BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OFFERING TOURISM IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF CAPE COAST

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Abstract

Ghana, as a country, has been trying to promote tourism with the aim of achieving rapid socio-economic development objectives, including employment creation, improvements in standard of living, diversification of economies and making the industry one of the main foreign exchange earners for the country. One way of realising these, is to ascertain the benefits that tertiary institutions and tourism establishments derive from the tourist activities and the challenges that they face. This paper, therefore, aims at finding out the level of collaboration between the tourism industry and educational institutions offering tourism and hospitality management, the benefits that they derive and the challenges they face in trying to collaborate with one another and recommendations for improving the level of collaboration. Data for the study were collected using an interview guide from five Lecturers and 20 management and staff from hotels, restaurants, tour operations and attractions. The study employs the qualitative method of analysis. The results of the study show that the educational institutions and the tourism industry both derived some benefits from some sort of collaboration. However, they were faced with challenges such as inadequate practical knowledge of graduates from the academic institutions, lack of regular and in-depth communication between the industry and the academic institutions. This paper recommends a partnerships approach aimed at surmounting the challenges and fostering closer collaboration.

Keywords: Tourism, Benefits, Challenges, Collaboration, Ghana

Introduction/Literature Review

Tourism is one of the oldest industries in the world. As far back as 3,000 B.C., some of the elite in Mesopotamia, who had discretionary income, travelled to foreign destinations for leisure. In ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, some elite also did the same thing. Wealthy Romans, for example, travelled to the sites of older civilizations such as the Egyptian and Greek civilizations as early as 200 B.C. In the Middle Ages, religious tourism started to grow. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that cultural and recreational tourism became within reach of a larger number of people, particularly in Europe ((Makhlouf, 2012: 233). As Weaver and Lawton (2002 cited in (Makhlouf, 2012)) noted, Thomas Cook, who was a British Baptist Priest, who turned into a pioneer in international tourism, began a series of Bible camps and other religious excursions in the 1840s. In the 1860s, he shifted his attention to broad-based excursions. His first international excursion was to the Swiss Alps in 1863. This was followed by an around-the-world excursion in 1872. These "Cook excursions [marked] the beginning of international tourism…although such trips were… still the prerogative of the wealthy" (Weaver and Lawton, 2002, p. 66).

At present, international tourism occupies fourth place among the world's leading industries, the other three being energy, chemicals, and automotives (Honey and Golpin, 2009, p. 2 cited in Makhlouf, 2012)). In 2010, the number of international tourists reached

about 940 million, compared to a mere 25 million in 1950. The annual revenue from this industry has also been growing at an annual rate ranging from 4 to 7 percent, and reaching $919 billion in 2010, according to the UN World Tourist Organization (WTO). As the number of tourists and the revenues from international tourism grew, the number of favoured destination countries had also increased, with the developing and emergent economies attracting increasingly larger numbers of tourists. As Honey and Golpin (2009 cited in Makhlouf, 2012) pointed out, "in 1950, just 15 destinations – primarily European – accounted for 98 percent of all international arrivals. By 2007 that figure had fallen to 57 percent…The developing world has now become … major growth area. Tourism (has become) a key foreign exchange earner for 83 percent of developing countries and the leading export earner for one-third of the world's poorest countries" (p. 2), including Ghana. In Ghana, it has, since the late 1980s, received considerable attention in the country's economic development strategy (Teye, 1998). The government, in a bid to show its commitment to tourism development, established a Ministry of Tourism in 1993 (Teye, 1998). Over the years, tourism has moved from the sidelines to the centre-stage of development policy in Ghana. From an insignificant entry subsumed under 'miscellaneous items' in the national accounts, tourism had by 2007 emerged as a significant sector contributing 6.3% of gross domestic product. By that same year, Ghana had emerged as the third leading destination for international tourism in the West African sub-region (World Tourism Organization, 2008 cited in Akyeampong, 2009: 1). It comes after minerals, cocoa and foreign remittances as the fourth leading foreign exchange earner (Akyeampong, 2009: 1).

Despite this trend, international tourism, as an industry, is far below its potential in many developing countries in terms of the dollars earned. Hence, there is room for growth with more investment in the infrastructure and tourism-related businesses and more ambitious tourism management and marketing strategies. Referring to the importance of the strategic leadership role of destination country governments, Honey and Golpin (2009 cited in Makhlouf, 2012) noted that "tourism cannot grow into a thriving sector…without constructive leadership from the national government. Too many countries fail to reap the rewards of tourism because of poor planning, poorly thought out strategies, and fragmented policies" (p.9).

Dodds and Butler (2009 cited in Dodds, 2012, p. 55), referencing multiple authors believe that sustainable tourism is the responsibility of all stakeholders and if so, there is a need to understand stakeholder roles and their role in sustainable tourism practices. Stakeholders are defined as any individual or group who can affect the firm's performance or who is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman, 1984 cited in Dodds, 2012: 55). In a tourism context, Sautter and Leisen (1999 cited in Dodds, 2012: 55) and Bansal and Roth (2000 cited in Dodds, 2012: 55) outline that stakeholders consist of residents, management, government, activist groups/NGOs, employees, tourists and industry associations. Stakeholder management can be a useful way of organising, as it can respond to the concerns of stakeholders because those stakeholders can ultimately affect the plans and activities of the firm (Husted, 1989 cited in Dodds, 2012, p. 55). The organisational setting of a firm can be similar to that of a destination as destinations are also bunches of resources just like companies (Ryan, 2Ó02 cited in Dodds, 2012, p. 55). For the long-term viable management of a destination, it is important to understand the views of stakeholders as they can motivate or impede sustainability in organizations (competitive advantage, regulatory compliance, economic considerations, etc.) (Graci & Dodds, 2008; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Carroll, 2000; Lantos, 2001 cited in Dodds, 2012, p. 55).

Some destination studies have identified motives and barriers to sustainability. These include economic considerations, political power and salience, lack of or inadequate co-ordination among stakeholders, lack of or inadequate accountability of all stakeholders, lack

of will and integration among government bodies (Ioannides, 2001; Dodds, 2007a; 2007b cited in Dodds, 2012, p. 55).

If there is lack of or inadequate co-ordination among stakeholders, for example, for our purpose in this paper between tourism managers or employers and academics, attaining sustainable tourism development becomes a nightmare. According to Solnet, Robinson & Cooper (2007), tourism and hospitality management are applied fields that call for close links between the tourism industry and academics, curriculum development experts and students, but strategies for industry engagement in many education institutions are often haphazard and lack focus, commitment and resources. Well-established fora, at which academic and practical-based debates and discussions between educators and other concerned parties are held, are not encouraged (Mayaka & Akama, 2007). Executives working in the hospitality industry have not developed programmes that help tourism students move ahead in an orderly manner (Berger, 2008).Whenever job opportunities in other sectors are scarce, many graduates run to the tourism industry and seek refuge there. For them, the industry becomes a first step or temporary occupation. Many tourism employers do not recognise the importance of education; they have a complete lack of appreciation of tourism education and underlying theories, framework and concepts that should guide tourism as a major social and economic global phenomenon (Zagonari, 2009). According to Dale & Robinson (2001 cited in Cervera-Taulet & Ruiz-Molina, 2008, p.61), some of them "often recruit non-tourism graduates (for example, graduates in business studies) who are able to demonstrate the generic skills required for a vocation in tourism". Such employers might have to equip the newly-employed staff with specialist skills that they might not have acquired during their previous training (Cervera-Taulet et al., 2008, p. 61). However, there are some employers, who are only interested in having cheap labour (Mustafa, 2012) and therefore are not interested in generic skills that the graduates might have acquired. Such steps are not in line with the aspirations of the training institutions, whose aim is to give students structured training. In view of the differing interests, training institutions and the tourism indutry do not have a strategic direction (Solnet et al., 2007).

Goodenough and Page (1993) point out the need to forge a closer link between the tourism industry and the training institutions. Through such a partnership, the industry and the educational institutions would develop and meet the training requirements of course participants.

The main objective of this study is to explore the extent, to which tertiary institutions offering courses in tourism and hospitality management in the Cape Coast Metropolis collaborate with institutions such as hotels, restaurants, tour operations as well as ticketing and travel agencies that operate within the tourism sector.

Specifically the study seeks to:
(i)   explore the level of collaboration between tourism establishments and hospitality management training institutions/departments in the Cape Coast Metropolis
(ii)   identify benefits that are derived through such collaboration
(iii)   assess constraints or challenges faced through such collaboration
(iv)   use the results of the study to make recommendations to help boost tourism in the Cape Coast Metropolis in particular and in Ghana in general.

The research will provide information, which will be useful to all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions offering tourism, hotels, restaurants, tour operating agencies, ticketing and travel agencies, municipal and district assemblies, etc. that deal with tourism

Again, the outcome of the study will provide people with the needed knowledge and understanding of the collaborative efforts that need to be scaled up to boost the tourism industry in Ghana.

This paper has been organized into five sections: Introduction/literature review, study area, data and methods, results, and discussion and conclusion.

The study area

The study area is the Cape Coast Municipality, which is the administrative capital of the Central Region. It is a historic and political geographical area in the Central Region. It has served as an entry point for the Europeans in the 15th century and later served as a port, military post and a receptacle to slaves from the interior during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. During the Gold Coast era, it also served as the first national capital of Ghana and seat of government until 1877, when it lost that status to Accra, the present national capital and seat of government. Cape Coat town is both the administrative and most viable commercial centre in the region with a population of about 169,894 of which 82,810 are males and 87,084 females (Ghana Statistical Service Report 2010). Apart from these functions, it also hosts a number of hotels, guest houses, attractions and restaurants. As at 2012, there were 158 hotels/lodges/guest houses in the Central Region, out of which Cape Coast had 40. There were 15 restaurants. Ten (10) of these were in Cape Coast. Attractions that were in Cape Coast as at the period include the Cape Coast Castle, the Military Cemetery, the London Bridge, the Kotokuraba Market, Emintsimadze Palace, Fort Victoria, Fort William, Merchant Houses and the Posuban Shrine. Two very important attractions – The National Kakum Park and the Elmina Castle – are not far from the Metropolis. Thus, many tourists visiting Cape Coast visit these attractions.
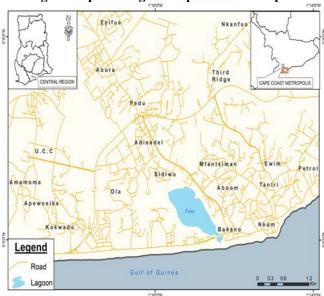
Fig. 1: Map showing the Cape Coast Metropolis

Source: Geographic Information Systems and Cartographic Unit, Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Cape Coast

Data and methods

The research uses descriptive analysis to show the level of collaboration between tertiary institutions and the tourism industry. The research was conducted using qualitative research methodology. This was used to help the researcher seek the views of employers and employees in the tourism industry as well as those of staff in training institutions regarding the level of collaboration between them and the benefits they derive from such collaboration as well as the challenges they face. As qualitative research, respondents were offered the opportunity to respond to questions more elaborately. It also provided information about the human side of the phenomenon under study.

Five (5) Lecturers and 20 management and staff from the tourism industry were selected largely by non-probability sampling techniques. Non-probability sampling has been

explained by Singleton, Strait, Strait & McAllister (1988) to mean the processes of selection other than random selection. It involves the use of convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. Despite the problems of investigator's bias in the selection of units and the inability to calculate sampling error or its precision, non-probability sampling has been more appropriate in many instances, especially when the researcher wants to be more informed about the problem itself (Singleton *et al.*, 1988).

Respondents were selected on the basis of their role in the tourism industry of the area. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select lecturers in tourism, the staff of attractions, the staff of hotels and the staff of tour operating agencies. According to Kumekpor (2002), purposive sampling has to do with the deliberate picking of respondents who satisfy some qualities for a given research. These respondents may not be obtained through a random sampling procedure due to the fact that the specific characteristics required of the respondents may not be randomly distributed in the universe.

The study was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved a collection of secondary information from existing literature. This was to help the researcher to review the works various researchers have done on the topic and the study area. This has the effect of avoiding repetition, refining the problem and directing the focus of the work (Schaefer, 2006). The second stage of the study took the form of field work, which was to collect primary data from tertiary institutions that teach tourism and hospitality management and from management and staff operating in the tourism industry by interviewing them and soliciting their views regarding the benefits of their collaboration and challenges facing them.

The researcher conducted the study using an interview guide which he had prepared in advance. The questions on the interview guide reflected the objectives of the study. The reliability of the interview guide was ascertained through a pre-test with lecturers and staff operating in the tourism industry. Having done away with every ambiguity, a Senior Research Assistant in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the University of Cape Coast conducted the interviews. He took notes and tape-recorded what respondents stated during the interviews. The data that were taped recorded were first transcribed. This was done by listening to the audio tapes and writing down the responses verbatim. The transcripts and prepared notes of the fieldwork provided a large volume of information, which still had to be processed before analysis could be done. Manual sorting was carried out. This included reading of the notes and transcripts several times, identifying and writing down major points, and themes emerging from each question from the interviews. This was to put the information into easily identifiable categories that would make it simple for analysis. Very interesting quotes were written down into a response sheet and later used in the text of the analysis to support the arguments made.

The analysis of the data was done after the sorting. Bodgan & Biklen (1982, p. 145) have argued that analysis in qualitative data involves working with data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what to tell others. Patton (1990) intimates that qualitative analysis involves inductive analysis. This means that critical themes emerge out of the data. The challenge of this analysis was to place raw data into logical meaningful categories, to examine them holistically; and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to the readers. After the analysis, the next stage was to make sense out of the sorted data, provide interpretation for the emerging trends and features of the data, and compare them with the literature.

Problem encountered during the study

The researcher could not interview some people, who were purposively selected, because they did not want to make themselves available for the interview.

Results
Benefits derived by tertiary institutions and the tourism sector

In discussing the benefits that the tertiary institutions and the tourism sector derived from each other, the respondents from both sectors stated that they benefited through the attachment of students. Those from the tertiary institutions stated that they benefited by sending their students on attachment, while the ones from the tourism sector mentioned that they benefited by receiving students, who provided some services.

A 34-year-old male Lecturer at a tertiary institution had this to say:

The tourism sector provides us the opportunity to send our students to do attachments in their outfit. By so doing, they help in the practical training at the attraction centres. Some of them also give job opportunities to our students. This is important because if we produce graduates in tourism and they are not employed, our department will not be attractive for people to pursue our courses. In this way, our programmes will not be sustainable.

A 22-year-old female Teaching Assistant of a tertiary institution stated:

The tourism industry provides avenues for our graduates to get jobs to do. We have the opportunity to do attachment in the industry in order to gain practical knowledge. We also use the attractions as 'laboratories', where we undertake educational trips and excursions.

Similarly, a 32-year-old male employee of an attraction stated:

People do come here for attachment and national service. Currently employment is a problem, so people prefer to come here voluntarily.

A 34-year-old interviewee mentioned that apart from the benefits derived from attachment, the students are given the opportunity to do research.

The attractions also give our students the opportunity to conduct research.

Challenges faced by tertiary institutions and the tourism sector

The stakeholders in the tertiary institutions and those in the tourism industry were faced with a number of challenges, including environmental problems in the attractions, criminal activities, inadequate number of personnel speaking foreign languages such as French, poor infrastructure in the attractions, lack of highly trained personnel to man the attractions, etc.

A 34-year-old Lecturer made mention of the fact that there was lack of institutional collaboration:

I think the industry is faced with a number of challenges.

Some interviewees felt that the training provided in the tertiary institutions was too theoretical.

The 34-year-old Lecturer mentioned above said:

I did my Bachelors Degree in tourism at the University [name withheld]. The University has great lecturers, but what we were doing was too academic. In order to effectively deliver in the tourism industry, one needs to have skills in ticket reservation, guard operations, hospitality law, etc., but such important courses were not taught during our training. The result is that when one went out to look for a job and produced a transcript that did not indicate that one had done those courses, it is often rejected.

The 22-year-old female Teaching Assistant mentioned above put it bluntly this way:

You will be surprised that an HND [Higher National Diploma] *holder in tourism goes to a hotel industry and does not know how to lay a bed. We are too theoretical.*

A female guide talked about difficulties faced by students when they have to carry out research:

Sometimes students come to collect data for research purposes, but we are unable to provide them with the requisite materials they need. Our library is not well-stocked with books. We do have a few books, but students have to buy them, and most of them are not able

to do so. The result is that they end up producing work that we cannot use to improve upon what we do.

A 33-year-old male working at a beach resort mentioned the fact that after training students from the institutions, particularly from the Universities, they hardly get any feedback from the authorities.

After offering practical training to students from the institutions, we often do not get any feedback from the schools, particularly the Universities, to help us improve upon the training we offer. The Polytechnics sometimes do a follow-up. The industrial liaison unit sends officers to us to ascertain how a student is performing. We then get feedback from the students' supervisors. But the Universities do not do that.

Another challenge that some respondents pointed out is the fact that many attractions do not want to employ highly-skilled persons.

A 29-year-old Lecturer stated:

They [tourism industry] do not want to employ our graduates because of salaries.

They think employing graduates will mean paying higher salaries and for that matter they employ SHS [senior high school] graduates who are either unskilled or semi-skilled and pay them between 80 and 150 Ghana Cedis a month. This however, affects the quality of service they have to offer to customers.

Another Lecturer made a similar statement:

The small-scale medium industries are unable to employ people with higher qualifications. They often employ their own family members. To them employing professionals will mean paying higher salaries which will deplete their profit margins. The bigger tourism industries such as big hotels also complain that the graduates they employ are too academic and theoretical. According to them, when they employ the graduates, they have to retrain them, and this comes as an additional cost to them.

Some respondents pointed out that because most of the staff did not possess skills in foreign languages such as French, they were not able to serve visitors well.

One male Lecturer stated:

There is lack of adequate qualified personnel to man the centres. The tour guides at times do not have a high command of the English language, let alone French. This makes it difficult for foreigners to get quality service from the centres.

Collaboration between the tourism industry and tertiary institutions

Some of the respondents indicated that there was some degree of collaboration between the tourism industries and the educational institutions, but the majority of them agreed that quite apart from the attachments that students did, and the honouring of invitations by some personnel from the tourism industry to the tertiary institutions to give talks on what pertained in the industry, there was very little or no collaboration.

A 54-year-old Senior Lecturer mentioned the employment of graduates from the institution, in which he teaches, by the tourism industry as collaboration. He stated:

A study I conducted indicated that 41 percent of our graduates are absorbed by the tourism industry.

A 34-year-old Lecturer, who also felt there was a degree of collaboration, stated the following:

During National Tourism Celebrations we are invited to observe the events; we go to the tourism industry to find out from them what they require from us; and in 2003, we constituted an advisory committee made up of professionals from both the tourism industry and the educational institutions to draw a plan geared towards making our courses more practical.

However, he agreed that more could be done. He pointed out that that there was very little institutional collaboration.

A 29-year-old Lecturer made a similar statement. He stated:

There is lack of institutional collaboration among the various players in the industry – the educational sector, the attraction sector, the hotel industry and the government, etc. As it is now collaboration is limited to attachment facilities for our students, annual get-togethers and parties

A female Teaching Assistant simply said:

There is a very big gap between the [tertiary] institutions and the industry.

Respondents suggested strategies to overcome challenges and strengthen collaboration

A 45-year-old male staff member of an attraction stated:

The tourism industry is improving day by day and once it gets to a certain level, professionals will be needed to run it. So I believe that the institutions should collaborate with the organisations much more for them to really know what is happening in the organizations, so that when they are training people, they can get to know the fact on the ground and get capable people who will come and address issues for the industry to move forward.

A 34-year-old Lecturer of a tertiary institution said:

There should be institutional collaboration. Most of the time it is the students who go round to look for attraction centres to work with or do their attachment. Such students go to places where they know people there. But the attachment should be institutionalised. The attractions should give us feedback as to what they expect fom us so that we would be informed as to the kind of quality products we should produce.

A 27-year-old female worker of an attraction stated:

We should be seen as partners by these tertiary institutions. These institutions should have good knowledge of our operations, so that they can train people to be absorbed by the tourism industry.

Discussion and conclusion

The study set out to ascertain the level of collaboration between tertiary institutions that teach tourism and hospitality management and the tourism industry, what benefits each of them derive from the collaboration and what challenges they are confronted with. The results of the study revealed that there was some amount of collaboration. As part of the training of the tourism students, they go to attractions on attachment to gain some practical experience.

On graduating from the institutions, the graduates are employed by the tourism industry. As indicated above, this is one of the benefits derived from tourism. However, the challenge here is that many of the graduates, who are employed, and the students, who go on attachment, are not able to fit well into the industry because they are not able to apply what they learn in the institutions on the job. This supports an argument made by Mayaka and Akama (2009) that there is a lack of proper academic understanding and focused theoretical framework of most tourism studies. This engenders a lack of provision of clear directions in the teaching of tourism courses. Another challenge that the results of the study revealed was that many employers in the tourism industry do not see the importance of education. Some employers engage the services of their own kith and kin. They do this because they would not want to employ professionals, whom they would have to give higher remuneration. As the literature points out, many employers in the tourism industry hire cheap labour (Mustafa, 2012). One strategy that needs to be adopted to ensure that Ghana, as a country, survives the competitive market place is that highly-skilled persons are trained to serve as managers in the industry (Akyeampong, 2009). The continuous appointment of people, who are unqualified, would collapse the industry. The challenge can only be faced squarely, if educational institutions offering courses in tourism and hospitality management collaborate more closely with the tourism industry (Goodenough & Page). As Akyeampong (2009, p. 21) points outs out, during the first 50 years of tourism development in Ghana, it was the partnership of the public and private sectors… and not the competition among them that contributed to the rapid

growth of the industry. The tourism industry should be seen to be contributing to the development of curriculum for tourism students. Seminars and workshops aimed at exchanging ideas should be organised on regular basis. During such fora, students would become well-equipped. They would gain a lot of both theoretical and practical knowledge. In this way, the graduates from the institutions would not be square pegs in round holes, when they enter the world of work in the tourism industry.

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