

The Impact Of Culture On Tourism In Ghana: An Investigation Of Cultural Tourism In Tamale Metropolis

Adam Bawa Yussif (Ph.D)

Afisa Abu Jaja

Dominic Alimber Dery

Tamale Technical University, Tamale

Abstract: *An effective and well planned cultural practice has steadily placed most tourism sectors of the world on the path of growth and universal acceptance. It has literally opened a window through which the world can see, appreciate, admire and identify with the prospects and progress of a nation. Just like well packaged products, cultural practices need some virile media of communication to convey them to the desired destinations. Culture and tourism are linked because of their obvious synergies and their growth potential. Emergence of cultural tourism has contributed to enhancing tourism. It is identified that culture and tourism impact each other. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of culture on tourism in the Tamale Metropolis. To achieve this objective, an extensive literature review was conducted that led to the development of the objectives outlined for the study. Subsequently, the qualitative research design based on causal relationships was adopted to guide the conduct of the study. A questionnaire was used to collect data for analysis. The study found that culture had a significant impact on tourism through facilitating tourism promotion, demand for tourism products and enhancing creative destinations. The study also found that culture had a significantly high effect on tourism promotion and marketing.*

Keywords: *Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Economic*

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Over the last couple of decades, the travel and tourism industry in every nation across the world has recorded and continues to record tremendous growth. Incidentally, tourism has developed into a truly worldwide activity that knows no political, ideological, geographical, or cultural boundaries. According to Bharathiar (2011), tourism has become more than just another industry and that it has developed into an important part of the economic foundation of many countries.

Today, tourism has become one of the major international industries as it is the world's largest and rapidly growing and profitable industry. Economically, tourism continues to be a leading employer as it employs around 235 million people worldwide (Tuhin & Majumder, 2011). This accounts for more than 8% of global employment. Travel and tourism is

also noted to contribute to over 13% of global GDP (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2013). The substantial economic benefits of the tourism industry include generating foreign exchange, income, employment and development (Tuhin & Mejumder, 2011). The sole reason behind the success and growth of the industry, according to Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2013), is the increase in trade between nations, increasing spending power of the people, curiosity to visit new countries and learn new culture and finally, improvement in the means of communication. Undoubtedly, the many dimensions of travel and tourism move beyond the transportation and tourism sectors to facilitate growth in others.

In this 21st century, tourism is growing very fast and plays an important role in the world economy. According to World Tourism Organization (2015), international tourist arrivals and receipts worldwide in 2014 was approximately 2.7 billion and \$500 trillion respectively despite global terrorism,

tsunami in some part of Asia, SAR in china and Southeast Asia, and rising of oil price. Tourism has become a global economic activity and its impact on socio-economic development is tremendously huge. In Ghana, tourism has been found to have a significant impact of government revenues and job creation, especially for the youth in rural communities.

Ultimately, the growth of tourism, its relevance in the economy, and the social impacts on the lives of people has compelled governments and stakeholders across the world to invest hugely into the development of tourism. Today, a popular theme in tourism development and promotion is cultural or heritage tourism. Research conducted in the area found that culture and tourism impact each other (Bazartha, 2012). Culture has played a pivotal role in tourism development and promotion lately. Accordingly, authorities have found culture to be beneficial in tourism development.

As communities and nations move to restructure and fine tune their cultural practices as a means of promoting tourism, a number of debates have emerged lately. Whiles proponents of cultural tourism hold the view that culture impacts tourism, opponents such as Minstengr (2013) argue that tourism rather influences the nature of the culture of a people and hence, could not be a tool for promoting it. It is estimated that this debate will continue into the future.

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to assess the impact of culture on the development of tourism in Ghana, with specific considerations to Tamale Metropolis. Ghana is a well-known destination for tourist from across the world and according to the Ghana Tourism Authority (2011), the country is among the top tourist destination in West Africa. Consequently, Tourism in Ghana has become a major socio-economic activity and one of the most important and fastest growing sectors of the Ghanaian economy. The industry generates substantial amounts in revenues to the government and provides several job opportunities to the youth especially in rural communities. According current statistics from the Ministry of Tourism (2014), the tourism industry contribute not less than 10% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product.

Despite its tremendous contribution to the socio-economic development of Ghana, the tourism potential is still underutilized (Frimpong, 2014). Consequently, to improve tourism sector performance and take advantage of the potential it offers, the government of Ghana established the Ministry of Tourism. The purpose was to advance and develop Ghana as an internationally competitive and high quality destination for tourists. As a result, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ghana Tourism Authority have found culture as an increasingly important element of the tourism product. Stakeholders in the tourism industry rely very much on Ghana rich and diversified cultural heritage as tool for tourism promotion.

Tamale Metropolis is home to some of the most important tourist sites in Ghana and over the years, the number of tourists visiting the metropolis has increased tremendously. The cultural heritage and diversity of the people of Tamale is known across the world. The purpose of this study is to assess the role that culture has played in the tourism sector in Tamale Metropolis

II. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND RESPONDENTS

This study utilized both primary and secondary data to achieve its purpose. There are various methods by which both secondary and primary data are obtained. Saunders *et al* (2007) list questionnaire, interviews (semi-structured, in-depth and group) and observation as methods that are usable.

Primary and secondary data was collected for analysis. The choice of these tools and techniques were in accordance with those demanded by the research. What is culture, the knowledge behind its function and its impact on Tourism in Tamale Metropolis, what are main cultural factors which are important from touristic point of view and how traditional culture impacts the flow of tourists were main questions to be answered. And for that, the study relied on a certain qualitative approach identified by Bryman (2004). It aims to gather an in depth understanding upon human behavior and the appropriate reason that ruled behind such behavior. The qualitative method investigates the why, and how, not simply just what, where and when. For this, smaller but focused samples were chosen.

This study used questionnaire and interview guide. Self-administered questionnaires were sent to chiefs who could speak and read English. These questionnaires were administered to a convenience sample of 60 respondents by trained Higher National Diploma students for course credits using techniques demonstrated to be very successful in conducting such studies in an international context (Coviello *et al.*, 2002). Respondents with background in tourism and cultural issues were selected for the study.

III. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Respondents were drawn from traditional chiefs (20), sub-chiefs (30) and members of the Museum and Monument Board. The typical respondent was about 40 years old (80%) and had been in the current position for at least 3 years. The distribution of the sample according to gender was male (90%) and female (10%).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A number of factors were found to characterize the tourism industry in Tamale in particular and Ghana in general. The study found that the industry used both natural and manmade resources to design its tourism products. For instance, physical geographic features, such as rivers, caves and national forests have been the region's major unique selling point. There are also sites of historic and cultural significance such as the Traditional Chief's Palaces where there is a wide display of typical northern artefact, sacred symbols and totems that have over the years united the people of Tamale. Apart from these resources that form a crust of the tourist product of Tamale, there are also special cultural events such as seasonal festivals, craft fairs and sporting events. Notable among these events are the culturally unique Damba Festival which is the major festival of the Dagombas of

Tamale and the Bugum Chugu popularly known as the Fire Festival. These events are occasionally celebrated to commemorate where they have come from as a people, what they believe in and those ancestors they owe allegiance.

Also, the use of tangible and intangible cultural assets as a means of developing comparative advantage amidst the intense competition hence, culture was an important element of the industry's tourism product. There has been growing relationship between tourism and culture among the people of Tamale, and the way in which they have together become major drivers of destination attractiveness and competitiveness. Based on the findings the relationship between tourism, culture and regional attractiveness, and the policy interventions which have been taken to enhance the relationship shows how a strong link between tourism and culture can be fostered to help Tamale become more attractive to tourists, as well as increasing its competitiveness as a location to live, visit, work and invest in as far as Ghana as a tourist destination is concerned.

A number of variables were also identified to be important strategies for tourism promotion and marketing. The use of cultural heritage, the presence of innovative and enhanced tourism products, media advertisement, international relations, and institutional marketing were among the strategies of tourism marketing in Tamale specifically and Ghana in general. Some of these strategies include the periodic organisation of seminars, tourism fairs, tours, meetings and conferences for stakeholders in the industry. One of the most important ways in which Tourism organisations in Tamale are assisting in the development of culture and tourism products is through marketing activities. Because of the complexity of the cultural product mainly because it is dynamic, very often there is a need to constantly utilize and give regional products exposure in national and international markets. The Ghana Tourism Authority needs to do more in developing a wide range of marketing activities related to culture and tourism in Tamale. These activities must include branding and image development, internet platforms which have accommodation and event booking functionality, joint promotions with tour operators from other parts of Ghana, especially the Capital, Accra, themed products (events, attractions, cultural routes) and finally encouraging filming of main tourism attractions in the Northern Region.

Finally, the study again found that culture has a significant effect on tourism marketing in the Tamale Metropolis because of its capacity to enhance the attractiveness of tourism products, to create local distinctiveness in tourism products, to enhance the competitiveness of tourism sites and products, and to improve tourism promotion.

V. CONCLUSION

In the light of the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that culture has a significant impact on tourism marketing. What this means is that the specific elements of culture are critical considerations in deciding which marketing strategy to adopt in promoting tourism in any destination. Through a number of strategies, culture was found to have a positive

correlation with each of the tourism marketing variables. The relevant conclusion of the study is that culture does have a significant impact on tourism marketing through a number of strategies such as enhancing the attractiveness of tourism products, developing uniqueness and distinctiveness of tourism sites and products and tourism promotion among other things. For this reason, there is the need to urgently focus on the cultural diversities of places for tourism development and promotion. In most cases, it is the culture of a group of people that serves as their competitive advantage.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that traditional authorities such as the chiefs and sub chiefs should reshape some aspects of their cultural values such as festivals to fine-tune them to attract more attention across globe. There is the need for this reshaping to be done because certain aspects of these festivals do not appeal really well to travelling tourists. This will enhance the partnership between culture and tourism. The link between regions can extend the cultural opportunities available to tourists and help to support new and innovative product offers. In addition to that, focus should not be placed only on the intangible components of culture but also on the tangibles. The reason is that the tangible elements of culture which include artefacts, dresses, food, drums and other visible aspects tangibilize the whole experience for visiting tourists.

Another recommendation is that the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Ghana Tourism Authority should frequently organize seminars, tourism fairs, tours, meetings and conferences for stakeholders in the industry so as to foster the development of tourism in the region. Many of these stakeholders have operated independently over the years and that has not expedited the development process of tourism in Tamale and the Northern Region.

In order to enhance attractiveness of the Region and its cultural resource, close collaborations are essential. The government, private expert tourism organisations in terms of operational excellence and other stakeholders such as educational institutions that are into the human resource development should be involved in developing cultural resources efficiently and effectively.

Above all, the central government (Ministry of Tourism and Ghana Tourism Authority) should establish a relevant long-term plan to develop the cultural programmes as the most attractive cultural tourism product in the Ghana. The programme should also benefit from private expertise in terms of operation and management.

Also, there is the need to build a convenient, clean, and comfortable infrastructure including accommodation facilities, meditation places reflecting the traditional cultural spirit, and restaurant facilities to experience the Northern Food and cuisine. The government's role is to finance the construction of this infrastructure.

In addition, there is the need to bundle available cultural attractions around cultural events to create a themed set of attractions that collectively constitute a primary attraction. Bundling, within a cultural tourism context, typically involves

combining a variety of similarly themed products and experiences and promoting their collective consumption to the visitor. The cultural experience in Tamale should be bundled with other tourism assets that exist in the local communities in the region. In this way, the economic benefit of cultural tourism is dispersed more widely.

Lastly, it is very prudent to foster skilled human resource for the general cultural experience in Tamale. The programme for training the tour guides should be provided by the public and private sectors. The tour guide should be an individual who helps domestic or foreign tourists with cultural experiences by explaining to them and imparting an accurate understanding of Northern, specifically Tamale cultural relics and local culture.

REFERENCES

- [1] Allison, F. (2012). Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-Term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990", *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, Nos. 5-6,
- [2] Amponsah, B. (2013). International Measurement of the Economic and Social Importance of Culture, *International Journal of Tourism*, NY, USA
- [3] Baggio R and Klobas. J (2011). *Quantitative Methods in Tourism: A Handbook*. Canada. Ontario.
- [4] Bazartha, F. (2012). Assessment of Tourist Competitiveness by Analysing Destination Efficiency, *Tinbergen Institute Discussion Paper*, TI
- [5] Bharathiar, K. (2011). *Cultural Tourism in Africa: Strategies for the New Millennium*. Arnhem, ATLAS.
- [6] Boniface.B & Cooper.C. (2009), *Worldwide Destinations Case Book: The Geography of Travel and Tourism*, 2nd Edition, London,
- [7] Cole, V. (2007). Destination Competitiveness: A Model and Indicators, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 6, No. 5
- [8] Edem, N. (2012). The creative industries and tourism in Singapore, *Tourism, Creativity and Development Press*, Routledge, London.
- [9] European Travel Commission and World Tourism Organization (2005), "City Tourism and Culture – The European Experience", ETC Research Report, Brussels,
- [10] Fitzsimmons, B. and Fitzsimmons, E. (2013). *Impact of Cultural Tourism upon Urban Economies: An Econometric Exercise*, Nota di Lavoro 85
- [11] Ghana Tourism Authority, (2013). Cultural Tourism Project 2011, www.tram-research.com/atlas, Accra, Ghana
- [12] Glasgow City Council (2007), Glasgow Economic Facts website, www.glasgoweconomicfacts.com/Dept.aspx?Dept_id=143.
- [13] Kotler, P., D.H. Haider and I. Rein (1993). *Marketing Places*, New York, Free Press.
- [14] Lana, S. (2011). Touristic ethnicity: a brief itinerary: Ethics and Racial Studies, *International Journal of Tourism Development*, NY, USA.
- [15] Leigin, I. (2009). Measuring Destination Competitiveness: An Exploratory Study of the Canaries, Mainland Spain, France, the Balearics and Italy", *Tourism Today*
- [16] Leiper, R. (2012), "Predicting Residents' Perceptions of Cultural Tourism Attractiveness", *Tourism Today*, Fall 2012, pp. 125-138.
- [17] Leslie, D. (2001), "Urban Regeneration and Glasgow's Galleries with Particular Reference to The Burrell Collection" in G. Richards (ed.) *Cultural Attractions and European Tourism*, CABI, Wallingford.
- [18] Maksim, J. (2003), *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, New York, Basic Books.
- [19] Maltus, K. (2014). *Planning Cultural Tourism in Europe: A Presentation of Theories and Cases*. Amsterdam. Boekman Stichting.
- [20] McLean, M. (2006), "Developing Cultural and Creative Tourism in the Scottish Highlands, the case of Proiseact Nan Ealan", Gaelic Arts Agency.
- [21] Milton, H. (2010), *Arts, Entertainment and Tourism*, 4th Edition, , Oxford, Butterworth- Heinemann
- [22] Minstengr, M. (2013). Tourism, Competitiveness, and Societal Prosperity", *Journal of Business Research*, 44 (3)
- [23] Roman, A. (2014). *Tourism and Hotel Industry in the Russian Federation*, Russian Federation, Saint Petersburg Press
- [24] Stephen, S. (2005), Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe, Position Paper adopted by the Europa Nostra Council on 2 June 2005 in Bergen (Norway).
- [25] Tuhin, R and Majumder, H. (2011). Regional Competitiveness, *International Journal of Tourism Development*. Retrived from: <http://www.regionalobservatories.org.uk> on 10th April, 2016