TOURISTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF SAFETY IN TOURISM AT A SELECTED TOURIST DESTINATION IN CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

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Abstract

This paper discusses some direct and indirect impacts of safety issues at Cape Coast-Elmina-Kakum National Park (KNP) tourism destination in Ghana. Some 260 tourists were randomly selected by covenience sampling. Most of the tourists who visited this destination area were the youthful, active or energetic population and probably travelled a lot for pleasure. Majority were Americans and Europeans. It was observed that tourists' perceptions of security at the destination area was dependent on the tour guides, friendly environment at the destination area and the security provided at the destination area. Tourists were safer when they were inside the castles and the national park because in these facilities the tourists were shielded from the ever present hustlers and beggars who asked them for money. Tourists disclosed that more security personnel should be provided to ensure their safety in addition to installation of CCTV cameras in all the facilities visited. They suggested that security personnel in both mufti and uniform around the tourism facilities should be provided to ensure safety and security. It was recommended that the various tourism related bodies in the region like Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and Ghana Fire Service should be coordinated and conscripted into the sensitization and provision of safety and security at tourist facilities.

Keywords: Tourism, Safety, Perception, Destination, Facility

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Introduction

In the developing countries like Ghana tourism development has become an active and lucrative business venture for economic development (Ayob & Masron, 2014) and it is also observed that the important constituent of a tourist offer is the safety factor (Czarnecki, R. 2012 Bujdoso et al, 2015a; b) which includes personal safety of all tourists. Tourism, according to Cooper et al (2008) is categorized among the subjects and interactive businesses known to be responsive to safety and security. Admittedly, tourism promotion has been caused by the rapid and ubiquitous development of transport in the world (Ayob & Masron, 2014, Pénzes et al, 2014). As a sequel, safety and security have become equally important just like tourism itself (Kovari & Zimanyi, 2011, Sallai& Matyas 2016). In Ghana, however, the peaceful democratic and political regime has contributed immensely to the developent and promotion of tourism.

Overview of Ghana's Tourism Sector

The tourism division is a huge supporter of financial development and advancement in Ghana. Tourism is a noteworthy wellspring of remote trade, work and government income. In 2013, the immediate commitment of the Travel and Tourism industry to Ghana's GDP was US$ 1.34 billion, amounting to 2.8% of GDP. In 2013, add up to commitment of Travel and Tourism to Ghana's economy was US$ 3.19 billion, equal to 6.67% of GDP. Tourism's immediate commitment to the economy has developed from US$1.03 billion in 2008 to US$1.34 billion in 2013. During the same period, the quantity of occupations specifically created by tourism diminished from 155 100 to 124 700. Travel and Tourism speculation expanded from US$ 303 million in 2008 to US$ 403 million in 2013 (World Economic Forum, 2013).

Add up to spending on Travel and Tourism in Ghana has demonstrated relentless development, expanding from US$ 1982 million in 2008 to US$ 2372 in 2013. Universal traveler receipts vary yet they have for the most part been rising; they expanded from US$970 million in 2008 to US$ 1068 million in 2013. Worldwide visitor receipts constituted around 45% of aggregate spending in 2013. The yearly number of universal visitors is assessed to be around 950,000 now and is expected to increase to 1.5 million by

2024. Worldwide traveler receipts constitute the fourth most noteworthy wellspring of outside trade for Ghana, after gold, cocoa and remittances from abroad.

Ghana Immigration Service measurements for 2011 demonstrate that the main hotspots for worldwide guests were Nigeria (19%), USA (13%), UK (9%), Cote d'Ivoire (5%), and 3% each for Canada, Germany, India, Netherlands and South Africa. Ghana Tourism Authority measurements for 2009 demonstrate that the main three purposes behind going to Ghana were business, conferences, study/training (40%), visiting friends and family (25%) and holiday travel (20%). The vacationer recreational/tourist facilities that pulled in the most guests (household and global) in 2013 were Kakum National Park (184 000), Cape Coast/Elmina Castles (157 000) Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park (93 000), Kumasi Zoo (68 000), Wli Waterfalls (63 000) and Manhyia Palace Museum (51 000) (Ghana Immigration Service, 2015).

Travel and Tourism foundations in Ghana incorporate inns, visitor shops, visit administrators, auto rentals and eateries. The lodging subsector is the biggest and generally powerful. The quantity of lodgings was 1775 in 2013 with 28028 rooms. The quantity of authorized star inns was 872. A large portion of the star appraised lodgings are found in Greater Accra. Unbranded guesthouses and hotels rule the settlement showcase, however a large portion of them do not meet global measures and have low quality of administration. Ghana's accommodation segment is turning into a prime advancement focus for major multinational lodging networks hoping to grow in Africa. In 2013, there were more than 1400 lodging rooms being worked on in Ghana, some of which incorporate advancements by worldwide inn brands, for example, Kempinski and Marriott. With respect to other sub-divisions, Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) insights for 2010 demonstrate that there were 255 visit administrators, yet under 60 had IATA licenses; there were 91 authorized auto rental organizations however under 10 had best appraisals; and there were around 360 authorized eateries and clubs yet under 50 had best evaluations. The greater part of the administrators in the non-inn subsector of the Travel and Tourism industry are independent companies (Frimpong-Bonsu, 2015). .

There is noteworthy action noticeable all around transport subsector. Kotoka International Airport (KIA) remains the main airplane terminal in Ghana

for universal flights. At present, there are 27 global aircrafts and six payload carriers working from KIA. Ghana Airport Company insights for 2013 show 23 400 universal air ship developments and 1.67 million travelers, including landings and takeoffs. There are likewise five residential aircrafts serving three household air terminals from KIA. (Ghana Immigration Service, 2015).

Kenya and Senegal are great tourism comparators for Ghana. Senegal is considered similarly appealing to Ghana in the West African sub-district and Kenya is viewed as more alluring than Ghana in Africa. Both Ghana and Senegal have extensive qualities in legacy and social tourism while Kenya is a worldwide goal for nature tourism and has impressive qualities in culture, shoreline and business/meeting tourism (Frimpong-Bonsu, 2015).

Tourist Safety and Effects afer 9/11 Incident in USA

It must be added that, safety in tourism increases people's propensity to travel and also enables tourists to maintain their plans and visit destinations they have saved money to travel. In the literature, we have enough surveys on the effects of unsafe conditions and events mostly about the effects of 9/11 on tourism flows. For instance, Sandler & Enders (2004) worked on tourism arrivals and terrorist events in Austria, Greece and Italy from 1970-1990 to estimate revenue losses in the tourism industries in these countries. In 2002, Pizam and Fleicher examined the damaging effects of terrorist attacks on tourism in Israel and found out that these incidents have far reaching dismal consequences that can lead to a total collapse of tourism activities. Sloboda, (2003) also did an estimation study on short-term effects of terrorism on tourism flows and the results showed decline in the flows of tourists.

In this light the vulnerability of tourism is of particular concern to those areas where tourism constitutes the major livelihood of local community members (Becken, 2005) like Kakum National Park, Elmina and Cape Coast Castles which are most popular tourist destinations in Central Region of Ghana. The direct and indirect impacts of safety issues on tourism destinations in Ghana has not been widely explored and critically assessed. The extent to which lose safety practices and their challenges impact on development of tourism at the above mentioned tourist facilities is still evasive in tourism research in Ghana. Admittedly, no terrorism incident has ever happened in Ghana as a country so far as tourism activities are concerned, research must start now to discuss the areas of great concern for further de-

tailed study especially about tourists' perceptions about the role of sfaety in the tourism industry and making recommendations upon their perceptions is an imperative research concern in Ghana.

Materials and Methods

The study area is made of triumvirate destination facilities, namely Cape Coast Castle, Elmina Castle and Kakum National Park (KNP) all in the Central Region of Ghana. Both Castle facilities are on the coast but the KNP is found in the forest a little removed from the coast.

Brief Discription of the Case Study Areas

Cape Coast was the first national capital of Ghana and has the Cape Coast Castle which is a Heritage site built by the Swedish in 1653 and later seized by the Danish in 1663. It was transferred to the British in 1664. Elmina was the first place in Ghana where coastal Ghanaians had the contact with European merchants via barter trade system in 1471 and has Elmina Castle, a Heritage site built by Portuguese in 1482 to facilitate trade on the coast of Gulf of Guinea. These two Castles were the points of no return for many Africans who were sent as slaves in the olden days mostly to the Americas and the returnee (or tourist) Afro-Americans in the Diaspora do visit these Castles and accpet them as the physical relics for their ancestors who are now rootly established in the Americas. Kakum National Park (KNP) is a rain forest park very close to the above two Heritage sites in the Central Region of Ghana. It was established as a National Park in 1992 and covers 375km². The unique added facility here is the Canopy Walkway which has seven long bridges and four short bridges. KNP is about 15 km from Cape Coast and Elmina. Recently added facility is the children's park with canopy walkway mainly for children.

Results and Discussions

The data collected from the tourists from these three tourist facilities was arranged into categories and analyzed using descriptive statistics tools such as frequency distribution tables and cross tabulations. Randomly and by convenience sampling, a total of 260 tourists responded to the questionnaires at the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination area in Ghana.

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)
SEX STRUCTURE		
Female	136	52.3
Male	124	47.7
TOTAL	**260**	**100**
AGE STRUCTURE		
18 – 25	96	36.9
26 – 35	75	28.8
36 – 45	33	12.7
46 – 55	19	7.3
56+	37	14.2
TOTAL	260	99.9

1. table: Demographic characteristics of tourists

Source: Field survey, 2017

The research showed that majority of the tourists representing 52% as seen from Table 1 were female while the remaining 48% of the respondents (tourists) were male. This may imply that more female tourists visited the destination than the male tourists. In addition, one can also say that, women are now becoming more interested in tourism activities at least in the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination.

For the research, to capture the ages of the respondents (tourists), they were grouped into five main age ranges including; 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55 and 56 years and above. It could be observed from Table 1 that majority of the respondents, representing 37% of the tourists fell within the age range of 18 – 25 years while 29% of the tourists fell within the age group of 26-35 years. Consequently, 13%, 14% of the tourists were found within the ages of 36-45 and 56 years and above respectfully. The minority of the respondents, representing 7% fell within the age range of 46-55 years. This suggests that most of the tourists who visited the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination area of Ghana from across the world were the youthful, active or energetic population and probably travelled a lot for pleasure (Imbeah, Hagan and Hodibert, 2015).

COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Germany	31	11.9
Canada	18	6.9
Ghana	64	24.6
UK	32	12.3
USA	65	25.0
Spain	8	3.1
Italy	6	2.3
Ireland	5	1.9
Poland	3	1.2
Netherlands	6	2.3
Scotland	2	0.8
France	2	0.8
Sweden	1	0.4
Denmark	10	3.8
Australia	3	1.2
Austria	2	0.8
Liberia	2	0.8
TOTAL	**260**	**100.0**

2. table: Nationality of respondents (tourists)

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 2 displays the nationality of the tourists who responded to the questionnaires. It was observed that majority; representing 25% of the respondents were tourists from the United States of America (USA). Subsequently, most of the remaining tourists representing 24.6% were Ghanaians. Tourists from the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and Canada showed some relatively higher percentages of 12.3%, 11.9% and 6.9% respectively as seen in Table 2 above. Others including tourists from Liberia, Denmark, Netherland, Italy and Spain also represented 0.8%, 3.8%, 2.3%, 2.3%, and 3.1% respectively among many foreigners. This can probably mean that the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination area of Ghana is patronized highly by both locals and foreigners, particularly citizens of the USA. This might be attributed to the fact that most of the American toursits were Afro-Americans in the Diaspora who usually come home to visit especially the two famous Castles which were once points of no return for the "Black Slaves" in the olden days.

Q. Do you feel safe at the destination?		
	Frequency	**Explanations for "yes" responses**
Yes	63	Security at the destination was good
	88	Staff/guide was competent & kind
	72	The environment was friendly
	13	I felt safer when I was in a group
	14	There were protective nets
No		**Explanations for "no" responses**
	7	There was harassment by the youth in front of the castle
	3	There was poor maintenance of building
Total	**260**	

3. table: Tourists' reasons for feeling safe/unsafe at the destination

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 3 above shows tourists' perception of safety and security at the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination area. From the table, it could be observed that out of 250 respondents (tourists) who revealed they were safe and secured, the majority, totaling 88 tourists responded that they felt safe because of tour guides' competence and kindness. Most of the remaining tourists, 72 tourists, disclosed that they felt safe because of a friendly environment at the destination area. This confirmed Ghana as one the most hospitable tourist destinations in Africa (Boakye, 2011). Also, many of them representing 63 tourists unveiled that their security and safety is assured when there were security personnel at the destination areas. Again, 13 tourists showed that they felt safer when in a group (family, friends etc). Finally, the remaining 14 tourists added that they felt secured and safer because of the facilities available at the destination areas such as the net around the canopy walk way at the KNP destination area. On the other hand, 10 respondents responded that they felt unsafe and unsecured at the destinations area. Out of these, 7 tourists said they were unsafe because of harassment by youth in front of the castles. These youth without any permission walk to tourists to beg for alms and sometimes coerce tourists to buy their wares. The remaining 3 tourists also disclosed that they felt unsafe because of poor maintenance of buildings especially at

the castles. This implied the idea that tourists' perceptions of security at the destination area was also dependent on the tour guides, friendly environment at the destination area and the security provided at the destination area. It was also observed that tourists were safer when they were inside the castles and the national park because in these facilities the tourists were shielded from the hustlers and beggars who asked them for money and this confirmed similar observation made out of the studies done by Boakye, (2011) on tourists' views on safety and vulnerability in Ghana.

Facility Types	RANK				Total
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Attraction Site	**148**	70	18	24	260
Accommodation	93	**121**	35	11	260
Transport	21	46	**138**	55	260
Internet Facility	7	22	63	**168**	260

4. table: Ranking of facility types in which tourists felt safer

Source: Field survey, 2017

Tourists were asked to rank the type of tourist facility used at the destination in which they felt safer. The facilities included attraction site, accommodation, transport and internet services/facilities. According to the tourists' experience with these facilities, the majority, totaling 148 out of 260 tourists ranked attraction site as first, others, showing 121 tourists ranked accommodation as second. Some, representing 138 tourists ranked transport as third and finally, internet facility was ranked by the majority, representing 168 tourists as fourth as seen in the leading diagonal of Table 4. This implied that internet services were not reliable and tourists were most of the time worried about getting connected to the facebook, whatsapp, skype and other internet applications for communicating with family and relations back home. It must be pointed out that, in Cape Coast as a tourism hub and Ghana as a whole, the commonest mode of transport is road. Since the are a lot of traffic jam on the road coupled with pot holes travelling between tourist facilities in and out suffers an increase travel time. This was also a bother to travelers especially tourists of non-African origin. These two poor services were a great worry for

tourists at the destination. However, on the whole this safety merit ranking of tourists infers that the tourists were safe and secured at the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination area in Ghana.

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Youth and natives should be checked by security	12	4.6
More security presence	49	18.8
Orientation to Do's and Don'ts	17	6.5
More guides should be provided	14	5.4
More provision of information on-line	11	4.2
More organizational arrangements and fixing of infrastructure, eg. road, internet	41	15.8
Current safety condition is good but can improve	116	44.6
Total	**260**	**100.0**

5. table: Tourists' suggestions to improve their safety

Source: Field survey, 2017

The tourists further had the opportunity to suggest other conditions and measures that should be put in place to ensure their safety and security. From Table 5 above, it was observed that the majority representing 44.6% (116) of the respondents suggested that the currents safety conditions could be improved upon. That the Canopy Walkway at Kakum National Park was scary and shaky but was still protected by safety net on both sides. Some of the tourists representing 18.8% (49) disclosed that more security personnel should be provided to ensure their safety in addition to installation of CCTV cameras in all the facilities visited. Security personnel in both mufti and uniform around the tourism facilities would improve safety and security. Also, 15.8% representing 41 of the respondents suggested that more organizational arrangements and infrastructural facilities, for instance fixing of roads linking

the various facilities and improving the internet connection should be provided for their safety and security assurance. Other tourists, 6.5% representing 17 of the respondents said there should be orientations to do's and don'ts at the destinations so as to ensure their safety. In other words, safety briefing upon arrival at the facility should be made to the tourists to know what to do in the facility in times of safety problem. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that tourists understood safety and security measures and were generally safe at the destination areas since they could tell what would make them feel safer in the various tourist facilities.

Summary

On the basis of the fact that tourists felt safe and secure at the Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP destination and called for more organizational arrangements and infrastructure provision, it is recommended that the various tourism related bodies in the region like Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and Ghana Fire Service should be coordinated and conscripted into the sensitization and provision of safety and security at tourist facilities. It is also observed that if Road Safety Commission in Ghana and for that matter in Central Region is given the official mandate to help educate and maintain safety at tourist facilities, it will be a great step in the right direction. This is because the official supervisors of road which is one of the principal components of tourism development can appropriately help maintain safety and security at tourism facilities. GTA must play a coordinator role in this collaboration. It is also recommended that safety gadgets or kits like CCTV cameras and alarm systems should be istalled as a matter of urgency and neccesity. For these equipment to be used and kept in working condition at various tourist facilities, periodic safety audit checks should be conducted by joint monitoring group coordinated by GTA. The physical presence and installation of these safety and security equipment boosts safety confidence in tourists in and around tourist facilities.

It is also recommended that the residents and natives in tourist destination should be given the right orientation on tourist safety to enable them accept tourism development in their community and be willing to offer safety and security help to tourists. In the opinion of Doxey (1975), if tourists are accorded good hospitality in the community, it is possible that a communal sense of protection can be offered to tourists.

As a long term measure to improve tourists safety and security, it is suggested that, periodically all workers of tourism facilities and tourism related organizations in the destination should be given basic training in ensuring safety and security, and that tourist safety competition and essays can be organized periodically in many schools in the destination to boost the sense of tourist safety in the community members in Ghana. Again GTA and Ghana Fire Service can collaborate with Ghana Education Service to inculcate in the students the awareness and sense of tourist safety and security.

Finally, it is suggested that, on line information about tourist safety and security in Cape Coast-Elmina-KNP should be regularly updated and be made simple to understand. The ICT department in various tourist facilities should take charge of this update assignment.

In conclusion, during the research it was observed that Ghana has enjoyed a peaceful political and social space for long time in the West African sub-region and this has endeared Ghana to be more preferred tourist destination by tourist inflows. Therefore, the tourist industry and GTA should quickly take advantage of this cordial situation to establish the appropriate tourist safety regime and auxiliary infrastructure at least in the Cape Coast-Elmina-Kakum National Park destination which has been a long time tourism hub in Ghana.

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