EMPOWERING FAMILY OWNED TOURISM BUSINESS IN OBUDU MOUNTAIN RESORT

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To Allah, the most beneficial, the most merciful To Prophet Mohammed To my beloved mother and father And to my lovely wife (Fatima)

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ABSTRACT

Family owned tourism business development and sustainability has tremendous contribution to family life, community viability, destination development and industry competitiveness. They are nowadays arguably effective vehicles for the economic transformation and revitalization of rural communities. With their copious benefits, very little academic attention has been given to the phenomenon as a promising approach for rural communities' empowerment in the context of developing countries. The existing approaches to rural communities' empowerment such as Community Based Tourism (CBT), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) and Community Benefit Tourism Initiatives (CBTIs) are laudable initiatives but, they have limitations in terms of understanding the family system and their ability to provide wide spread empowerment for all strata of rural communities. In order to explore this contemporary phenomenon, Obudu mountain resort whose host communities still live in poverty was chosen. It is currently relatively the most organized tourists destination in Nigeria with the existence of active family owned tourism businesses. Thus, factors affecting the development and sustainability of micro and small tourism businesses were examined. Using a qualitative case study research strategy, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 38 members of 14 family owned tourism businesses and 10 management staff members of the government and private agencies. The collected data was analysed thematically. The study found inadequacy of disposable capital and extreme seasonality as the main factors affecting the development and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses in the mountain destination. While the low capital base impedes industry specific training and effective marketing, extreme seasonality impact severely on the entire business and family system as the owners depend solely on the businesses for survival. Despite the effects of seasonality, the ability of the operators to remain in business all year round, adopting varying strategies indicates that the "familiness" of family owned tourism business has the potential of reducing seasonality effects in rural areas. As a way of promoting the development and sustainability of family owned tourism business in Obudu mountain resort, for rural poverty alleviation and communities' well-being sustainability, a multi-stakeholder framework was designed to guide the government, private organizations and the existing and prospective tourism entrepreneurs.

ABSTRAK

Pembangunan dan kemampanan perniagaan pelancogan berasaskan keluarga memberi sumbangan besar terhadap kehidupan keluarga, kedayahidupan komuniti serta pembangunan dan dayasaing sesebuah destinasi. Ia dilihat sebagai pemacu yang berkesan dalam transformasi ekonomi dan pemulihan komuniti luar bandar. Dengan manfaat yang besar, perhatian terhad diberi oleh ahli akademik terhadap fenomena tersebut melalui pendekatan memperkasa komuniti luarbandar dalam konteks negara membangun. Pendekatan sedia ada dalam pemerkasaan komuniti luar bandar seperti Community Based Tourism (CBT), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) dan Community Benefit Tourism lnitiatives (CBTIs) adalah inisiatif yang baik tetapi mempunyai batasan dalam memahami sistem kekeluargaan dan keupayaan untuk menggalakkan pemerkasaan secara menyeluruh semua lapisan masyarakat luar bandar. Dalam usaha untuk meneroka fenomena kontemporari ini, Obudu Mountain Resort yang mana komunitinya masih berada dalam kemiskinan telah dipilih sebagai kajian kes. Ia merupakan destinasi pelancongan tersusun di Nigeria dengan kewujudan perniagaan pelancongan keluarga yang aktif. Faktor-faktor yang memberi kesan terhadap pembangunan perniagaan pelancongan kecil dan mikro telah dikaji. Menggunakan strategi penyelidikan kajian kes kualitatif, temubual terperinci separuh struktur telah dijalankan terhadap 38 anggota daripada 14 buah perniagaan pelancongan keluarga dan 10 kakitangan pengurusan dari pihak kerajaan serta agensi swasta. Data yang diperolehi dianalisa secara tematik. Kajian mendapati kekurangan modal boleh guna dan pengaruh musim sebagai faktor utama yang memberi kesan kepada pembangunan dan daya saing perniagaan pelancongan milikan keluarga di destinasi pergunungan. Sementara itu, asas modal yang rendah telah memperlahankan latihan khusus industri dan pemasaran berkesan dan pengaruh musim memberi kesan yang negatif kepada keseluruhan perniagaan dan sistem kekeluargaan kerana pemilik bergantung sepenuhnya ke atas perniagaan tersebut untuk terus hidup. Walaupun kesannya adalah disebabkan musim, keupayaan pengusaha dalam mengekalkan perniagaan sepanjang tahun dengan menggunapakai pelbagai strategi menunjukkan faktor kekeluargaan boleh mengurangkan kesan bermusim di luar bandar. Sebagai langkah untuk menggalakkan pembangunan dan kemampanan perniagaan pelancongan milikan keluarga di Obudu Mountain Resort, rangkakerja bagi pelbagai pemegang berkepentingan telah direkabentuk untuk pembasmian kemiskinan luar bandar dan kesejahteraan komuniti mampan. Ia juga adalah bertujuan untuk membimbing pihak kerajaan, organisasi swasta dan usahawan pelancongan sedia ada dan berpotensi.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

The tremendous contribution tourism has made to the economic development of many countries hitherto both in the developing and the developed countries cannot be over emphasized. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2015), travel and tourism generated 105,408,000 jobs directly in 2014 (3.6% of total employment) and this is forecast to grow by 2.0% in 2015 to 107,519,000 (3.6% of total employment). International tourism receipts increased by US \$48 billion in 2014 to reach a record US \$1,245 billion which positioned tourism to be the world's leading and fastest growing sector of economy (UNWTO, 2015). The growing interest in tourism and the gains it offers in terms of personal desire satisfaction and monetary advantage to the government of host communities worldwide has resulted in evolvement of new alternative forms of tourism which have provided many opportunities for micro and small business in rural areas to flourish.

The tourism industry is dominated by micro and small tourism businesses that are mostly family owned and they are playing a vital role in destination development and competitiveness (Morrison and King, 2002). Because of the micro and small size nature of the businesses in most tourism destinations and the relatively little capital require to set them up, the tourism industry provides opportunities for relatively easy entry into a number of business types that are often attractive to sole proprietors and families (Getz and Carlsen, 2000). Examples of family owned tourism businesses are hotel, winery, motel, guest ranch and farm, bed and breakfast, retail outlet, tour operator, restaurant, homestay, cafe, arts and craft and transportation (Carlsen *et al.* 2001; Gets and Nilsson, 2004; Zhao, 2009). Family businesses are increasing in rural areas in the developed countries and they are dominating tourism destinations in many regions and a considerable effort has been made to encourage its sustainability (Andersson *et al.* 2002). In Australia, 90% of the members of the Augusta-Margaret River Tourist Association in Western part of the country were found to be family owned tourism businesses (Carlsen *et al.* 2001).

There is no doubt that with the records available in the literature, heavy investment in tourism will bring fruitful returns and will help in job creation for local communities. According to Hawkins and Mann (2007), the World Bank have step up its support for tourism related project and programmes since the year 2000 because of the promising role tourism has played in the fulfilment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Today, local micro and small tourism enterprise development is now encouraged and endorsed as a catalyst for economic independency, community empowerment and capacity-building (Zhao, 2009).

In the ST-EP program of the United Nation World Tourism Organization in year 2002, the establishment and running of micro and small tourism enterprises was recognized as one of the most important ways for the poor to participate in and share the benefits of tourism development in their locality. To further state the importance the United Nation World Tourism Organization accorded micro and small tourism business growth and development, four of the seven recommendations for the implementation of ST-EP are for local tourism enterprises development (UNWTO, 2004, 2006). In addition, the World Tourism Organization have worked and are still working closely with microfinance institutions, trying to see the possibilities of adapting microcredit to the specific needs of micro and small businesses (Zhao, 2009).

Family businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector are significant in regional development. Their significance for job creation and economic

revitalization of rural communities is immeasurable (Fleischer and Felsenstein, 2004; Wanhill, 2000). As noted by Kokkranikal (1993) and Getz and Carlsen (2000), a successful family businesses increase community development, create new source of employment for able body men and women, and provide a better quality of life for the rural dwellers. The potential benefits they bring to peripheral areas are many which include: providing income for parents to educate their children's, increasing local peoples tie to their land, enhance locals commitment to their communities in many ways and it also helps to develop the locals attitude towards conservation of resources (Getz and Carlsen, 2000).

With all the copious benefit associated with family business in tourism in rural areas, in most developing countries, the tourism industry is dominated by conventional mass tourism in the developing countries which constrains the growth prospects of micro and small tourism firms (Rogerson, 2007). This dominance reduces the potentials of tourism in poverty alleviation in developing countries (Mbaiwa, 2005). The collective negotiating power of micro and small tourism businesses in developing countries to compete with well-established international tour operators and access tourism markets to their advantage is a major challenge that has led to a lot of foreign exchange leakages (Thomas *et al.* 2012).

Furthermore, the participation of rural communities in micro and small family owned tourism businesses is low in developing countries when compared to what obtains in developed nations (Godwin, 2002). If rural community participation in micro and small family owned tourism businesses in developing is encouraged, poverty prevalent in many rural tourism communities in developing countries will be alleviated as rural dwellers will be empowered (Tosun, 2000; Cole, 2006; Hampton, 2005). However, till date, there is paucity of research that explores the possibilities of empowering family business in tourism in developing countries mountain destinations for rural communities empowerment and poverty alleviation.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Obudu Mountain in Cross River State in Nigeria has enjoyed relative development into an international tourism destination and there exist in its local communities some active family owned tourism businesses. Despite the scale of tourism development and the presence of some family owned tourism businesses on Obudu Mountain, the majority of the inhabitants of its host communities still wallow in poverty. A recent study conducted by Nwahia *et al.* (2012) shows that rural community participation in tourism development in Obudu mountain resort had little effect on reduction of poverty. It was evident in their study that 1% increase in tourism income of both active and non-active participating core poor and moderate poor households reduces their poverty by 0.01%. This effect is seen as extremely low. By implication, it connotes that the existence of the Obudu mountain resort and family owned tourism businesses in its host communities have not alleviated rural poverty. It also suggest that family tourism business contribution to family life, entreprise and community viability, destination development and competiveness have not been significantly felt in Obudu mountain resort environment.

Inspite of the tremendous benefits of family tourism business, there is scarcity of research in family business in tourism that is directed towards rural communities empowerment and poverty alleviation in developing countries. Over the years, poverty incidence have been in the increase in developing countries and it's even worst in sub-Sahara Africa known with high potential in tourism development (Ajakaiye and Odusola; Anyanwu, 2012). The existing tourism based approaches to rural communities' empowerment and poverty alleviation such as Community Based Tourism (CBT) (Manyara *et al.* 2006), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) (Godwin, 2008), and Community Benefit Tourism Initiatives (CBTIs) (Simpson, 2008), have reasonably received academic attention. They are also laudable initiatives but they have limitations in terms of understanding the family system in peripheral rural tourism communities and their little ability to provide wide spread empowerment for all the strata of rural communities.

Meanwhile, exploring the phenomenon of family owned tourism business so as to stimulate its development and sustainability for rural communities empowerment and poverty alleviation requires an understanding of the factors affecting the development and sustainability of micro and small tourism businesses which have not been investigated in sub-Sahara countries context. They include issues on their characteristics, marketing, seasonality, and the role of government and private agencies. Details on the need for the investigation of these variables in the case study area which informed the research questions and objectives stated in this research are discussed in details in the next sub section.

1.2.1 The Need for Research

Firstly, in order to explore the phenomenon of family owned tourism business, an understanding of its unique characteristics in the case study area is paramount. As such, this inform the need to investigate the characteristics of family owned tourism business in Obudu mountain resort host communities in terms of their socio-economic features, the types of businesses, family structure, relationship of family members in the businesses, nature of family meetings, powers and hierarchy of family members in the businesses, method of business decision and crisis management approach (Sander and Bordone, 2006; Lee and Li, 2009; Tower *et al.* 2006). Other characteristics investigated include: start-up issues such as source of capital and difficulty encountered during start-up, motivation, level of industry-specific training among family members, and succession planning (Getz *et al.* 2004; Chen and Elston, 2013; Blumentritt *et al.* 2012). All of these features are necessary during family business development and its sustainability.

Secondly, the marketing practices of the existing family owned tourism businesses and the obstacles to it are necessary to be examined as ineffective marketing of tourism business will hamper growth, development and sustainability. As noted by Polo-Peña *et al.* (2012) marketing practices have a significant effect on the achievement of outcomes that keeps tourism business going.

Thirdly, the sustainability of micro and small tourism businesses is often threatened by seasonal nature of tourism activities in many destinations as seasonality is generally considered one of the major challenges of tourism businesses (Kastenholz and Almeida, 2008). Seasonality is a reality of life in many tourism destinations and a key aspect affecting the performance of micro and small tourism enterprises (Butler, 2001; Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2012). Therefore, for continues survivability and sustainability of micro and small family owned tourism businesses, there is the need to explore seasonality issues in the case study area.

Fourthly, in encouraging people to venture into micro and small tourism businesses, the government and private sector play a significant role. One of the fundamental roles of government is the provision of enabling environment for indigenous community to easily access fund from private and public financial institutions. Government also collaborate with donor agencies, NGOs and World Bank to support micro and small tourism enterprise development through provision of start-up capital. For instance, the concept of donor-assisted community-based tourism (DACBT) has promoted aid through international cooperation and allows many local communities characterized by subsistence economies to obtain the initial funding in cash to start creating their own microenterprises (UNWTO 2004, 2006; López-Guzmán et al. 2013). In addition, the drive for the establishment of community base tourism enterprises in Kenya mainly results from external intervention (Manyara and Jones, 2007). So it is important that the government and private sector role in supporting the development and sustainability of family owned tourism business in the case study area is investigated. On the basis of the foregoing discussion, the following questions and objectives are stated to guide the research as shown in the next sub sections.

1.3 Research Questions

Four research questions have been developed to guide this research. These are:

- I. What are the characteristics of family owned tourism businesses with respect to the family system in relation to the businesses in Obudu mountain resort in Nigeria?
- II. How effective are the strategies adopted by family owned tourism businesses in marketing?
- III. How does seasonality affect family owned tourism businesses in Obudu mountain resort and what are their coping strategies?
- IV. What roles have government and private agencies played in supporting the development and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses in Obudu mountain resort?

1.4 Research Objectives

In view of the above research questions, this thesis addressed the following objectives:

- I. To examine the characteristics of family owned tourism businesses in Nigeria using the case of Obudu mountain resort.
- II. To investigate the strategies adopted in marketing family owned tourism businesses.
- III. To ascertain the nature of seasonality in Obudu mountain resort and its effect on family owned tourism businesses.
- IV. To examine the the roles of government and private agencies in the development and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses in Obudu mountain resort.
- V. To suggest a guide for stakeholders in the development and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses based on findings.

1.5 Scope of Research

For reasons of manageability it is important to identify the scope and boundaries of the system to be studied (Hall, 2000). The scope of this research is discussed under three pertinent sub headings. These headings show the extent of coverage of the study. This is discussed in terms of area, population or target group and in terms of content.

1.5.1 Scope of the Area

The study area include the host communities of Obudu mountain resort which are the communities surrounding the tourists destination and they are seven in number. Six of these communities are found at the mountain top and they are: Anape, Okpazawge, Kigol, Keji-Ukwu, Okwamu and Apah-Ajilli. The seventh community called Ikwette is at the bottom of the mountain close to the entrance gate leading to the mountain resort.

1.5.2 Scope of Population

The population for this study consists of two main groups as follows:

- I. Existing family owned tourism businesses.
- II. Stakeholders (Tourism officers of Obanliku local government council, Management staff of Obudu mountain resort, Management staff of Cross River State Tourism Bureau, Operation managers of Obudu micro finance bank and FCE Micro finance bank).

1.5.3 Scope of Content

The scope of this research in terms of content which streamlines the depth and direction of the research includes investigation into the characteristics of the identified family owned tourism businesses, marketing issues, seasonality issues, and the role government and private agencies have played in supporting the development and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses. All of these issues which were earlier stated in sub section 1.2.1 were investigated.

1.6 Significance of Research

Given the huge potentials in tourism development in Nigeria and the laudable initiatives of the Cross River State government in developing the Obudu mountain into an international tourists destination and even with that, poverty incidence is still high in Obudu mountain environment, this study is timely and its significance is in three folds.

- I. Findings would unveil the impediment to family owned tourism business development and sustainability in the context of Obudu mountain resort environment.
- II. Findings would provide a guide to government in policy making to promote family owned tourism business as a panacea to rural poverty.
- III. Findings would highlight areas of collaboration between stakeholders in the development and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses in Obudu mountain resort and other rural peripheral tourists destinations in Nigeria.

1.7 Outline of this Thesis

This thesis is presented in seven (7) chapters and they are briefly discussed below:

Chapter One: This chapter discusses the background of the research. It explains the problem statement and the need for research and also the rationale for the research questions and objectives. It contains the research questions and objectives. It also explains the scope of the research, and then followed by the significance of research. This chapter concludes with a summary of all that was discussed.

Chapter Two: This chapter discusses tourism development in developing countries and its significance in rural communities revitalization and empowerment.

It also discusses the concept of tourism based rural communities empowerment and its dimensions. Furthermore, approaches to rural communities empowerment and poverty alleviation through tourism are discussed. It also discusses the concept of family business in non-tourism and tourism sector and some characteristic of the family system and family business. The role of micro and small tourism businesses in destination development and poverty alleviation is also highlighted in this chapter. In addition, this chapter explains some of the factors affecting the development and sustainability of micro and small tourism business. Lastly, the summary of the issues raised in this chapter is presented in the conclusion.

Chapter Three: This chapter discusses the study area where the research was conducted and the phenomenon of interest (family owned tourism business). It starts by presenting the location and climate of the case study area (Obudu mountain resort). It then followed by justifying the Obudu mountain resort as a case study of family owned tourism business in Nigeria. It also discusses the evolution of Obudu mountain resort and the genesis of the development of family owned tourism businesses. The chapter further describe the population structure of the host communities of Obudu mountain resort.

Chapter Four: This chapter discusses in details the methodological idea pertinent to this research that provides an understanding on the issues surrounding family owned tourism businesses in the case study area. The first section discusses qualitative research as the chosen research paradigm with emphasis on why it was chosen. The second section discusses why case study was the chosen research strategy and why the mountain resort was considered as a single case for family owned tourism business. The third section describes the method of data collection. The fourth section discusses the procedure used in data analysis which elaborate on how the recorded interviews where transcribed and the thematic analysis approach used in analysing interview transcripts was carried out. This chapter ends with a conclusion.

Chapter Five: It presents the findings in the context of each of the four research questions which ends with a conclusion that summarizes all the findings.

Chapter Six: This chapter discusses the findings presented in chapter five starting with an introduction to the issues presented. The order of discussion is similar in sequence as the presentations in chapter five. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

Chapter Seven: This chapter presents a Multi-stakeholder framework for empowering family business in tourism in the context of Obudu mountain resort. The chapter discusses all the components that makes the framework and the rationale for their inclusion. It also discusses the theoretical and practical contribution of this research as well as the limitation of research and future research direction. Lastly, the chapter ends with a concluding remark.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the background introduction into the research reported in this thesis. It noted the incidence of poverty in an active tourists destination (Obudu mountain resort host communities) even with the presence of some family owned tourism businesses; a situation that does not benefit a destination and its host communities. Thus, this necessitates a research to uncover issues around the phenomenon of family business in tourism. Finally the chapter emphasis the need for rural communities participation in tourism development as owners of micro and small family owned tourism businesses so that they can be empowered, be self sufficient and have their poverty level reduced. The next chapter present the literature review.

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