



Identification of Problems Hindering Sustainable Community-Based Tourism Development in Obudu Plateau, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study identified problems hindering sustainable tourism development in Obudu Plateau. Five objectives were stated and included: to identify the key challenges impeding sustainable CBT development in Obudu; to assess the level of community involvement in tourism planning and implementation in the region; to examine the impact of inadequate infrastructure on tourism development and community participation; to evaluate the role of funding and investment in promoting CBT initiatives in Obudu Plateau and to investigate the effects of environmental degradation on the sustainability of tourism activities in the area. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. Stratified Sampling technique and purposive sampling were used to select key informants. A sample size of 150 respondents were selected and the data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) with the aid of statistical software such as SPSS. Findings reveal challenges such as poor infrastructure, lack of community involvement, limited funding, inadequate training, and environmental degradation. Recommendations made to address these challenges and promote sustainable CBT in Obudu included: improve Infrastructure; strengthening community engagement; enhancing Government and Private Sector Collaboration; Implementing sustainable environmental practices and to improve security measures, by strengthening local security patrols and surveillance in tourist sites.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism, Sustainability, Obudu, Challenges, Development, Obudu Plateau

Introduction

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a key approach to fostering sustainable development in rural areas by engaging local communities in tourism activities. It emphasizes local ownership, cultural preservation, environmental conservation, and equitable distribution of benefits (Asker et al., 2010). CBT has been widely recognized as a tool for poverty alleviation and empowerment, especially in developing countries where communities rely heavily on natural and cultural resources for their livelihoods (Ashley & Roe, 2002).

In Nigeria, tourism has significant potential to contribute to the national economy, particularly in regions endowed with unique natural attractions and cultural heritage. One such region is the Obudu Plateau in Cross River State, renowned for its serene environment,

picturesque landscapes, and cultural richness. The Obudu Mountain Resort, a major tourist attraction in the area, has brought attention to the region's potential for tourism-driven development. Anake, (2008), identified some of the tourists attractions in the area to include: Cool temperature, with an altitude of about 1,716 meters above sea level; the interlocking mountain ranges (26), characterized by landscapes of rolling grassland bands, winding roads, cloudy mountain and montane forest; the Montane forest, which is found only in the Mambila plateau and Obudu Cattle Ranch; the Waterfalls, two main waterfalls are found in the area, with the yaro being the largest (a gradient of 93 ft), and takes about 3 hours walk from the ranch hotel, and the other one Egaga has a gradient of about 50 ft and it is closer to the hotel but with a bad terrain; the Groto, which is stony in nature, shelters animals such as grass cutter, antelopes, hynas, rabbit, pocking pines, baboons and other monkey species.

Bush burning has been a major threat to this animal sanctuary; Birds viewing are another interesting attraction in the area. Unique Birds such as white throated mountain babbler, bananas weaver, etc, which cannot be found elsewhere are found here; the Holy Mountain, located after the new market acts as playgrounds and bunkers (for war). It is also the source of the Cross River which passes through Ikom and empties into the Atlantic Ocean in Calabar. The gradient is steeper than any other mountain in the area and the Becheve nature reserve, which was founded in 1963 by the indigenes of the Becheve communities was mainly to preserve the area for hunting. Later on the AP Leventis and Nigeria conservation foundation (NCF) gave them the technical support. This is the only place CBT is operative.

Despite the above attractions, the development of sustainable CBT in Obudu faces numerous challenges. Poor infrastructure, lack of community involvement, environmental degradation, and insufficient funding are persistent barriers (Ezeuduji, 2015). These issues not only hinder the growth of tourism but also prevent local communities from fully reaping its socio-economic benefits.

Furthermore, the lack of capacity-building programs and limited collaboration between stakeholders exacerbate the challenges. Without addressing these issues, the potential for CBT to serve as a catalyst for sustainable development in Obudu remains underutilized. This study seeks to investigate these challenges, providing insights into the barriers to sustainable CBT in Obudu while proposing practical solutions for its successful implementation.

Understanding the factors hindering sustainable CBT development is crucial for formulating strategies that can enhance community participation, improve resource management, and maximize tourism's socio-economic benefits in Obudu Plateau and similar rural settings.

Statement of the Problem

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is widely regarded as a sustainable development strategy that promotes local economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. However, despite its potential, the implementation of CBT in Obudu Plateau, Cross River State, Nigeria, has been fraught with challenges.

Obudu Plateau, as stated above, is endowed with natural attractions such as the Becheve nature reserve, waterfalls, montane forest, interlocking mountain ranges, the temperate environment, lush greenery, and unique cultural heritage. These resources position the region as a potential hub for tourism development. Yet, the community has not significantly benefited from tourism initiatives, and the sector's growth remains stunted. Key challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and the exclusion of local communities from planning and decision-making processes hinder sustainable tourism development in the area.

Moreover, many community members lack the skills and training necessary to participate in tourism-related activities, further limiting their involvement and benefits. Environmental issues, including deforestation and poor waste management, also threaten the long-term sustainability of tourism in the region. These challenges are exacerbated by weak institutional frameworks and insufficient collaboration among stakeholders.

Without addressing these issues, the prospects of achieving sustainable CBT in Obudu Plateau are slim. This situation not only undermines the socio-economic potential of tourism but also risks the degradation of the region's natural and cultural assets. There is, therefore, a critical need to identify and address the factors impeding the sustainable development of CBT in Obudu, ensuring that tourism becomes a viable tool for community development and environmental sustainability.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to identify the challenges hindering sustainable Community-Based Tourism (CBT) development in Obudu Plateau, Nigeria and to propose strategies for addressing these challenges to enhance the socio-economic and environmental benefits of CBT.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the key challenges impeding sustainable CBT development in Obudu.
2. Assess the level of community involvement in tourism planning and implementation in the region.

3. Examine the impact of inadequate infrastructure on tourism development and community participation.
4. Evaluate the role of funding and investment in promoting CBT initiatives in Obudu Plateau.
5. Investigate the effects of environmental degradation on the sustainability of tourism activities in the area.

Literature Review

Concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) refers to a type of tourism where local communities have control over and benefit from tourism development in their area. CBT projects are managed and owned by the community, and they aim to provide authentic cultural experiences for tourists while generating income and improving the quality of life for community members. The concept is aimed at benefiting residents economically, socially, and culturally while promoting environmental sustainability (Asker et al., 2010). It emphasizes local participation, ensuring that decisions reflect the community's interests and foster ownership. Studies by Tosun (2000) highlight that CBT can empower rural communities, providing an alternative livelihood and enhancing the conservation of cultural and natural resources.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF). (2019), listed the following as key characteristics of CBT:

- Community ownership and management: Local communities have control over tourism development and management.
- Community benefits: Tourism revenue benefits the local community directly.
- Cultural authenticity: Tourism experiences are authentic and showcase local culture.
- Sustainability: Tourism development is sustainable and environmentally friendly.
- Community involvement: Community members are involved in decision-making and tourism operations.

Sustainable Tourism Development

According to Cunningham, et al (2003), sustainable development became popularized in 1987, through the Brundtland Report which was published by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development. It stressed that development should aim at meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainability in tourism development involves balancing economic, social, and environmental factors to meet present and future needs (UNWTO, 2022). CBT aligns with

this principle by ensuring that benefits are equitably distributed, environmental resources are preserved, and cultural heritage is protected (Goodwin, 2006). However, achieving sustainability in CBT requires robust frameworks, stakeholder collaboration, and consistent policy implementation (Okazaki, 2008).

Challenges of CBT Development in Developing Countries

Developing countries often face structural, social, and economic challenges that hinder CBT development. Mathieson and Wall (1993), broadly listed them to include: Lack of funding, infrastructure, trained manpower, awareness, strategic management, participation, empowerment, Conflict of interests, Social differentiation, Economic viability and in most Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, poor governance, weak institutional frameworks, and limited community engagement exacerbate these challenges (Scheyvens, 1999).

Infrastructure and Accessibility

According to Spenceley (2008), Roads, transportation systems, and communication networks are essential for facilitating tourist access and promoting local economic activities. He further emphasized that Infrastructure and accessibility play a crucial role in tourism development, as they can significantly impact the quality of the tourist experience and the overall competitiveness of a destination. He identified some key aspects of infrastructure and accessibility that play significant role in tourism development to include: Transportation such as Airports, seaports, roads, and public transportation systems facilitate the movement of tourists; Accommodation, such as Hotels, resorts, and other types of accommodation provide tourists with a place to stay; Amenities, such as restaurants, shops, and entertainment facilities enhance the tourist experience; Utilities, such as access to clean water, electricity, and telecommunications is essential for tourist facilities; effective waste management systems help maintain a clean and healthy environment.

In terms of physical accessibility, tourist attractions and facilities should be accessible to people with disabilities; economic accessibility, tourism should be affordable and accessible to a wide range of people, regardless of income level; in cultural accessibility, tourist attractions and experiences should be respectful of local cultures and traditions; digital accessibility, tourist information and services should be available online and accessible through digital channels;

Community Participation

Community participation is based on the premise that whatever is done to improve the welfare of a people must endeavour to elicit the enthusiasm and whole-hearted participation of such people. It is a mechanism for promoting rural development, and it

specifically stems from the failures of the 'top-down approach' characteristic of traditional development strategies to reach and benefit the rural people (United Nations, 1991). Reporting on their findings from Tanzania, Cleaver and Toner (2006), argued that community involvement and ownership of projects ensures greater success rates and improves the situation of excluded groups such as women and poor people.

Community involvement is a cornerstone of successful CBT. Studies emphasize that the exclusion of local communities in tourism planning often leads to resistance, low participation, and unsustainable practices (Tosun, 2000). Participation enhances trust, ensures equitable benefit distribution, and aligns tourism projects with community needs (Ashley & Roe, 2002).

Environmental and Cultural Conservation

Unregulated tourism activities can lead to environmental degradation, including deforestation, pollution, and habitat destruction (UNEP, 2019). It protects the environment, including waste management, pollution control, and climate change mitigation. Additionally, it presers and protection of cultural heritage, including traditions, artifacts, and historical sites.cultural heritage conserves culture to maintain the authenticity and uniqueness of tourism experiences (Goodwin, 2006).

CBT in Nigeria: Context and Challenges

In Nigeria, tourism has immense potential due to its diverse natural and cultural attractions. However, the sector remains underdeveloped, particularly in rural areas like Obudu (Ezeuduji, 2015). In Nigeria, challenges of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) governance include:

Lack of clear policies and regulations; Inadequate community participation; Poor benefit-sharing mechanisms; Limited capacity and resources; Conflicting interests; Sustainability concerns; Cultural and environmental impacts; Lack of transparency and accountability; Power dynamics and Funding constraints. These factors hinders the growth of CBT; as Okonkwo et al. (2020), advised that addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach, involving local communities, government, and private investors.

The literature underscores the potential of CBT as a tool for sustainable development in rural areas. However, challenges such as poor infrastructure, limited funding, and inadequate community involvement must be addressed to achieve success. By leveraging participatory approaches and focusing on sustainability, CBT can significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of regions like Obudu, while preserving their natural and cultural assets.

Theoretical Framework

Participatory Development Theory

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Participatory Development Theory. This theory provides a foundation for understanding the challenges and potential solutions for sustainable Community-Based Tourism (CBT) development in Obudu Plateau, Cross River State, Nigeria.

The participatory development theory underpins CBT, emphasizing the active involvement of local communities in decision-making processes (Pretty, 1995). It also emphasizes the active involvement of local communities in the planning, implementation, and management of development projects. The theory posits that meaningful participation leads to empowerment, ownership, and the sustainability of development projects. The theory further argues that true development can only occur when beneficiaries are empowered to take ownership of initiatives (Pretty, 1995).

In the context of CBT, participatory development ensures that: Community members are involved in decision-making processes, Tourism projects align with local needs, priorities, and cultural values and Benefits are equitably distributed among stakeholders.

This theory highlights the importance of including Obudu Plateau's local communities in CBT planning and execution. Exclusion or tokenistic involvement often leads to resistance, project failure, and unsustainable outcomes (Tosun, 2000). By adopting participatory approaches, CBT in Obudu Plateau can foster local ownership, trust, and long-term sustainability.

Using this theory, the study explores how participatory approaches and sustainable practices can address the identified challenges. Specifically, the theory guides the analysis of community involvement in tourism planning and implementation in Obudu.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the challenges hindering sustainable Community-Based Tourism (CBT) development in Obudu, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Study Area

The study focuses on Obudu Plateau in Cross River State, Nigeria, a region renowned for its natural attractions, including the Obudu Mountain Resort, and its cultural

heritage. Some of the tourists attractions in the area to include: Cool temperature, with an altitude of about 1,716 meters above sea level; the interlocking mountain ranges (26), which characterized by landscapes of rolling grassland bands, winding roads, cloudy mountain and montane forest; two main waterfalls are found in the area, with the yaro being the largest (a gradient of 93 ft), and takes about 3 hours walk from the ranch hotel, and the other one Egaga has a gradient of about 50 ft and it is closer to the hotel but with a bad terrain; the Groto, which is stony in nature, shelters animals such as grass cutter, antelopes, hynas, rabbit, pocking pines, baboons and other monkey species; Birds viewing are another interesting attraction in the area. Unique Birds such as white throated mountain babbler, bananas weaver, etc, which cannot be found elsewhere are found here; the Holy Mountain, located after the new market acts as playgrounds and bunkers (for war). It is also the source of the Cross River which passes through Ikom and empties into the Atlantic Ocean in Calabar. The gradient is steeper than any other mountain in the area.

Population of the Study

The target population included, Community Members who are residents of Obudu Plateau, who are directly affected by tourism activities; Tourism Stakeholders which include Local government officials, tourism operators, and investors and Tourism experts such as the Academics and professionals in tourism and sustainability.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling Techniques: Stratified Sampling technique was used to ensure representation of different groups, including community members, stakeholders, and experts.

Purposive Sampling was applied for selecting key informants, such as local leaders and government officials.

Sample Size: A total of 150 respondents were surveyed: 100 community members, 30 tourism stakeholders and 20 experts.

Data Collection Methods

The study uses Primary Data, such as Structured questionnaires, distributed to community members to assess their perceptions and experiences regarding CBT challenges, Semi-structured interviews conducted with tourism stakeholders and experts to gain deeper insights into systemic issues and potential solutions, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which were organized with community members to explore collective perspectives and generate actionable recommendations. While the Secondary Data, obtained from Academic journals, government reports, and previous studies on CBT and sustainable tourism development, were reviewed to contextualize the findings.

Data Analysis

Data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) with the aid of statistical software such as SPSS. Data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns related to CBT challenges and solutions.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

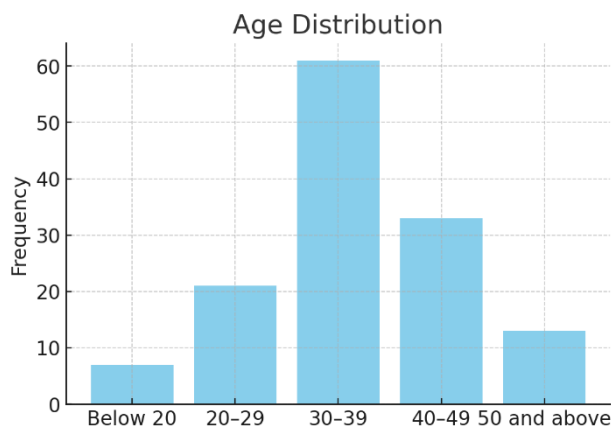


Fig. 1. Age Distribution

Figure 1, shows that the majority of respondents (45.19%) are aged 30–39 years, followed by 40–49 years (24.44%). Younger individuals below 20 years (5.19%) and those 50 and above (9.63%) form a smaller portion. This suggests that the most engaged group in tourism-related matters in Obudu falls within 30–49 years.

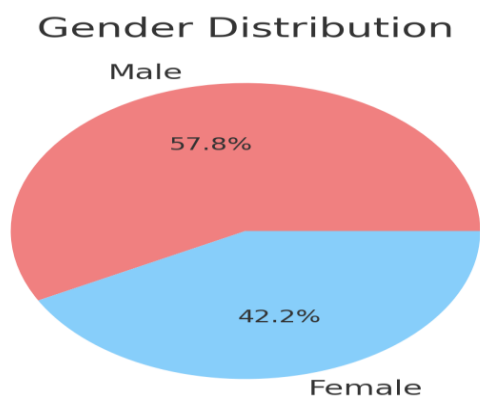


Fig. 2. Gender Distribution

In figure 2, the male respondents (57.78%) outnumber females (42.22%). This indicates a slight male dominance in participation, but the gender gap is not extreme.

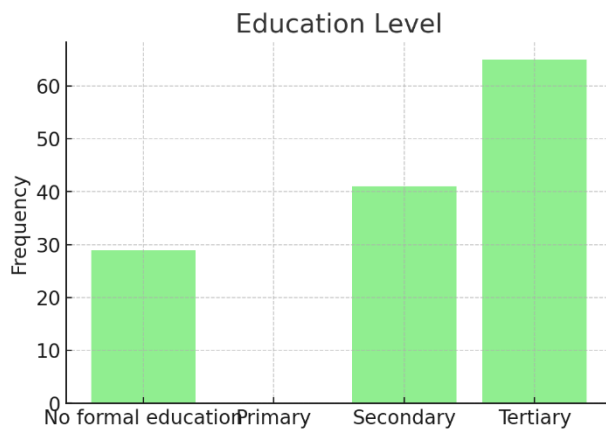


Fig. 3. Education Level

Figure 3, indicates that 48.15% of respondents have tertiary education, while 30.37% have secondary education. A significant portion (21.48%) has no formal education, and none reported only primary education. This suggests a relatively educated population, which may positively impact tourism participation and decision-making.

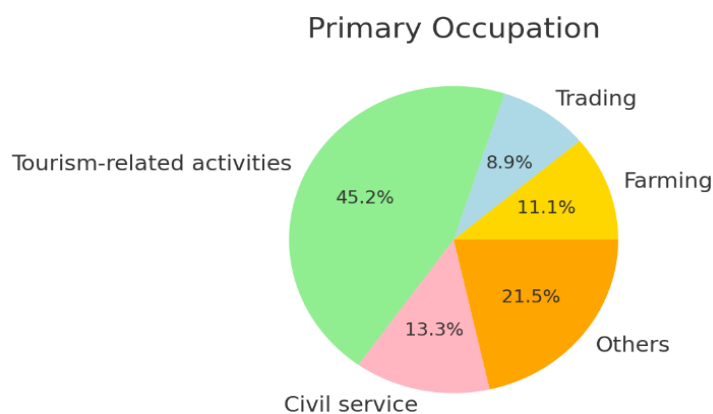


Fig. 4. Primary Occupation

In figure 4, the largest occupation group is tourism-related activities (45.19%), followed by civil service (13.33%) and farming (11.11%). Trading accounts for only 8.89%, while other occupations make up 21.48%. This highlights that tourism is a major economic activity for many respondents.

Table 1: Community Involvement in Tourism

	Section B: Community Involvement in Tourism			
5.	Are you aware of any tourism activities or projects in Obudu?			
	Yes	101	74.81%	101
	No	34	25.19	135
6.	Are you involved in any tourism-related activities?			
	Yes			

	No	82 53	60.74% 39.26%	82 135
7.	Do you participate in the planning and decision-making processes of tourism projects?			
	Yes	38	28.15%	38
	No	51	37.78%	89
	Sometimes	46	34.07%	135
8.	How would you rate the level of community involvement in tourism projects?			
	Very high	38	28.15%	38
	High	18	13.33%	56
	Moderate	42	31.11%	98
	Low	17	12.59%	115
	Very low	20	14.81%	135

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Under Community Involvement in Tourism on table 1, a significant majority (74.81%) are aware of tourism activities in Obudu Plateau, while 25.19% are not. This indicates strong general awareness, which is crucial for fostering participation. In terms of participation in tourism activities, 60.74% of respondents are actively involved in tourism-related activities, while 39.26% are not. This shows a high level of engagement in tourism-related work. For decision-making in tourism projects, 28.15% actively participate in planning and decision-making, while 37.78% do not. Interestingly, 34.07% participate "sometimes", showing that a large portion is somewhat involved but not consistently.

With respect to the perception of Community Involvement Level, 28.15% rate community involvement as "very high," while 13.33% say "high." 31.11% consider it "moderate," 12.59% say "low," and 14.81% say "very low." The mixed perception indicates room for improvement in fully integrating the community into tourism initiatives. Implications for the findings shows that, the 30–49 age group is the most involved in tourism, making them a key target for development programs. While a high percentage of respondents have tertiary education, outreach efforts could target those with lower educational backgrounds to ensure inclusive participation. Awareness of tourism activities is high, but decision-making participation could be improved by providing more opportunities for engagement. There is a need for better community involvement strategies, as a notable percentage perceives their involvement as low or moderate.

Table 2: Challenges of CBT Development

	Section C: Challenges of CBT Development			
9.	What do you think are the main challenges hindering tourism development in Obudu? (Select all that apply)			
	Poor infrastructure	26	19.26%	26
	Lack of funding and investment	54	40.00%	80
	Exclusion of local communities from decision-making	30	22.22%	110
	Environmental degradation			

	Lack of training and skills	17	12.59%	127
	Others	8	5.93%	135
		0	0.00%	0
10.	How does the condition of roads and transportation affect tourism development in Obudu?			
	Very negatively	54	40.00%	54
	Negatively	29	21.48%	83
	No effect	25	18.52%	108
	Positively	20	14.81%	128
	Very positively	7	5.19%	135
11.	Do you think the government is providing sufficient support for tourism development in Obudu?			
	Yes	32	23.70%	32
	No	68	50.37%	100
	Not sure	35	25.93%	135

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 2, highlights the key challenges affecting community-based tourism (CBT) development in Obudu Plateau, with the most significant barrier identified as a lack of funding and investment, which 40.00% of respondents agreed upon as a major hindrance. This suggests that despite the tourism potential in Obudu, financial constraints limit infrastructure development, marketing, and overall tourism growth. Additionally, 22.22% of respondents pointed out that exclusion of local communities from decision-making is another major challenge, indicating that local voices and interests are not adequately considered in tourism planning and implementation, which could result in a lack of community ownership and support for tourism projects. Poor infrastructure, including inadequate roads and facilities, was also highlighted by 19.26% of the respondents as a major setback, which aligns with the concerns raised about transportation challenges in the following section.

Moreover, 12.59% of respondents identified environmental degradation as a factor negatively impacting tourism, which suggests that sustainable tourism practices are not being sufficiently prioritized, potentially threatening the long-term viability of tourism in the region. A relatively smaller percentage (5.93%) mentioned lack of training and skills as a limiting factor, implying that while some skill gaps exist in the tourism sector, other pressing issues such as funding, infrastructure, and decision-making processes overshadow this concern. Interestingly, no respondents selected the “Others” category, indicating that the provided options comprehensively captured the major challenges facing tourism development in Obudu Plateau.

Further analysis of the data on transportation infrastructure reveals that 61.48% of respondents perceive the current road and transport conditions as having a negative or very negative impact on tourism, with 40.00%, stating that the effect is very negative. This implies that poor road networks and inadequate transport facilities are significant obstacles

preventing seamless tourist access to Obudu Plateau, which could limit visitor inflow and affect the overall tourism experience. Meanwhile, 18.52% believe that road conditions have no effect, and 20% see them as having a positive or very positive impact, suggesting that some respondents might have access to better transport routes or alternative means of travel that mitigate these concerns.

Regarding government support for tourism development in Obudu Plateau, half of the respondents (50.37%) believe that the government is not providing sufficient support, which reflects a general dissatisfaction with the level of investment, policy implementation, or infrastructural development in the tourism sector. Only 23.70% of respondents feel that the government is doing enough to support tourism, while 25.93% remain uncertain, possibly due to a lack of awareness or mixed perceptions about government efforts. The significant percentage of dissatisfaction indicates that stakeholders might expect more proactive interventions, such as increased funding, better infrastructure, policy reforms, or enhanced community involvement.

Overall, the data suggests that while tourism holds potential in Obudu Plateau, it faces major structural and financial challenges, particularly in areas such as investment, infrastructure, decision-making inclusion, and transportation. Additionally, the lack of strong government support, as perceived by the majority of respondents, could hinder the sustainable growth of tourism in the region, emphasizing the need for more targeted policies and development strategies to address these key issues.

Table 3: Socio-Economic Impacts of Tourism

	Section D: Socio-Economic Impacts of Tourism			
12.	Has tourism contributed to the economic development of your community?			
	Yes	83	61.48%	83
	No	13	9.63%	96
	Not sure	39	28.89%	135
13.	In what ways has tourism impacted your livelihood?			
	Job creation	78	57.78%	78
	Increased income	17	12.59%	95
	Market for local products	30	22.22%	125
	None	1	0.74%	126
	Others	9	6.67%	135
14.	Do you believe tourism has improved the overall quality of life in Obudu?			
	Strongly agree	63	46.67%	63
	Agree	41	30.37%	104
	Neutral	19	14.07%	123
	Disagree	7	5.19%	130
	Strongly disagree	5	3.70%	135

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 3, indicates that the majority of respondents (61.48%) believe that tourism has contributed positively to the economic development of their community in Obudu. However, a notable 28.89% of respondents are uncertain about its impact, which suggests that either tourism benefits are not widely distributed, or there is a lack of awareness regarding its economic contributions. Only 9.63% of respondents out rightly stated that tourism has not contributed to economic development, indicating that the general perception of tourism's economic role is largely positive.

When examining the specific ways tourism has impacted livelihoods, the most frequently cited benefit was job creation, with 57.78% of respondents acknowledging that tourism has provided employment opportunities. This highlights tourism as a significant employer within the community. Additionally, 22.22% of respondents indicated that tourism has helped by creating a market for local products, demonstrating that tourism supports local businesses and artisans by providing demand for locally made goods. However, only 12.59% reported experiencing increased income from tourism, which may suggest that while tourism creates jobs, the wages or profits generated might not be substantial. A small fraction (0.74%) cited a market for local products, and 6.67% claimed that tourism had no impact on their livelihood, indicating that not all community members benefit equally from tourism-related activities.

Regarding the overall quality of life in Obudu Plateau, 77.04% of respondents (combining those who strongly agree and agree) believe that tourism has improved living conditions. This suggests that tourism plays a significant role in enhancing local infrastructure, services, and opportunities. Meanwhile, 14.07% of respondents remained neutral, meaning they neither perceive a positive nor a negative impact, and 8.89% (disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) feel that tourism has not improved their quality of life. These responses highlight that while tourism has brought benefits, they may not be equally distributed across the community, leading to mixed perceptions.

Table 4: Environmental and Cultural Impacts

	Section E: Environmental and Cultural Impacts			
15.	Are there any environmental issues caused by tourism in Obudu?			
	Yes	82	60.74%	82
	No	53	39.26%	135
16.	Do you think tourism activities in Obudu help preserve cultural heritage?			
	Yes	98	72.59%	98
	No	21	15.56%	119
	Not sure	16	11.85%	135

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 4, indicates that 60.74% of respondents acknowledged that tourism has led to environmental issues in Obudu Plateau. This suggests that despite tourism's economic and social benefits, it is also associated with negative environmental consequences, such as deforestation, waste pollution, or ecosystem disturbances. However, 39.26% of respondents disagreed, indicating that while environmental issues exist, they might not be widespread or significant enough to be a concern for everyone.

On the cultural aspect, an overwhelming 72.59% of respondents believe that tourism helps preserve cultural heritage, demonstrating that tourism activities, such as cultural festivals, heritage site conservation, and traditional craft promotion, have positively contributed to maintaining the community's cultural identity. However, 15.56% of respondents disagree, indicating concerns that tourism might lead to the commercialization or alteration of traditional practices. Additionally, 11.85% remain uncertain, suggesting a gap in awareness or tangible evidence of tourism's role in cultural preservation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The data collectively suggests that tourism has had a generally positive socio-economic impact on Obudu Plateau, particularly in terms of job creation, economic growth, and quality of life improvements. However, the benefits are not universally felt, as some respondents report little or no personal economic gain from tourism. The environmental concerns associated with tourism are also notable, with a significant portion of respondents acknowledging its negative effects on the ecosystem. Nevertheless, tourism appears to be playing a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, reinforcing its importance not just for economic reasons but also for sustaining local traditions and identity. To maximize benefits and minimize negative impacts, it may be necessary to implement better tourism management strategies, sustainable development policies, and broader community engagement to ensure that all residents experience the advantages of tourism in a balanced and equitable manner.

To address these challenges and enhance sustainable community-based tourism development in Obudu Plateau, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Improve Infrastructure, by upgrading road networks, transportation services, and accommodation facilities to enhance accessibility and visitor experience, Develop eco-friendly infrastructure to maintain environmental sustainability.
- Strengthen Community Engagement, by conducting training and capacity-building programs for locals on tourism management, customer service, and entrepreneurship, establish cooperatives to empower community members to participate actively in CBT initiatives.

- Enhance Government and Private Sector Collaboration, in advocating for stronger government policies and financial incentives to support community-based tourism projects, Encourage private-sector investment in tourism-related businesses such as hotels, tour operations, and local craft markets.
- Implement Sustainable Environmental Practices, by Introducing eco-tourism guidelines and conservation programs to protect natural resources, Promote waste management initiatives, including recycling and proper disposal of waste in tourist areas.
- Improve Security Measures, by strengthening local security patrols and surveillance in tourist sites to ensure safety, and Establish conflict resolution mechanisms to address community disputes affecting tourism.
- Develop Effective Marketing Strategies, in creating a strong digital presence through social media, websites, and travel blogs to showcase Obudu Plateau as a top destination, and partnering with national and international tourism boards to attract more visitors.

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