

A STUDY OF TOURISTS' SAFETY IN THE AHANTA WEST DISTRICT IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Issues of tourists' safety are gaining grounds in Ghana especially in the Ahanta West District in the Western Region where Ghana discovered commercial crude oil in Cape Three Points in 2007 and started drilling in 2010. Using purposive sampling method, observation, interviews and questionnaires, this study sought to examine the extent to which tourists perceive their own safety in this destination which is old but now renewed tourist destination due to the oil find in Ghana. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere to tourists was indicative of a safe and a secured destination for tourists. The display of globalization showed in the form of 'glocalization' in this destination. There is a conflict between land use for agricultural purposes and tourist facilities since the predominant cash crop in this area is oil palm, hence a threat to agricultural sustainability. It is recommended that the security agents should as a matter of urgency put in place the appropriate structures in this tourist destination and farming area for safety.

Keywords: glocalization, Ahanta, Ghana

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INTRODUCTION

Personal safety of tourists at the destination is relevant to tourists and destination managers and therefore the perceived and actual risk associated with travel and tourism has made safety and security very critical in the promotion of tourism (Mopeli, 2009). The subject of safety and security has become more imperative not only for the host-community, but also for the tourist who is a guest (Cavlek, 2002) in a new environment. As Mansfeld and Pizam (2006) opined, peace, safety and security are the three prerequisites for thriving tourism development in every destination.

The tourism sector in Ghana has remained as a steady contributor to economic growth and development. According to Institute of Statistical, Social & Economic Research – ISSER (2017), tourism has been a major source of foreign exchange, employment and government revenue in Ghana. In the report of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2016, travel and tourism generated a lot more of tourist receipts which was 10.2% of global GDP and 292 million jobs, equivalent to 1 in 10 jobs in the global economy. The contribution of the tourism sector in 2016 to total employment, both direct and indirect was 5.9%, representing 693,000 jobs. In the assessment of ISSER (2017), tourism arrivals were

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Table 1. Tourism indicators in Ghana in 2009–2016

Indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Arrivals (in thous.)	802.8	931.2	1 080.20	903.30	993.60	1 093.0	1 202.2	1 322.5
Receipts (USD million)	1 615.20	1 875.00	2 178.9	1 704.7	1 876.9	2 066.5	2 275.2	2 505.5
Gross contribution to GDP								
GDP	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tourism is now either the 3rd or 4th foreign exchange earner in Ghana			
	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%	4.8%				

Source: Ghanaian Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (2012); Ghana Tourism Authority (2016).

estimated at 1,322,500 in 2016 representing a 10% increase from 2015 as shown in the TABLE 1 below. Also, as shown in Table 1, revenue from tourism also went up by approximately 10% from USD 2,275.2 million in 2015 to USD 2,505.5 million in 2016.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Appaw-Agbola and Dehlor (2011) propose that tourism has emerged as one of the fastest growing industries, averaging about 4% per annum worldwide. They proposed that though there are major destinations in the developed countries, a number of developing countries have also become major points of destination. In Africa, such major destinations include Kenya, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Ghana (Appaw-Agbola and Dehlor, 2011). Tourism in Ghana has become a major socio-economic activity and one of the most important and fastest growing sectors of the Ghanaian economy (Dorkenoo, 2013). The perceived risk associated with travel and tourism has made safety issues come to the lime light in many studies in tourism promotion (Boakye, 2011) especially in the developing countries after the September, 11 disaster in USA where safety was supposed to be the best. This study sought to identify the perceptions tourists have about safety in the Ahanta West District which houses the recently oil find area at the west of Cape Three Points. For this purpose both primary and secondary data are used in the discussion. The adopted and modified model attempts to show how safety at the tourist destination has become integral

among tourism components termed by the research as shown below in Figure 1 as '4-DPC' (Four destination product components) namely: physical products, programmes, people and packages.

Destination management

In the opinion of Morrison (2012), destination management can be defined as the coordination and integration of all the elements of the tourist destination mix (physical products, programmes, people and packages) in a particular geographic area based upon a defined tourism strategy and plan.

Physical products include items like attractions, facilities, transportation and other infrastructure at the tourist destination and these attractions play the central role of pulling and drawing tourists to the destination (Vengesayi, 2003) and one of the reasons of visiting a place (Kamra and Chand, 2006). Events and festivals are put together for tourists and well designed and promoted programmes share the same role with the physical products and their safety conditions can determine the numbers of tourists.

The local people provide the hospitality resources as the hosts and providers of personal services. Hospitality of the residents is an asset to tourism development and this has been the bedrock for tourism development in Ghana especially when it comes to host-guest interaction (Boakye, 2011; Imbeah, Hodibert and Amankwa, 2016). It is also observed in Ghana that hospitality can be classified as both tourist product and safety measure since the personnel who offer the tourist services display the nature, values and

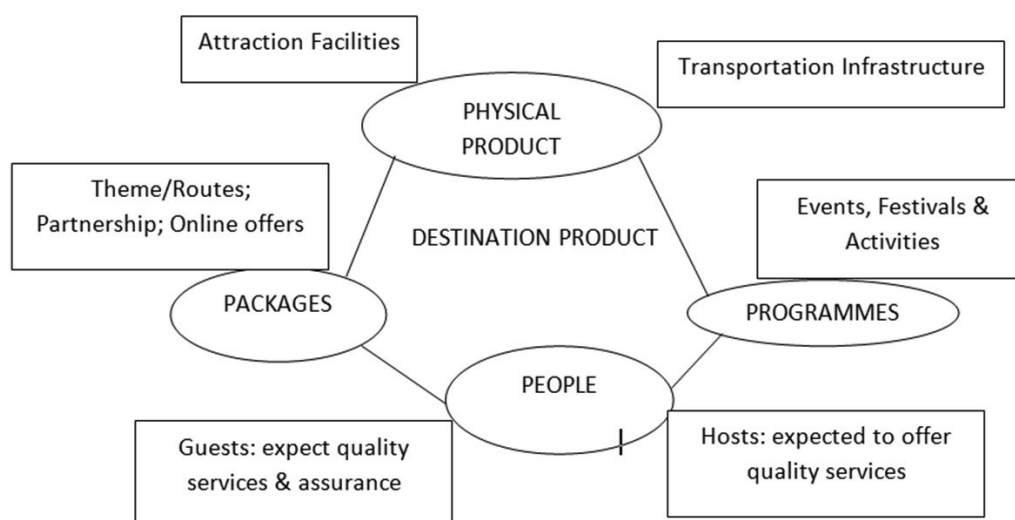


Figure 1. Four destination product components (4-DPC)

Source: adopted and modified from Morrison (2012).

hospitality of the host community. Packages are put together by tour operators, travel agencies and other related agencies, and merge many elements of the total travel experience and satisfaction and these draw tourists to destinations as proposed by Imbeah (2011) and Imbeah and Odoom (2016). In all this, safety is crucial in the operator's motive to make profit and the tourists' motivation to travel.

Figure 1 which is termed '4-DPC' summarizes the components under 2.1.1 and 2.1.2; that destination product is made of physical product, programmes, people and packages which are accessed by tourists at a destination. Each of these destination products has various and viable elements which are either enjoyed or offered for sale by the tour operators to the tourists.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey, involving a sample of tourists to Ahanta District tourist destination namely, Busua Beach, Egyambra Crocodile Pond, Cape Three Points, Dixcove, Akwidaa and Princess Town rendezvous sessions were undertaken. Also, interview with the Ghana Police Service and some literature retrieval from Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) in Takoradi were conducted. The data collection was done on

1 July 2015 during the peak tourist season in Ghana from June to early September. A purposive sampling technique which was non probability sampling procedure was adopted because the target population was made of tourists. Purposive sampling was used to select these areas because they are possible sites most tourists could be intercepted easily. Research instruments used were: questionnaire was used for the tourists and interview guide was used for the Ghana Police Service. Observation was also keenly applied during the data collection. Research assistants were recruited and trained to help in the questionnaire administration. Meetings were arranged with the management of Ghana Police Service for interview at their offices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Origin of respondents

The study also showed that Europeans were the majority (17 respondents representing 42.5%) of the sampled respondents. This was followed by Americans who were 10 representing 25% of the total sampled respondents. Australians were the least recorded with only one respondent. The number of Asians and Africans except Ghanaians were the same, 6 respondents (representing 15%) each. This might confirm the

observation made by Frimpong-Bonsu (2015) that Europeans are the most generating tourists to Ghana. However, the study indicated that, there was a downturn in the arrivals from Africa and Asia while arrivals from Europe and America are still high as per the arrivals at least in this particular district.

Discussion of tourists' perception about safety

As revealed in Table 2, 45% of the respondents strongly agreed and 50% agreed that uncontrolled unemployment is a major cause of tourism offenses and has the propensity to create unsafe ambience for recreational activities and the remaining 5% disagreed with that notion. Though there was an evidence of uncontrolled offenses situation in this destination, it was not a cause for bother for tourist safety. As shown in Table 2, some of the reasons for feeling unsafe are: overcrowding in facilities, lack of good policing practice, very high cost of living, poor publicity about tourism crime and poor management of tourism facilities.

Ghana Tourism Authority official in Takoradi, said that, 'at the beaches in the District, you always find foreigners mainly Afro-Americans dressed like the natives and even eating the food of the locals while on vacation. You see them freely enjoying the beach facilities without any safety problem and this is manifestation of globalization'. The popular beach is Busua Beach Resort. However, as a result

of the presence of serene ambience for vacation in the District, 'glocalization' an aspect of globalization is real. Reisinger (2009) proposed that 'glocalization' is the result of the relationships between the global 'tourists' and the local 'residents'. In the interaction with the Ghana Police Service boss, DSP, it was revealed that, the district is 'fairly a friendly and secured destination'. The days during which the beaches are highly patronized are: Independence Day – 6th of March; Republic Day – 1st of July; Workers' Day – 1st of May; Easter Mondays; and New Year Day – 1st of January. The police intensify patrols at the beaches during holidays to provide adequate security for holiday makers. Majority of the respondents proposed that the presence of police personnel in tourists' areas indicated and enhanced a safe and a secured destination for tourists and where there was a provision of a welcoming and friendly atmosphere to visitors, tourists also felt safe and secure.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, it is recommended that the GTA should quickly take opportunity of calm tourist destination to establish the necessary structures such as engaging the immediate tourism agencies like the local tour guides and form a team made of guides, Ghana Police Service and Ghana Fire Service should help educate and maintain safety in this destination. It is again recommended that, service providers should be

Table 2. Unsafe conditions-distribution of tourists' reasons

Reasons	SA (strongly agree)	A (agree)	N (neutral)	D (disagree)	SD (strongly disagree)
Uncontrolled unemployment	45	50	0	5	0
Overcrowding in facilities	10	17.5	0	52.5	20
Lack of good policing practice	0	5	0	82.5	12.5
Very high cost of living	15	27.5	30	15	12.5
Poor publicity about tourism crime	0	10	42.5	20	27.5
Poor management of the facilities	2.5	15	27.5	50	5
Uncontrolled crime situation	0	0	2.5	7.5	90

Source: fieldwork and Results of Tourists' Perception about Safety (2015).

advised by the GTA on how to treat their clients as far as harassment and security of tourists are concerned. Most tourists become victims of behaviour intended to disturb or upset or make them insecure because they are unaware of such issues and some have little knowledge about them in the country. Finally, the Ghana Tourism Authority needs to organize seminars and training programmes for service providers and the general public to make them understand what they may lose if security and harassment of tourists are not managed properly and to encourage friendly behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

The research revealed that tourists generally perceive Ghana to be safe even though few of them were once victims to crime situations; they would still recommend the destination for others and would even want to visit again. Agriculture is the major economic activity in the District and the predominant cash crop is oil palm. However, one notable challenge is the competition between the use of land for rubber plantations and use of land for cultivation of food crop. Also, there is also an increasing demand for land for other non-agricultural activities like tourism and hotel facilities in the district especially in the wake of the oil find in the region and its subsequent drilling in 2010.

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