities.

Local resistance developed in many developing countries against authorities of national parks where local people were excluded from the day-to-day activities of the parks. Mortson & Kafu (2022) explained further that local people generally felt the practice was intentional to exclude them from management of parks. In addition, resistance of park-fringe communities to the establishment of parks was directly related to the use of financial benefits from parks and their consequential effects on development of the park-fringe communities (Gilligham et al., 1999).

Much of the revenue generated as entrance fees went to the central government. Very little was spent on development of adjacent communities.

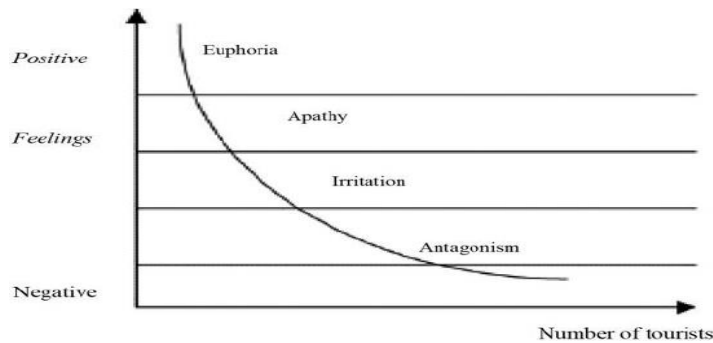
However, fringe communities which received significant support from management of parks had positive perception of parks. Similarly, Infield (2008) had found in Nepal and South Africa that residents in fringe communities which benefited from parks had positive perception of parks than individuals who did not benefit. Conversely, Gilligham, et al. (1999) had noted that park-fringe communities in northern Botswana held negative perception of parks in spite of the benefits they received in employment and exploitation of wildlife resources. The benefits they obtained were not enough to offset losses they suffered. A similar finding in fringe communities of Amboseli national park in Kenya had been stated by Shibia (2010).

Finally, the inability of governments to redeem promises of development projects to park-fringe communities influenced local resistance to the creation and management of parks. For instance, before the establishment of Marsabit National Reserve in Kenya, the localities were promised alternative livelihood activities but those promises had remained fiasco. The situation was not different in the fringe communities of Mole and Kakum national parks in Ghana. Infrastructure around the Mole national park and the Wli waterfall were poor (Mortson et al., 2022). Poor road network, poorly equipped clinics and the absence of potable water for the Kakum communities were obvious today. The park-fringe communities no longer had access to the forest resources. As a result, adjacent communities had negative perception of national parks (Bediako, 2000).

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **Index of tourism irritation or “Irridex” framework**

One of the earliest contributions to theoretical frameworks in leisure industry is the index of tourism irritation or “Irridex” by Doxey (1975). The “Irridex” framework (Figure 1) is in four stages. This framework proposes that unfavourable effects of tourism development might cause irritation in the fringe communities. According to Doxey (1975), such irritation is necessitated by the level of incompatibility between residents and tourists. The framework basically assumes that with the upsurge in the number of tourists to tourism destinations, perception of residents may vary from euphoria, to apathy, and then to annoyance before ending up in antagonism. Figure 1 shows changes in residents’ perception from euphoria to apathy, to irritation, and terminating in antagonism as the number of tourists increases.



**Figure 1: Irritation index framework**

Source: Doxey (1975)

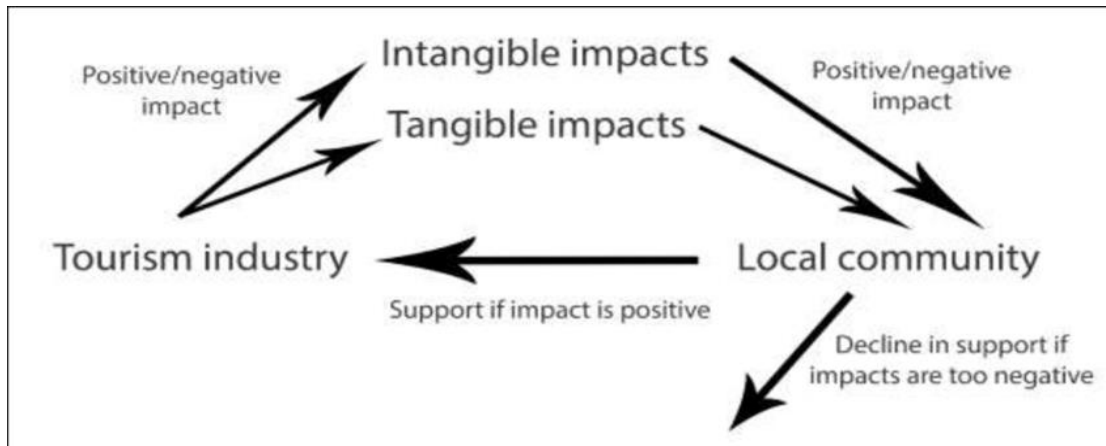
Doxey's (1975) "Irridex" has some limitations although it is widely regarded as one of the most successful frameworks which addresses the association between tourism development and local residents' perception (Mason & Cheyne, 2000). One of the most significant limitations is the fact that it assumes homogeneity of the communities and overlooks differences among residents in the same communities. Besides, it did not consider a tourist management scheme which will reduce tourist pressure on communities or allow residents in local communities to participate directly in tourism development (Zhang, Inbakaran, & Jackson, 2006). As a result of these shortcomings, social exchange framework was adapted.

### **Social exchange framework**

Social exchange framework proposes that park-fringe community residents' perception and acceptance of tourism development will be dependent on their assessment of consequential outcome of tourism development on the community (Zhang et al., 2006). This means residents in park-fringe communities assess rewards and costs of tourism development on their communities. They measure loss of social, natural and cultural resources to tourism development *vis-a-vis* benefits which will accrue to their communities. Therefore, the decision to accept tourism development is based on positive and beneficial social exchange.

This framework provides a theoretical grounding which explains the underpinnings of residents' perception and acceptance of tourism development in park-fringe communities.

Social exchange framework has valuable potential in its application. It provides the grounds for identification and definition of the most central concept for measuring residents' perception and acceptance of tourism development as shown in Figure 2 (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). The framework (Figure 2) shows that residents in park-fringe communities support tourism development if the impacts are perceived to be positive but decline support for tourism development when the impacts are negative.



**Figure 2:**

### **Social exchange framework**

Zhang, Inbakaran, and Jackson, 2006

### **Conceptual framework**

Social exchange framework was adopted for this study. This framework assumed that exchange of resources occurs between park-fringe communities and tourists. When the exchange is in favour of the park-fringe communities, residents accept tourism development. Alternatively, when the residents perceive the exchange as unfavorable, they oppose the development of tourism facilities. Consequently, residents in park-fringe communities assess the positive and negative impacts of tourism development based on benefits they can derive from the industry *vis-a-vis* the costs they will incur when ecotourism is developed within the fringes of their communities.

Therefore, residents' perception and acceptance of tourism development in the fringe communities of Kyabobo national park was examined on the basis of social exchange framework underpinned by cost-benefit analysis. Similar factors as found in the fringe communities of the Masoala national park in Madagascar were assessed to determine their influence on this study.

A study related to the conceptual framework was by Ormsby et al. (2005). That study examined the perception of communities on the fringes of Masoala national park. The study focused on: factors which influenced perception of the park-fringe communities about the Masoala national park. It analysed levels of involvement of park-fringe communities in the management of the park. Finally, the study brought out park management strategies which were adapted to positively influence perception of Masoala national park-fringe communities about the park.

### **Conclusions**

First, there was limited involvement of park-fringe communities in the development of the Kyabobo national park. That starkly contrasted the established park development principle of community participation as suggested by Dei (2008), Holmes (2003) and Mclaughlin (2011) that local communities' participation in the development of national parks is critical to the success of such projects. Involvement of fringe communities in park development is a broad decentralisation strategy that enhances efficiency in the management of national parks. In fact, involvement of

fringe communities in the development of parks is a means to satisfying the concept of community empowerment and positive support for the park and successful conservation (Dei, 2008; Holmes, 2003).

The study also found that there was an absence of revenue sharing between government and park-fringe communities. No part of the park revenue was shared between Kyabobo national park authorities and park-fringe communities or used to provide basic infrastructure in the communities. Ironically, economic empowerment of the park-fringe communities is judged by the *trickle down* effect of park revenue on fringe communities. The absence of these benefits denies park-fringe communities of critical resources necessary for their development thereby contributing to poverty as was also found by Acheampong (2011) that communities around national parks in developing countries live in abject poverty. This is particularly so when the communities had traditionally depended on the park resources for their well-being. Hence, host communities should be made direct beneficiaries of park revenue realised through transparent and equitable revenue sharing regimes.

Residents of the park-fringe communities expected good roads, electricity, pipe-borne water and health posts in their communities immediately the park was established but those expectations are yet to be fully realised. When fringe communities' expectations of development projects are not met, their attitudes toward the park turn negative (Allendorf, 2007). *Shiare, Odomi, Gekorong* and *Keri* communities were characterised by poor road network, poorly equipped clinics and the absence of pipe-borne water. The park-fringe communities felt betrayed and robbed by government when promises of infrastructure never materialised. The provision of infrastructure in the park-fringe communities is necessary to increase tourist arrivals with associated effects on employment creation in the communities since the residents no longer have access to forest resources (Bediako, 2000).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations are made towards improving residents' perceptions and acceptance of tourism development of the Kyabobo national park.

Firstly, government should provide physical infrastructure in Kyabobo national park-fringe communities. The government, through its annual budgetary allocation to the Ministries of Lands and Natural Resources, Roads and Highways, Water Resources Works and Housing should provide the Kyabobo national park-fringe communities with roads, pipe-borne water, health posts and electricity. The *Shiare* community is located on a scarp opposite the park and is not accessible to vehicles. The other Kyabobo national park-fringe communities are connected by poorly maintained Class Three roads and lack electricity and pipe-borne water. Hence, the provision of

these infrastructural facilities would project the image of Kyabobo national park in the eyes of the fringe communities and sustain their support for the park.

Secondly, there should be conscious effort by the Ghana Wildlife Division to involve Kyabobo national park-fringe communities as partners in the development of the park. The Local Government Act of 1993, (Act 462) provided for local communities' participation in planning processes of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies. Hence, involvement of representatives of Kyabobo national park-fringe communities in discussions and debates as important stakeholders on infrastructure in the Nkwanta North and South District Assemblies is crucial.

In addition, the government should review the Kyabobo National Park Law, the Executive Instrument No. 20 of 1993, which established the park and grant the fringe communities a negotiated percentage of park revenue. Part of communities' share of the park revenue could be used to provide them with infrastructure. Other opportunities in the fringe communities associated with the Kyabobo national park should be submitted by the Chiefs through their representatives to the District Assemblies for consideration and inclusion in each District Assembly Development Plan. These recommendations are consistent with the Local Government Act of 1993, (Act 462).

Involvement of fringe communities in the development of national parks is a sure means of empowering them as important stakeholders and partners whose involvement in the park would ensure successful conservation. Participation of park-fringe communities in the development of national parks leads to renewal of mindsets and active involvement of residents in protecting the park against encroachment to ensure the success of the park.

## **CONCLUSION**

in order to provide alternative livelihood activities to Kyabobo national park-fringe communities, skills training programme should be reintroduced in park-fringe communities. In this regard, The Forestry Commission should increase its financial support to the Kyabobo national park to train residents of the fringe communities in alternative livelihood activities such as rearing of grass cutters, snails, rabbits, growing of mushrooms and production of honey. The training model could elicit donor and governmental financial assistance such as Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme to establish those who have been trained. These financial arrangements should be made in collaboration with the District Assemblies which are stakeholders of the park. Skills training programme would provide residents of the fringe communities with alternative sources of income to sustain their livelihoods.



Moreover, the Ghana Wildlife Division through Forestry Commission should support the management of Kyabobo national park financially and encourage it to intensify its public education programme on conservation in the fringe communities. Such public education would help residents to adopt modern methods of protecting farms against raiding animals and disabuse their minds that only direct employment at the park constitutes involvement in park development.

Furthermore, priority should be given to qualified and skilled residents in Kyabobo national park-fringe communities during recruitment of park staff. Involvement of the youth will enhance conservation since they would take steps necessary to protect their source of livelihood. Income earned by these residents will improve their standard of living.

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