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Assessing Ghana's Contemporary Tourism Development Experience

Kwaku Adutwum Boakye, Ferdinand Otibo, and Foster Frempong

The re-emerging acceptance of tourism as a pathway to development has culminated in widespread adoption of the trade by many poor countries. Ghana is one such country and, over the past three decades, has sought to use tourism as means of diversifying its economy. The substantial amounts invested in tourism by the government make it imperative to continually evaluate tourism performance and outcomes as a tool for socio-economic development. Yet, to date, very few studies have placed Ghana's tourism experience under the spotlight. This paper focuses on how the trade has evolved into a major economic activity. It assesses the country's interventions in the tourist trade over the years and it examines the performance of the tourist trade, first as an economic activity and second within its expected role as an agent for overall human development. By and large, the findings suggest that Ghana's tourism development experience has been characterized by mixed fortunes. While there are indications of impressive macroeconomic gains, there have been challenges in the quest to translate these into the expected developmental outcomes at the more disaggregated communal and individual levels. Some weaknesses, notably, defects in policy, a powerless public sector, and low human capacities are suggested as contributing to the current state of stagnation the sector is experiencing.

Introduction

Over the last decade and a half, there has been an unprecedented increase in inbound traffic towards Africa (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). This influx may be the outcome of a deliberate policy decision by many African countries to market themselves as tourist destinations. The desired end is to use tourism as a pathway towards socio-economic development. Thus, theoretically, it is expected that the presence of visitors increases spending which translates into enhanced business and revenue generation opportunities for the private sector and government, respectively. These create the needed wealth which in turn can be invested in development-oriented avenues. Tourism has thus engaged the attention of many poor countries and international aid agencies (both bilateral and multilateral). Major United Nations agencies that have developmental strategies built around tourism include: the UNTWO, United Nation's Environmental Program, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Pleumarom, 2012). In addition more than 80% of the world's poor countries (including the 33 in Africa) have included tourism in their strategic poverty reduction plans (Mitchell & Ashley, 2007).

While the 1990s are remembered for ushering in a wave of multiparty democracy across Africa, the era is also synonymous with a renewed interest in tourism's role as an agent for economic development on the continent. With the assistance of the UNWTO,

some African countries made conscious attempts to develop their tourism sectors. These included the crafting of tourism development plans, training of manpower, and, in the case of Ghana, the creation of a specific ministry to exercise oversight responsibility. In Ghana, the “tourism revival” started in 1985, on the back of two decades of national economic decline, which rendered the country a near basket case and prompted the implementation of International Monetary Fund- and World Bank- initiated Structural Reform Programs (Akyeampong, 2009). Under one such program, tourism was identified as one of four important sectors around which Ghana’s economic transformation was to be organized (Akyeampong, 2009).

The aim of tourism development is inherently economic (Mill & Morrison, 2009) and this is particularly true of African countries that have adopted the trade as a tool for development. It therefore becomes imperative to continually assess tourism’s performance, especially within the context of operating it as a vehicle for development. This paper’s primary purpose is to assess Ghana’s experience after almost three decades of recognizing and promoting tourism as such a vehicle. In that regard, it provides a brief overview of governmental interventions, assesses the performance of the tourist trade, explores some development outcomes, and, based on these outcomes, sets forth some issues for policy consideration. Though tourism development in the country can be traced to the country’s colonial period, 1985 marks the beginning of the trade’s “golden era” (Akyeampong, 2009), where data is most available, and therefore it serves as the base year for analysis.

The Dynamics of Using Tourism as a Tool for Development

Like the proverbial coin, tourism has both positive and negative sides. The biggest claim of tourism’s usefulness lies in its ability to act as a catalyst for economic growth and, by extension, development. Tourism’s ability (at least theoretically) to foster economic growth (and by extension development) has been well documented (de Kadt, 1979; Goodwin, 2008; Mitchell & Ashley, 2007). Theoretically tourism is expected to stimulate economic growth (and by extension reduce poverty) through (1) infusing new demand for local goods and services, and (2) in the process generate demand for other goods and services, which tourism businesses rely upon in their operations. Thus, the increased spending created by tourists’ demands is expected to trigger increased business activity in the local economy and ultimately, stimulate economic growth and development. The enhancement of economic linkages through tourism development results in a greater demand for local goods and services, the creation of more jobs, and the development of more opportunities for local businesses (Akama & Kieti, 2007; Gee, Mackens, & Choy, 1997; Shakya, 2009).

According to UNWTO (2002), tourism bears certain characteristics that enable it to contribute to economic growth. These include its ability to energize and diversify economies of marginal areas that host tourist attractions (Honey & Gilpin, 2009), to provide for the poor to become exporters and sellers of goods and services, to absorb unskilled labor, and to provide small-scale employment opportunities, which can also help promote gender equity. Small businesses may even possess competitive advantages since they can often offer tourism products at cheaper cost (Shakya, 2009). Finally, UNWTO claims there are numerous indirect benefits of tourism for the poor, including increased market

access for remote areas through the development of roads, infrastructure, and communication networks.

Beyond the economic realm, tourism is thought to engender other development-oriented benefits such as protection of the environment and provision (or indirect facilitation) of important amenities such as potable drinking water, schools, and health facilities. In a similar non-economic vein, tourism has been identified as a facilitator of peace (Baron, 1996; Sarkar & George, 2010), which is also an important precondition for development and a promoter of gender equity (Cukier, 2002).

On the other hand, tourism has been found to be a conduit of underdevelopment by exposing host communities to risks which threaten their livelihoods. Two of these tourism-related risks have been well documented in the literature, especially regarding the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) setting. The first relates to displacement (both physical and economic) (Coad, Campbell, Miles & Humphries, 2008; Odincho, 2010). Displacement as used in this context involves forcing locals to relocate to places that are less suitable for earning a living (Agarwal & Redford, 2007; Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008) with debilitating consequences (Lasgorceix & Kothari, 2009). Key examples of this tourism-induced hazard have occurred in Ethiopia and Botswana (Adams & Hutton, 2007), Cameroun (Schmidt-Soltau, 2005), the Congo (Cernea, 2006), Kenya (Ogotu, 2002; Odincho, 2010), and South Africa (Carruthers, 2007). The second (and more debilitating) risk comes in the form of a disruption of normal lifestyles (Boakye, 2008; Cernea, 2006; Nelson, 2012). These disturbances occur when livelihoods and practices are curtailed to make room for tourism-related development (Schmidt-Soltau, 2005). The associated risk is widely reported in indigenous and tribal communities (Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Coriaa & Calfucurab, 2012; McLaughlin, 2011; Pleumarom, 2007). Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Lolindo areas continue to be sources of conflict between local livelihood and wildlife conservation and tourism development interests (Ngoitiko, Sinandei, Meitaya, & Nelson, 2010).

In addition, at the macro level, tourism has been known to distort economies of poor countries through creating conditions for increased importation. The fragile nature of African economies has reflected in declining output from their agriculture and manufacturing sectors and this has translated into increased importation to meet the needs of tourists. Hence, high tourism-induced leakages ranging between 40 and 50% have been reported in major destinations like Kenya (Akama, 1999, 2004; Okech, 2010; Sindiga, 2000). Sometimes only about 10% of tourism income stays in developing countries (Brown, 1998). Though the veracity of some leakage claims has been questioned (Mitchell & Ashley, 2007), the reality that it represents a formidable threat to any gains to be made from tourism on the continent cannot be glossed over. According to Okech (2010), the dominance of institutionalized tourists (who rely mainly on packaged tours) in Kenya's tourist mix has also played to the advantage of foreign-owned travel intermediaries, who determine the demand for Kenya in their countries. Brown (1998) provides similar examples of such detrimental multi-national company (MNC) dominance in Africa.

Tourism by its structure and nature is the quintessential industry in which the dependency theory expresses itself fully. This view is aptly captured by Britton (1982):

When a Third World country uses tourism as a development strategy, it becomes enmeshed in a global system over which it has little control. The international tourism in-

dustry is a product of metropolitan capitalist enterprise. The superior entrepreneurial skills, resources, and commercial power of metropolitan companies enable them to dominate many Third World tourist destinations. (p. 1)

Indeed as Burns & Holden (1995) have noted, some MNCs may even outcompete and stifle the growth of smaller locally-owned businesses over time.

These two contrasting scenarios demonstrate tourism's inherent duality (Holden, 2005), exhibiting both positive and negative sides, which accentuates the imperative for prudent, knowledge-based destination management. Both forms of impact are bound to be experienced, even with the smallest number of tourists. Hence, the answer to managing impacts does not necessarily lie in creating "alternative forms" of tourism but rather in crafting strong policy initiatives that lead to maximizing the positive and minimizing the negatives. The hosting of tourists per se does not automatically guarantee economic benefits. There is the need for clear, actionable policies through which the destination can capture and distribute tourism revenues appropriately and effectively in the host communities.

The Destination Competitiveness and Development Nexus

Being competitive is a necessary condition for maximization of the gains from tourism (Ahmed & Krohn, 1990; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000, 2003). Consequently, destination competitiveness has received great attention in the literature and has focused on many thematic areas and area/country-specific orientations. Many indices have been used (with varying degrees of success) to assess destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hassan, 2000; Pearce, 1997; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The literature generally agrees, however, that a competitive and sustainable destination must show evidence of possessing a strong legal and policy framework, a diverse range of quality attractions, and an availability of supporting infrastructure and superstructure. In short, to be competitive, a destination must not only be attractive, but also able to successfully host visitors.

However, competitiveness is not an end in itself and should be viewed as a means to the grander goal of using tourism as a tool for development (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Competitiveness and sustainability can occur together in every destination. Host community expectations of tourism are, predominantly, economic (Akama, 1999; de Kadt, 1979; Jafari, 2001; Teye, Sonmez, & Sirakaya, 2002), and destinations, which are not successful in ensuring widespread distribution of tourism gains, may over time face the possibility of having disillusioned host communities, whose reactions could include apathy, antagonism, and hostility (Doxey, 1975). Hence a destination should be both competitive and successful at ensuring the translation of tourism gains into palpable developmental outcomes.

Ghana's tourism experience is thus assessed from two perspectives: first, the performance of the tourist trade itself and, secondly, the success of translating the gains from the trade (if any) into needed developmental outcomes. These are discussed in turn but first, a brief overview of the state's interventions in the tourist trade is provided.

Ghana's Interventions in the Tourist Trade

As regards its intervention in tourism, Dieke (1995) calls for a distinction between the state's entrepreneurial and facilitative (enabling) roles. An assessment of the state's operations in Ghana suggests that each role has been played at various times and with varying degrees of balance. Notably, these interventions have been shaped by the ideological orientations of different governmental administrations (Akyeampong, 2009). The entrepreneurial role was largely consigned to the pre-1990 era, which saw the state owning and running tourism-related facilities, especially hotels and transportation. However, many of these had become insolvent by the mid-1990s, owing largely to mismanagement (Akyeampong, 2009).

The state has also intervened in the tourist trade by creating bureaucracies. The first tourism-specific public sector organization was the Ghana Tourist Corporation in 1968; this would later change into the Ghana Tourist Control Board in 1973, and would later evolve in 1979 to the Ghana Tourist Board until 2011, when it became the Ghana Tourist Authority. There is also the Ministry of Tourism which was created in 1993.

On the other hand, the state's facilitative role has been more pronounced in the post-1990 era and has been characterized by the establishment of policies and regulations, some capacity building interventions, and the creation of attractions but nonetheless limiting the state's direct role in operating in the tourist industry. Concerning the policy regime for example, there have been many interventions. Since 1996, there have been six major strategies or action plans, averaging one plan every three years. Interestingly, new plans have been implemented when the old ones have not served their full course, let alone been evaluated. The plans have included: The Integrated Tourism Development Plan of 1996-2010; the five-year Tourism Action Plan of 2003-2007; The National Tourism Policy of 2005; The Tourism Sector Medium Term Development Plan 2010-2013; National Tourism Marketing Strategy 2009-2012; and, more recently, the National Tourism Development Plan scheduled to last from 2013 to 2027. The legal framework received a major boost with the passage in 2011 of the country's first ever tourism-specific law – Act 817. Prior to this, the extant legislation was largely focused on regulating financial aspects of the trade, such as the tax and incentive regimes. In that regard, one such instrument was the creation of L.I 1817, which offered a very generous package for a wide array of tourism-related businesses, but this was abolished after five years due to abuse. Capacity building initiatives have generally fallen under two categories: human resource training and private sector development. With the former, the most noticeable has been the establishment in the early 1990s of the Hotel Catering and Tourism Training Institute, which was designed to provide skill-based training for low to mid-level front-line tourism staff. Capacity building efforts have also come by way of organizing training workshops for tourism service providers in areas such as record keeping, marketing, and customer service.

The least frequent of the public sector interventions has been in the area of attraction creation and marketing. Government has (on a very limited scale) been involved with the establishment of attractions. Even then, most of the financing has come from bilateral and multilateral aid agencies. A clear case in point is its partnership with the United States Agency for International Development and United Nation's Development Program to create the Kakum National Park, and to upgrade the status of World Heritage sites of

Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle in the early 1990s. These three can be described as the country's landmark attractions and feature prominently on almost every itinerary, be it inbound or domestic.

Akyeampong (2009) has outlined the active, passive, and laissez-faire-related philosophies that have occurred in Ghana over the past 50 years. Yet, the degree to which these have positively affected or shaped trade performance remains debatable. While Akyeampong (2009), for example, attributes the country's tourism boom to the laissez-faire approach taken by government, Boakye (2013), on the other hand, assigns the tourist trade's current stagnation to an overly passive posture by government in the name of neo-liberal laissez-fairist thinking. Attention is now turned to the performance of the tourist trade.

The Performance of the Tourist Trade 1985 to Date: Demand, Supply, and Revenue Perspectives

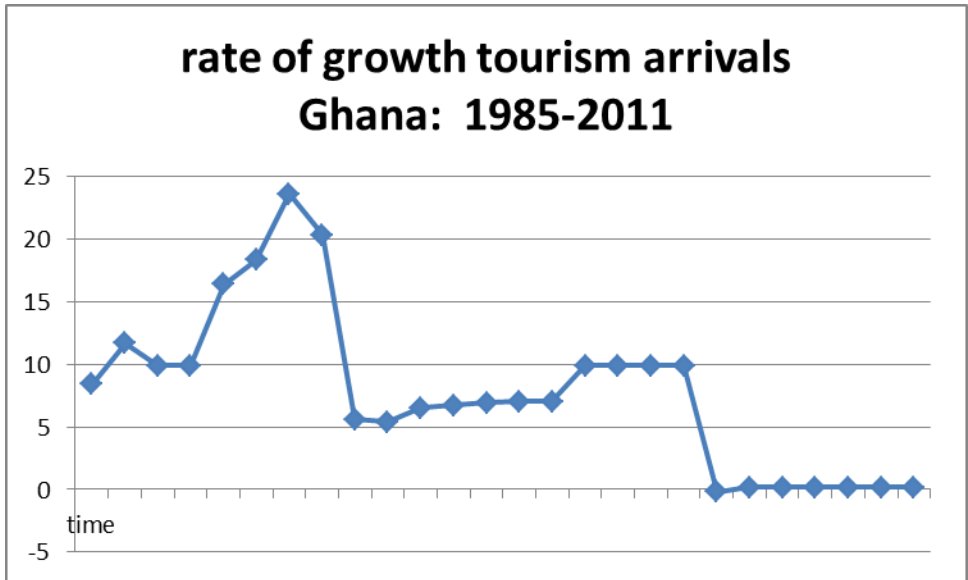
Relative to its 1985 figures, the tourist trade has performed quite impressively and keeps increasing in nominal terms. However, a closer look at the data in real terms shows unmistakable signs of declining or static growth in recent years. This is especially true of the last half decade. Interestingly, this stagnation is observed on all three indicators of demand, supply, and revenue.

Demand

In absolute terms, tourist demand in the country since 1985 can best be described as lying along a pattern of continuous growth. Tourist arrivals have increased some 1,166% since 1985. There can therefore be very little doubt that tourist demand for Ghana has increased exponentially over the period in question. Ghana's case is part of wider growth occurring in the SSA region, which is the fastest growing tourist destination area in the world and this trend, though challenged strongly by Asia, and does not look to be abating in the next decade.

In Ghana, the highest growth rates have been the 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 years (Figure 1). This period coincides with the opening of the earlier-mentioned tourist attractions, as well as the very well patronized first two events of PANAFEST, which appealed to the "diasporan market" and attracted increased numbers. A drop in growth rates was experienced between 1994 and 1996, but after that there was stability of growth in the single digit zone until 2005, where they have levelled out.

But the lowest growth rates have been recorded over the last five to seven years where they have hardly risen beyond 1%, and have, in some years been negative. As will be noted from Figure 1, the graph marks out a generally cyclical pattern, in which low periods are always followed by higher ones but the country's growth has never experienced such a long stay without rising as has been seen recently. This period which mark out an era of stagnation was preceded by a sharp drop in growth (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage changes in arrival growth rate: 1985-2011

Source: Computed from figures provided by Ghana Tourism Authority.

Of particular note, important international events (such as major conferences and sporting events) can account for the post-2005 stabilization of the arrival growth rate. Notable events that have been held in this period include the celebration of the country's Golden Jubilee in 2007, the hosting of the African Cup football tournament, and the hosting of the international World Tourism Day in 2008 and 2009. These events have not resulted in any significant increases in tourism from abroad. How much these events have contributed to increased internal tourist activity has not been formally assessed, and while beyond the primary scope of this study, does represent an important area for consideration.

Supply Trends

The same trend of nominal growth can be observed in the area of supply. The data (Table 1) suggests that there has been an appreciable increase in the number of businesses that provide first-line services to the tourists since 1985 thereby confirming Akyeampong's (2007) assertion that the country's hospitality industry has blossomed over time. Although there have been internal fluctuations, especially over the last five to seven years, a general pattern of growth has been observed relative to the 1985 and 1995 base years. This theme is examined under the various subunits of the hospitality industry, food/beverage, travel and tour, car rentals, and accommodation.

Food/Beverage

This industry grew the most as compared to the other service providers. Between 1995 and 2009, there was a threefold increase in the number of facilities in this category. However, these figures would have been much higher but for the methodological limitations imposed by the operational definition used by The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA). Unfortunately, the GTA's categorization of eating places excludes the many local informal catering establishments called "chop bars."

Notably, the slowest growth within the restaurant sub-sector has been in the fast food and snack markets. In fact, the number of registered fast food joints slumped from 50 in 2002 to 17 in 2003 and now number 33 (Table 1). In more recent years, the restaurant concept has witnessed a diversification from the dominance of continental menus towards the inclusion of traditional dishes, and the creation of snack bars and night clubs.

Travel and Tour

The travel and tour business includes travel agents and tour operators. This industry grew the least, with an 89% increase from 1995 to 2009 (Table 1). In Ghana, however, the difference between the two has proven to be rather blurred, given the fact that most tour operating firms actually sell airline tickets, rather than their core mandate of creating tours or even ground handling. A few companies irregularly organize local domestic tours for schools and other groups.

Table 1: Licensed hospitality operators for selected years in Ghana

| Type of Business | 1995 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Increase 09/95 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Food and beverage | 94 | 233 | 233 | 231 | 372 | 330 | 354 | 369 | 379 | 303% |
| Travel and tour | 142 | 178 | 179 | 177 | 349 | 350 | 294 | 284 | 269 | 89.4 % |
| Car rental | 27 | 26 | 27 | 33 | 53 | 60 | 57 | 84 | 90 | 233% |
| Hotels | 580 | 730 | 834 | 992 | 1345 | 1427 | 1432 | 1595 | 1775 | 206% |
| Star rated hotels | 168 | 253 | 288 | 369 | 504 | 342 | 312 | 379 | 372 | 121% |

Source: Ghana Tourism Authority. The year 2009 is used as the cutoff owing to lack of confirmed data for 2010 and 2011.

Car Rentals

The car rental business saw the second largest increase with a 233% difference over the base year. Apart from the well noted ones such as Avis and Hertz, there are many other locally owned organizations in this business. The reason for its strong showing is not hard to find. It requires relatively less capital to start. It is easy for example for a budding entrepreneur to convert their personal vehicle for such purposes. In any case where personal vehicles are not used, some car rental companies simply rent vehicles from used car dealers or automobile companies when they receive orders. From the demand per-

spective, the plausible reason for the growth of this industry is the increased need for such services that has been created through the country's continued hosting of major events, a growth in independent travel (both for business and leisure), and a generally unreliable public transportation system.

Accommodation

Akyeampong (2004) asserts that accommodation is the most visible aspect of a country's tourism. Both the star rated and the general hotel landscapes have witnessed expansion over the period. There is certainly a much higher number of facilities and a wider gamut of accommodation types available. The numbers available represent licensed hotels generally and licensed star rated hotels (which are defined as three-star and above). As compared to 1995, the number of star rated hotels grew by 121% (Table 1), but there was also a sharp decline, for example, from 504 in 2005 to 342 in 2006 and an equally sharp increase in 2000 (369) over the previous year's figure of 288. For the broad hotel category the curve outlines a smoother figure though suggesting a smaller rate of change.

The country currently has two five-star hotels, a few more four-star and many three-star facilities. The three-star rated categories appear to be more fairly spread across the country, while the higher rated hotels are disproportionately located in the two major cities, Accra, the capital, and Kumasi, the country's second most cosmopolitan city. One missing element from the available data is the growing phenomenon of non-conventional forms of tourist accommodation such as homestays and hostels (Akyeampong, 2004), which according to Dayour (2013) and Agyeiwaa (in press) are becoming increasingly popular among the non-institutionalized tourists largely because of the lower costs involved.

Yet, like in the case of demand, a closer look at the supply sector shows a decline in growth over recent years (Table 2). The indices in Table 2 were computed by finding the averages of the rates of growth over the respective periods.

Table 2: Comparative sub sector growth rates: 1996-2001 vs 2004 to 2009

| Indicator | 1996-2001 (%) | 2004-2009 (%) |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Travel agents and tour operators | 7 | 2.8 |
| Car rental | 6.6 | 10.8* |
| Restaurants and night clubs | 21.3 | 2.7 |
| Hotels | 10.8 | 6.1 |
| Star rated hotels | 15.8 | -2.8 |
| Arrivals | 7.3 | 1.73 |
| Receipts | 11.7 | 4.4 |

Source: Author's computation from Ghana Tourism Authority figures

On the whole, the growth rate has been markedly slower since 2004 (Table 2). The only exception to the decline is in the car rental category and even that should be considered an outlier, attributable to the unusual surge in local demand for rented cars during major international events, such as the celebration of the country's 50th anniversary of independence, African Cup of Nations tournament in 2008, hosting of the World Tourism

Day in 2009, and many major international conferences. Otherwise, a period of relative decline is observable across all the major tourism supply businesses.

Development-Related Outcomes

The mixed fortunes of Ghana's tourism development are truly demonstrated when considering the development-oriented outcomes. Within this paper, such outcomes are conceptualized at two levels: the macro and micro. Macroeconomic gains pertain to the national economy, while the micro economy addresses the more communal and individual units of society.

At the macroeconomic level, the performance of the tourist trade in Ghana supports the assertion by Mitchell and Ashley (2006) that tourism generally has a favorable macroeconomic impact on developing countries. In the case of Ghana, this benign influence shows in four ways with the first being revenue accruing to government through its tourism receipts. Over the past quarter of a century, receipts have increased by some 11,074% growing from \$19.5 million in 1985 to \$2,179 million in 2011. Receipts per arrival have also grown ten-fold over the period from \$228 million in 1985 to \$2,017 million in 2011. Cumulatively, tourism-related receipts have, since 1985 exceeded \$13 billion, which translates to an approximate average increase of \$500 million per year. For the Ghanaian economy, this is a substantial amount.

The second and third macroeconomic benefits of the tourist trade are found in the increase of both the sector's contribution to gross domestic product and fiscal revenues (Table 3), respectively. The growth in contribution to GDP is confirmation of the rising fiscal revenues from the trade (Table 3). In 2011 for example, only two tourism related industries (hotel and restaurants) yielded approximately \$10 million by way of taxes. The final evidence of a benign influence shows in the employment figures (Table 3). Tourism is employing an increasing number of Ghanaians, both directly and indirectly, and, on the average, the sector employments have increased by between 10 and 13% annually. When compared to the 1995 figure of 60,000, the current employment figure of 330,514 represents a 450% increase over the period, and accounts for almost 6% of the country's labor force. However, there are indications that these gains could have been substantially higher but for the increasing levels of imports (Figure 2).

Micro-Level Benefits

While the macroeconomic gains have been largely impressive, there have been challenges in translating such achievements into real developmental outcomes, at least for the majority of residents in key tourist towns. There has been very little by way of palpable developmental outcomes to show for the tourist trade at the more disaggregated levels of the community and individual over the past two decades in Ghana. This is amply demonstrated by the case of the Cape Coast-Elmina townships which jointly form the most visited tourist destination in Ghana but have hardly experienced any significant benefits from the trade. Many authors have consistently concluded that tourism has (after almost 25 years of practice) done little to better the lives (and livelihoods) of these inhabitants (Arthur & Mensah, 2006; Boakye, 2008; Koutra, 2007; Koutra & Edwards, 2012; Sonne, 2010; Teye et al., 2002).

Table 3: Tourism and Selected Macroeconomic Indicators

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|---|---|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | GDP contribution (%) | | | | | | |
| | 5.7 | 5.8 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 7% | |
| | Employment (Total) | | | | | | |
| # | | 183192 | 206091 | 234679 | 263157 | 291202 | 330514 |
| % | | 6.0 | 12.5% | 13.9% | 12.1% | 10.7% | 13.5% |
| | Tax-revenue from hotel and restaurants | | | | | | |
| ¢ | 4,435,583 | 9,233,196 | 13,560,599 | 12,732,124 | 13,683,223 | 14,051,092 | 18,589,132 |
| | .13 | .78 | .96 | .69 | .18 | .18 | .73 |
| % | | 108.16 | 46.87 | -6.11 | 7.47 | 2.69 | 32.30 |

Sources: Ghana Tourism Authority, Ghana Revenue Authority (as cited by NTDP, 2013-2027).

This is particularly intriguing given the fact that, being the major tourist receiving destination area in the country, the two townships are visited by over 100,000 visitors annually (Arthur & Mensah, 2006) and have been the recipient of numerous tourism-development related investments (Sonne, 2010). To this end, some authors (Koutra & Edwards, 2012; Sonne, 2010) have identified issues of low host community capacities, while others (Adu-Febiri, 1994; Konadu-Agyemang, 2001; Teye, 2000) have attributed the situation to the wider socio-economic context within which the tourist trade operates in Ghana. Both sets of studies underscore the importance of appreciating context when examining the performance of the tourist trade.

Hence, relative to development oriented outcomes, the deficiencies occur at two levels. First, whatever the macroeconomic gains have been achieved, these have not been translated into micro-level gains. These challenges are structural in nature (Akama, 1999) and are similar to what Dwyer and Kim (2003) define as situational factors which shape the environment within which tourism operates and determine the extent to which a destination becomes competitive and sustainable. In Ghana three such weaknesses can be identified and they are discussed in the ensuing section. The first pertains to weaknesses in the existing policy/legal framework, the second is structural, and the third is related to capacity building.

Policy-Related Weaknesses

The tourism renaissance of 1985 came with the creation of a broad policy/legal framework to supervise the conduct of the trade. Some of these have been mentioned earlier in the text and they have provided some generic benefits. First, it provides legal backing to the tourist trade, something that had rarely happened save in the form of financial instruments. The second advantage has been the creation of a higher level of visibility and (to a limited extent) power to the tourism establishment. Third, it has also made provision for the decentralization of the management of the tourist trade. Perhaps, the most noticeable innovation assisted by the existing framework is the legal backing provided for the creation of a tourism development fund. The fund is supposed to be financed by a Tourism Development Levy of a 1% charge on the face value of all hospitality-related services.

However, collectively, the extant policy/legal framework shows some structural flaws, which may have, inadvertently created problems for the growth of tourism in the country. In the first place, they place a disproportionate emphasis on supply and demand (or tourism production perspectives) and generally tend to overlook the fact that tourism is more complex and that it has multiple stakeholders and is shaped by a myriad of social, political and economic forces (Holden, 2005). Hence, in all of them, only nominal reference is made to the role of other important stakeholders such as host communities, social services, education, sanitation, and health, or even tourism research. More importantly, within the framework of the country's developmental expectations of from tourism, the existing policy and legal framework does very little to (1) stimulate inter-sectoral linkages through regulating the operational and purchasing activities of tourism enterprises, (2) protect local communities through building provisions for capacity building or some investment in social infrastructure for deprived areas near attractions, (3) give tourism a greater legitimacy and clout (a theme to be explored in more detail shortly) by providing some higher recognition or even granting cabinet status and, most importantly, (4) create a structure for ensuring a wider spread of tourism's gains. As regards the last gap, for example, Koutra (2007) bemoans the absence of a clear-cut policy to translate tourism's gains into investments towards poverty reduction.

Structural and Organizational Weaknesses

Ghana's tourism sector is both under-resourced and poorly organized. Though often touted as a major economic activity with the fourth highest contribution to foreign exchange earnings, available evidence suggests that government's support for tourism has hardly gone beyond the nominal endorsement of the sector. Not only is it not clear how tourism-related revenue is spent on the general welfare, tourism remains one of the lowest recipients of budgetary allocations which have, in real terms, been declining over the years. In fact as Mensah (2011) indicates, the Ministry of Tourism's budget was almost halved in 2012 from the 2011 figure. The 2012 budgetary allocation of \$5.1 million represents a mere 0.23% for the previous year's receipts. Worse still is the fact that a large chunk of this allocation goes into salaries and emoluments, leaving very little for developmental or promotional activity. The following extracts from archived Ghana News Agency Reports about the perennial underfunding are self-explanatory.

In 2003, the then outgoing acting Minister for Tourism described budgetary allocation to the Ministry as "peanuts" saying, "The amount is not capable of developing the industry to competitive levels in the Sub-Region" (citation needed here). He said the budget allocated to the Ministry was limited and was a serious constraint to raising the standards in the tourism industry. Nine years later in 2012, "The Deputy Minister for Tourism has noted that the poor performance of countries in the sub-region in their tourism competitiveness was due to weak research and low budget allocations to the sector" (citation). Most recently in 2013, the outgoing Minister for Tourism was quoted to have, again, bemoaned the low allocations to the ministry.

But the more debilitating challenge comes in the form of the tourism sector's powerlessness in the Ghanaian economy. Owing to its variegated nature, tourism relies on many other sectors over which it has limited or no powers of agency. In a developing country like Ghana where government agencies tend to be overprotective of their spheres

of influence and power, the vulnerability of tourism becomes more manifest. The tourism sector therefore becomes a victim of the power play and protectionist tendencies of other sectors and ministries, whose output has implications for tourism. The authority/responsibility for taking major decisions concerning pertinent issues in the sector lies outside the control of the Ministry of Tourism, which does not even have cabinet status. In fact, at cabinet, the highest executive level, the Ministry's interests are represented by the Minister for Trade. Thus the tourism operating environment is one in which the public sector agency is consigned to a negotiating position rather than a decision-making role. A clear example of this challenge is captured in the draft National Tourism Development Plan (Republic of Ghana, 2013), which outlines the frustrations the tourism establishment faces in its dealings with the authorities of the Kotoka International Airport (the country's major exit and entry point) in its quest to collect very vital information from departing tourists. Apparently, the GTA has, for some time now, been disallowed from collecting data in the airports – ostensibly in keeping with international aviation safety and security standards.

Another example of the tourism public sector's powerlessness is in the ownership and management of attractions. As shown in Table 4, what pertains is that the ownership and management of the major tourism attractions does not lie in the hands of the tourism establishment but in other Ministries Departments and Agencies whose core mandates are quite different from the core tourism ethos of leisure and recreation.

Table 4: Some major attractions in Ghana and their supervisory bodies

| Attraction | Supervising entity with power of agency |
|--|--|
| Aburi Botanical Gardens | Forestry Commission |
| Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum | Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture |
| Kakum National Park | Forestry Commission |
| Cape Coast Castle | Ghana Museums and Monuments Board |
| Elmina Castle | Ghana Museums and Monuments Board |
| Lake Bosomtwe recreational area | Relevant District Assembly |
| BoabengFiema Monkey Sanctuary | Local community |
| Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary | Local community |
| LA Pleasure Beach | Local community (La, Development Committee) |
| Various waterfalls (e.g., Wli, Boti, Kintampo) | Relevant District Assemblies |

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

One very illustrative example of the tourism public sector's powerlessness is expressed in the poor nature of the Fulfulsi to Mole road which provides access to the Mole National Park located in the country's Northern Region. The Mole National Park is one of the country's foremost nature attractions and is comparable in its wildlife offerings to the famed parks in East Africa. However, the main access road to the park has been in the most deplorable of conditions for close to two decades and has been the main reason why many would-be patrons decide to forego the park experience. Yet because the power of agency of rectifying the road lies outside the tourism establishment and in a Ministry whose priorities are different, the road remains a major obstacle to tourism development

in the area. The Ministry of Roads and Highways, which has the power to ensure the construction, obviously has a different view of which priority roads need attention. Consequently there is a mismatch between the tourism development agenda with that of other national developmental goals.

Capacity-Related Weaknesses

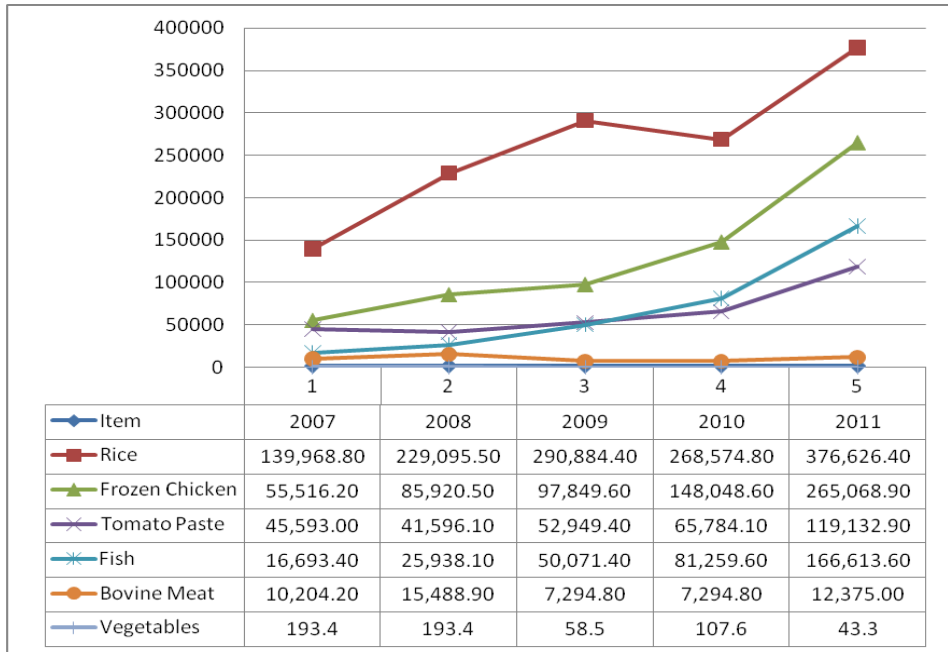
Capacity can be thought of as the ability of an organism to perform a particular task. It can further be operationalized within this context to be the degree to which a stakeholder can (1) identify and (2) maximize the benefits from the tourist trade. In Ghana capacity-related weaknesses occur at levels: broader macro economy and, secondly, at the level of the host communities. The first capacity weakness occurs at the macro level of the national economy. Boakye (2013) argues that Ghana's tourism-induced leakage figures may be much higher than previously thought. This is, in part, due to the presence of a floundering economy (especially in agriculture and manufacturing), which is dominated by a blossoming service sector (51%), whose productivity does not translate into strong backward linkages with tourism. Consequently, the tourist trade relies heavily on imports to cater for its visitors (Figure 2) and, in the process whittles away the net earnings made from the trade.

Whether the increased importation is occasioned by tourism or internal demand, the rising incidence of the importation of the ingredients in Figure 2 is a clear indication of a weak local agriculture sector (especially in the crops sub-sector) and even weaker forward linkages with the country's tourist trade. This is confirmed by the International Monetary Fund (2012) which asserts that performance in the more livelihood-related products, such as crops and fisheries, has been discouraging in Ghana over the years. Consequently, poverty keeps increasing in the predominantly food crop producing areas and fishing communities (IMF, 2012, p. 3).

Communal and Individual Weaknesses

Capacity weaknesses are also observed at the level of host communities and the individuals who live in them and this is particularly true of the Cape-Coast-Elmina area (Holden, Sonne, & Novelli, 2011; Koutra 2007; Koutra & Edwards, 2012; Sonne, 2010). Normally, a strong vibrant and wealthy community is needed for successful tourism development but, in reality, this is hardly the case of the host communities of the study area and the broad context in Ghana. Many host communities in rural Africa simply do not possess the needed capacities to participate meaningfully and beneficially from tourism (Asiedu, 2002; Boakye, 2008).

SSA communities have certain characteristics which weaken their capacities to become major stakeholders in tourism development. First, are the low skill levels that these communities have. Even in instances where, in the name of community engagement, certain job positions in the tourism establishment have been reserved for local people, their low skills preclude them from taking advantage of the opportunities thereby consigning them to subservient positions in their encounter with visitors (Akyeampong, 2011; Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

Figure 2: Recent Trends in the Imports of Some Tourism-Related Items.

Source: Constructed from Ministry of Trade figures as cited in NTDP (2013-2027)

The second capacity-related weakness which lies in the fact that such communities have little or no capital assets, which implies their access to credit is almost non-existent. Hosting tourists creates many opportunities as each tourist need represents an area for investment. However, owing to low credit and a low capital base, these communities are unable to take advantage of such opportunities when they occur. This normally leads to a situation where the tourism development opportunities are exploited mainly by more powerful outsiders in cohort with a few local elite, a scenario reminiscent of the workings of the dependency theory.

The inequalities of the core-periphery theory are often conceptualized at the global level where “core” countries possessing superior wealth and technological know-how not only exploit the resources of the “peripheral” countries but also create structures (e.g., trade), which force the latter to depend perpetually on them. However, the more detrimental power relations appear to happen within the same local space where the elite dominate. In that regard, tourism becomes the vehicle through which local inequalities are enhanced as benefits rather go to the non-poor and powerful non-residents (Akyeamong, 2011). In a more recent study, Mukwada and Dhlamini (2012) found that the affluent members of a community were likely to be the biggest beneficiaries from the community’s hosting of an event. In his 2011 study of communities in the Kakum National Park catchment area, Akyeampong (year) found that it was residents of communities outside

the Park's catchment who had gained more from tourism-related interventions. Similar findings have been adduced of the Cape-Coast Elmina area.

Discussion

On the whole, Ghana's tourism experience over the past two to three decades can best be described as one of mixed fortunes. While there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the tourist trade has blossomed and has yielded some impressive macroeconomic gains, it is also true that there has been very little to show at the disaggregated level of communities and individuals by way of palpable developmental outcomes. Of Elmina for example, Arthur and Mensah (2006) argue that the increased numbers of tourists (about 100,000 annually) has made very little impact on the poverty situation in the town, which is still characterized by poor sanitation and waste management, weak infrastructure, and huge constraints on educational and healthcare facilities.

Though the study did not adopt a strict experimental design, it is difficult to eliminate the possibility that the stagnation and lack of distribution are only symptoms of deeper structural deficiencies which are characterized under (but not limited to) policy weaknesses, structural and organizational weaknesses, and differential capacity shortcomings. Collectively, they may have contributed to (a) reduce the benefits from tourism, (b) restrict the growth of tourism, (c) reduce the ability of host communities to receive developmental outcomes from the tourist trade, (d) exacerbated inequities, and, (e) by extension, ultimately reduce host acceptability of tourism.

For example, the absence of substantial financing for the tourism public sector implies a limitation on the possibilities of undertaking developmental and marketing activities, which are vital for making destinations attractive and competitive. It is therefore not very surprising that since the creation of the three key attractions some two decades ago, no new major attraction has been added to the country's tourism attraction base. Consequently, the country has had to rely on old attractions over the past two decades, and the observed decline in growth on the inbound demand side (Figure 1) is therefore, likely to be an outcome of the lack of diversity in offerings.

Similarly, the lack of power of agency of the tourism establishment (Table 4) implies that the tourist trade plays second fiddle to other competing sectors. Simply put, were the needed financing even available, the current defective power structure would constitute barriers of implementation, and subsequently, growth. The case of the Mole National Park discussed earlier implies reduced accessibility to tourist sites (especially the potential ones) and an overconcentration on the same, old ones.

A similar argument can be made with respect to the management of attractions. Though their primary clientele are tourists, these facilities (especially the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles and Kakum National Park) are managed by agencies (Ghana Museums and Monuments Board and Forestry Commission, respectively), whose core preservation and conservationist mandates sometimes clash with tourism's requirements of service-based professionalism and diversity. Consequently, there have been problems of service quality (Boakye, 2012) and a likely loss of appeal to repeat visitors with its attendant consequences for word-of-mouth marketing. More importantly, the loss of power of agency means the tourism establishment does not have access to the funds generated at such sites thereby making it further cash-strapped and unable to grow as expected.

The decline in growth of the supply side is a reflection-of-sorts of the similar decline happening on the demand side. It is also indicative of the fact that the tourism operating environment is not as conducive as expected. The tourism operating environment (especially for the private sector) is anything but ideal. Operators of tourism businesses have to grapple with limited and discriminatory access to credit, low demand, weak supporting infrastructure, and high and multilayered taxes (Akyeampong, 2007, 2010). The decline in growth over the post-2005 period is, therefore, understandable as such conditions would not only force firms to close down but also discourage prospective entrepreneurs from entering the trade.

Finally, at the communal level, the absence of a clear policy strategy to enhance the translation of the macroeconomic gains to a more individualized or even communal levels (Koutra, 2007) may have contributed to the current situation where there is a simmering discontent among the major host communities where it is thought that the tourist trade has failed to better their livelihoods (Arthur & Mensah, 2006; Boakye, 2008; Koutra & Edwards, 2012; Teye et al., 2002). By Doxey's (1975) theorization, such concerns if left unattended, ultimately transmute into antagonism, which according to Getz (1994) expresses itself in a wide range of emotions not excluding open hostility. Consequently, though such misgivings can be placed in the social realm, they ultimately assume economic implications as the destinations become (or are at least perceived to be) unsafe with its attendant implications for competitiveness.

There is an imperative need for a more integrated and organized public sector approach to the tourist trade—a strange suggestion in a predominantly neo-liberal era. However, the importance for the state to maintain a major coordinating and regulatory presence in the tourist trade remains of utmost importance (Nunkoo, Ramkissoon & Gursoy, 2012). This is particularly true when the countries that seek to gain from the tourist trade have weak economies and their citizens' weak capacity to meaningfully participate in capturing tourism revenues (Nelson, 2012). To successfully employ tourism as a vehicle for development, efforts must be made to address the power (policy and structure) and capacity challenges which have contrived to reduce its efficacy.

Consequently, the first suggestion is for the political agency of the tourism establishment to be strengthened. Tourism is political in nature (Hall, 1996; Holden, 2005; Nelson, 2012; Pleumarom, 2012) and governments of the developing world must have their presence felt in the sector by re-territorializing (Hazbun, 2004) their spaces and asserting their authorities as the initiators and leaders of the tourism development process through strong policy and strict enforcement regimes. To that extent, government must undertake to provide greater clout to the existing structure of the tourism establishment to grant it the power it needs to ensure stronger intersectorial coordination. Such an overhaul must be preceded by the declaration by government of tourism as a National Priority Sector (like was done in 1985 during the era of development) which calls for the highest level of political involvement. To this end, there can be the creation of a Tourism Coordinating Council (TCC) as a sub-committee of Cabinet which will superintend the implementation of tourism plans. Such a council to be chaired by the Vice President will be constituted by the sector ministers from all the sector agencies whose area of jurisdiction has implication for tourism.

This recommended high-level coordination addresses the issues of power highlighted in this analysis. The creation of the TCC implies the need for a more integrated system of

planning in which tourism goals are synchronized with and pursued alongside local and national developmental goals. It should be possible for the tourism establishment for example to (through interacting with various stakeholders) present a list of yearly priorities which when deliberated at that level will be addressed by each sector minister. For example, the need to construct an access road to a new tourist attraction should be identified by the Ministry of Tourism, adopted and upheld by the TCC and factored into the budget by the Ministry for Roads and Highways. Similarly problems of having access to data collection points can very easily be solved at the TCC level once implementation modalities are agreed upon. The current practice of negotiating with the supervising line ministry will only continue to yield very little as each organization will always want to protect its decision making authority.

It will also be pertinent to consciously build the capacity of host community residents. This can be done in the form of skills training and facilitating access to credit to establish small businesses with which tourism has linkages. Capacity building in such an area would help wider sections of host communities become more active in the tourism revenue capturing process. Even then, such capacity building approaches should be structured in a more real-market and business-oriented approach—a detail which according (Spenceley, 2008) is all too often overlooked by implementers

Though marked by a few structural challenges, Ghana's tourist trade shows promise. If properly planned, coordinated and managed, its growth can be more sustained and benefits from the tourist trade can be maximized and more widely distributed. The first step of such an enterprise is to create reliable data bases which track tourist numbers, their movements and revenues and costs that arise from their expenditure.

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