



## **ANALYSIS OF POOR PATRONAGE OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN THE VOLTA REGION OF GHANA**

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### **Abstract**

*Nature provides different features at different places that people all over the world to travel from place to place for site seeing and relaxation. Ghana has a lot natural features which people from other countries visit as tourists. This research is to explore what tourists consider before visiting a site. Two hundred (200) respondents participated in the research. The results showed that the sites are not attractive and are underdeveloped. Road networks linking the places are poor. The natural environment is good and is appreciated by the visitors. Associated facilities that could provide much information about the culture of the people are unavailable at the sites. Security and safety facilities are also non-existing and result tourists feel uncomfortable at the places. Tourists stated the factors that would make them keep visiting the places; they include but not limited to 'good accommodation facilities', 'quality customers service', 'neatness of the environment', and 'availability of transport facilities'. It is recommended that the places need to be developed and facilities upgraded to higher level. Research could be conducted to determine suitable marketing strategies to be adopted by the managers of the places to promote the tourism centres in the country as a whole.*

*Keywords: Tourist destinations, accommodation, road-networks, natural environment, transportation*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism plays a very important role in promoting economic growth of a country because it serves as reliable means of income generation, employment, and infrastructural development for the local communities where tourist attractions are located and well developed. In the



Netherlands and China, tourism is used as a means of attracting potential investors into their countries and this proved very successful as their economies show positive responds since then. In Africa, especially South Africa and Seychelles tourism was used as a development tool to improve their economies (Archer & Fletcher 1996, Makochekanwa 2002, and Kaplan 2004). Tourism therefore becomes economic sustainable tool used by many countries to support other foreign currency generators and also as a point of exchange of cultural values among people.

Ghana as a country has many overwhelming places where tourists can visit because of the endowment of many beautiful natural resources couple with rich cultural heritages; and the Volta Region is not an exception as it can boast of many tourist sites which include Adaklu mountain, Tafi-Atome Monkey Sanctuary, AgumatsaWli Waterfalls, Afadja Mountain (the highest mountain) in Ghana, Likpe Cages, just to mention but a few.

Ghana recently, has become a major centre for tourism sites. The tourism sector started to grow fast because governments and stakeholders were positively talking about tourism development centres and were able to take few actions in the development of the sites. According to Ahiawodzi, (2013) the falling foreign reserves, high inflation, depreciation of the cedi, and fluctuating economic growth, development of tourism sector can in the long-run help in increasing the country's foreign exchange earnings, stabilized inflation, appreciate the cedi, and increase growth in the economy, thereby contributing to reduction of poverty among the people in the country.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the increasing contributions of tourism to the national economy, access to important tourist destinations identified in Ghana still remain underdeveloped with accompanying sub-standard facilities and lack of other related services and in all cases, not easily accessible to tourists. According to Eagle, McCool, and Haynes (2002) tourists are often attracted to remote areas because of their comparative advantage in terms of cultural, wildlife, and landscape values with increasing demand for high quality recreational opportunities and services that support them. Tour guides are expected to have perfect knowledge about the sites and be able to communicate effectively. Tourists want their host to make them feel welcome, comfortable, and be part of the communities they visit.

But Eagles *et al*, (2002) opined that most tourist agencies do not have service quality goals and monitoring programmes which are making the programmes appear not responsive to the demands of customers. Tourism has become a very competitive business as the visitors always demand value for money, therefore, tourism sectors need to have specific and attracting features that reflect the current needs of the industry.

According to Cole (2006), residents have both the right and obligation to participate in the tourism development processes that will shape the future of their community and their lives as well. Based on these realisations, a number of Community Based Eco-tourism Projects (CBEPs) were established throughout the country, (Zeppel, 2006). Few years after the execution of the Community Based Eco-tourism Projects, majority of the sites have realised increase in the number of tourists visiting the places. Later on, the number of visitors to the sites continues to dwindle and income generated by the management of the sites is reducing daily. Many people including the Government remain worried because this is also negatively affecting cultural exchange and other related benefits to both the communities and governments.

Mathieson and Wall (2004), and Mayo and Jarvis (2005), conducted researches on diverse aspects of tourism and came out with varying revelations concerning the development and use of tourism products and the related services. Mathieson and Wall (1982) looked at the competitive strategy the tourism sectors would use to attract tourists in Britain. They found that, competitiveness led to high number of investors and increasing destination income. They concluded that, competitiveness must be linked to price, quality, and satisfaction of the tourists in order to establish profitable and sustainable position in the tourism industry.

According Mayo and Jarvis (2005) tourists look for the ability of managers of the destinations to deliver individual benefits enhanced by the attributes (price, attractiveness, quality services, other related products, etc.) of destinations. They concluded that, the importance of these attributes helped people evaluate the attractiveness of their destinations and visitors used them in choosing relevant destinations to visit.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This research generally aimed at investigating and examining the factors that contribute to the low patronage of eco-tourism destination in the Volta Region of Ghana. In order to achieve this aim, the researcher specifically aimed to:

1. examine the current state of eco-tourism destinations in the Volta Region
2. identify and analyse the factors considered by tourists in choosing eco-tourism destinations.

### **LITERATURE**

Appiah, (2008) defined tourist-site as a place of interest where tourists visit, typically for its inherent or exhibited natural value, cultural value, historical significance, natural and built-in beauty, adventure, offering leisure, and amusement. Operationally, tourist-sites are places where tourists visit for site-seeing, relaxation, and learning new things about nature and culture of other people.

World Conservation Union (1996) defined eco-tourism as an environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature and any accompanying cultural features, both past and present that promote conservation, has low negative visitors' impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations. With this in mind, the development of tourism destinations must help in preserving natural beauty of the places leading to the promotion of sustainable natural environment, which is an important asset in tourism drive. That is to say, tourists would be interested in seeing natural vegetation and features and hence, it is important to keep natural features that can attract them.

Tourism destination is a physical space made up of tourism products such as support services, attractions, and tourism resources with physical and administrative boundaries that define its management, and images, (World Tourism Organisation 2003b). According to Buhalis, (2000), tourism destinations are places that offer mixture of tourism products and services, (attractions, accessibility, available packaged activities, well noted artefact and ancillary services) which are consumed under a brand name of the destination. Development of the tourist sites must aim at making the places attractive, with different analogous services that can make tourists feel comfortable and happy.

Random utility theory, (a classic micro-economic theory) that emphasizes rank-order utility maximisation among a set of alternative destinations was used by some researchers in choosing tourism destination, (Huybers 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Nicolau & Mas, 2008). This stipulates that when tourists make decision to visit a tourism centre, they compare the utilities available in a number of destinations before making a choice. In most cases, comparison is made relating to utility expected to be obtained from visiting a particular destination. The use of discrete choice models is compatible with the economic principle of utility maximization, where the utility of a given destination is a function of tourists' socio-demographic profiles and the attractiveness of destinations as defined by their attributes. This theory is described as being a circular concept; utility is the quality in commodities that enables individuals to buy them, and the fact is that individuals buy commodities in which they have the highest utility.

It is criticised that neither cardinal nor ordinal utility is empirically observable in the real world. In the case of basic utility, it is impossible to measure the level of satisfaction 'quantitatively' when a person consumes a product. In the case of ordinal utility, it is impossible to determine exactly what makes a consumer buys a particular product because there are many influencing buyers behave in a particular way. Any act of a consumer would involve liking over a vast set of choices (Berkeley, 2010).

Whether people gain utility for diverse reasons of wants, beliefs or a sense of duty leads to understanding their behaviour (Burke, 2002), because there is a reason for people doing one thing or the other. Tourists therefore as customers would also look for and consider various factors before taking decision to visit a tourist centre. Likewise, choosing among alternatives is a process of determining what to consider among a lot of things; a question of choice within uncertainty (Pilkington, 2014).

### Conceptual Framework

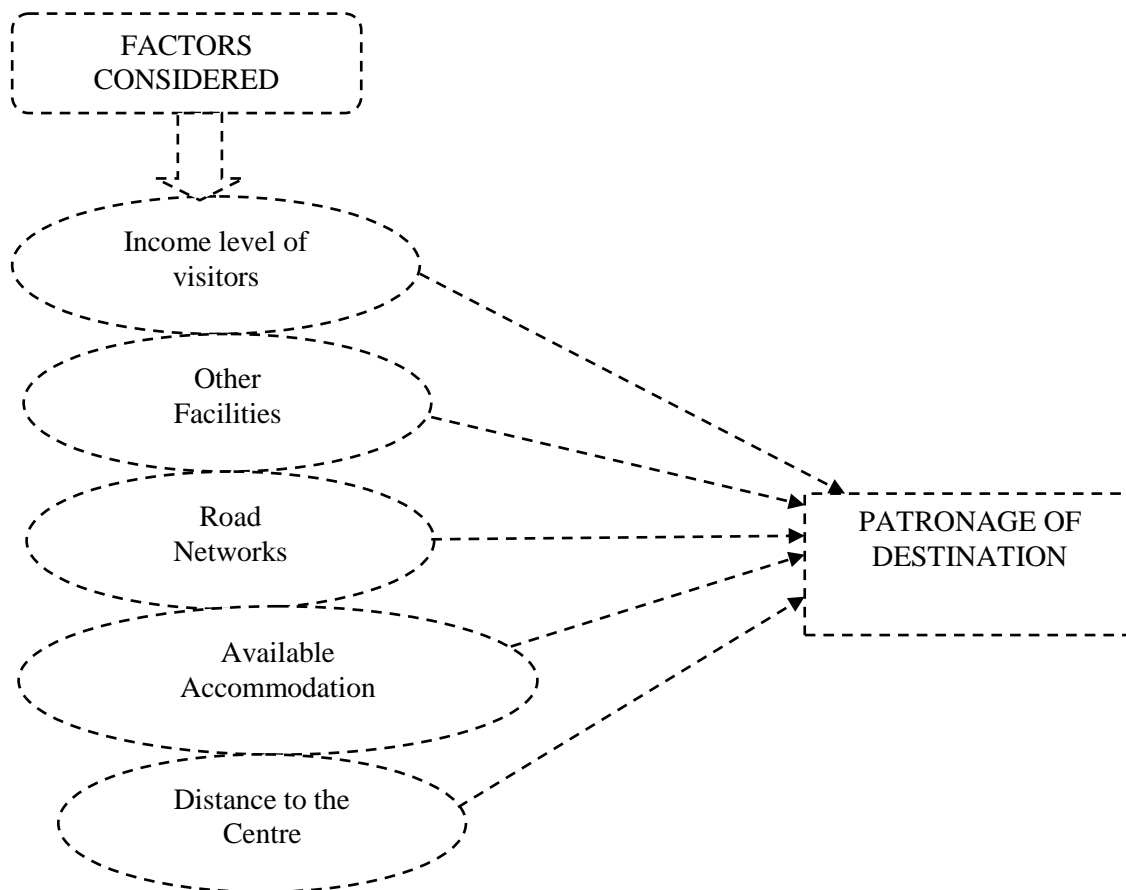


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Personal characteristics, destination characteristics, and trip characteristics are the main variables that can affect the choice of tourist destinations. Personal characteristics include education, household composition, income, and place of residence (Eugenio-Martin, 2008). Tourists can control personal characteristics by changing their behaviours to enable them consume products according to their preference. Destination characteristics on the other hand, include attributes such as climate, the presence of different kinds of activities, quality of

tourism products, costs related to facilities (transport, accommodations, exchange rates, etc.) available, (Balogu & McClearr, 2009). Trip characteristics include travel distances and its cost, travel times, and vacation purpose, etc. It is however difficult for tourists to influence these characteristics. However, tourists can adjust themselves to choose destinations appropriately.

Recently, researchers have begun looking at these standard factors into more insightful measures of tourists' preferences and motivations. This is in response to the fact that tourists are becoming increasingly demanding and selective about their holiday travels, which in turn leads to an increasingly competitive tourism marketing, (Beerli et al, 2007). The most relatively common method that could be considered by tourists in choosing destination is reasonable described as stated motivation factors (what tourists expect to accomplish on their trip or the personal benefits they hope to gain from taking holiday), which they often obtain from surveys or interviews (Papatheodorou, 2001). Different researchers describe these factors as 'level of appreciation', i.e. how much a traveller appreciates such activities as nature, cultural heritage, improvement of the destinations, shopping, dining, and outdoor recreation (Letho et al., 2004). Nicolau and Mas (2005) used this latter definition in their review of interest in new places and new cultures. Baloglu and McCleary (2009) evaluated how various destinations were perceived based on how well they would allow tourists to relax, have excitement, gain knowledge, be social, and attain prestige. The factors explained immediately above by various researchers are the focus of this research.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research was carried out in the three main areas in the Volta Region where ecotourism destinations (Likpe Caves, Wli Waterfalls at Agumatsa, and Tafi-Atome Monkey Sanctuary) prevail. The Cave is located in Likpe-Todome, which is about 45 minutes walking distance from the town, The Wli Waterfalls is located at Agumatsa, Likpe, and the Monkey Sanctuary which covers an area of 35 square kilometres is located at Tafi-Atome.

A case study approach was adopted in investigating the low patronage of eco-tourism destinations in the Volta Region, Ghana. The case study method was employed for the fact that the researcher wanted to conduct a systematic enquiry into events or a set of related events that describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. The case study made is possible to obtain in-depth information relating to the conditions prevailing at tourist destinations in the Volta Region, and factors considered by tourists in choosing these destinations to visit. The different groups of participants involved in the study were management of the centres, tour- guards, tourists, and other auxiliary workers of the tourism destinations. The accessible population

included tourists and all personnel of tourism destinations that had direct contact with the tourists. Other auxiliary workers at the destination are the people selling artefacts, providing other related services at the destination. The total estimated population being capable of providing data for the study was 300.

The sampling techniques employed for the research were purposive, and convenience, which are under non-probability sampling. Using the purposive sampling technique, the researcher relied on personal judgment relating to a specific purpose for choosing sample size from the population. This was because the type of information needed could be obtained only from particular people (managements, tour guards, tourists, and other auxiliary workers) and for convenience, those who were present at the tourism destinations and are willing to provide data for the study are given questionnaire. The total number of participants sampled from the population was 200.

Questionnaire, designed by the researcher was the main data collection tool used in collecting data for the study. The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Section A collected the biographic information of respondents, section B collected data on the current state of tourism destinations in the Volta Region of Ghana, and section C showed questions relating to factors that influenced the choice of tourism destinations.

Permission was duly obtained from the managers of the selected tourism destinations to enable researcher administer questionnaire to the participants. During the time of administering questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study thoroughly to respondents. This was to help respondents understand the purpose of the research and do away with suspicions, and partiality so that they can express opinions independently in answering the questions. The researcher then went back after two days to take the answered questionnaires from the participants.

For analysis and presentation of results, the data collected was edited, coded, and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0, and in order to have clear images and good pictorial interpretation of the analysis in various charts, Microsoft Excel was used. Specific objectives of the study were considered and as result, descriptive statistics was used in running the analysis and the results were presented in tables for clearer understanding. For the purpose of accurate interpretation, frequencies were run to determine factors that affected the tourist's choice of tourism destinations. The factor with a higher frequency was identified as a major factor and the one with a low frequency, a lower factor.

## RESULTS

Data on the category of the respondents were analysed; it showed that 110 of the participants representing 55% were domestic tourists, and 74 (37%) were international tourists, and the remaining 16 (8%) of the respondents were auxiliary workers, managers, etc.

Information gathered on the means of arriving at the tourist sites indicated that 184 tourists, 92 representing 50% of the total tourists arrived at the sites by car, 68 (37%) tourists arrived at the sites by motor-bicycle, and 24 respondents representing 13% arrived by bicycle. It is obvious that all the tourist participants arrived at the sites by road using cars, motor-bicycles, and bicycles relatively. Again results of the analysis indicated that 110 (60%) of the tourist respondents visited the places for the first time, and 74 representing 40% said it was not their first time of visiting the sites.

Table 1 Views of all respondents on the current state of tourism destinations in the Volta Region of Ghana

Statements	Responses & Percentages		
	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
Tourism destinations in Ghana have deteriorated	(32)16%	(104)52%	(64)32%
The tourism sites are less developed	(52)26%	(32)16%	(116)58%
The environment of tourism sites looks neat and attractive	(48)24%	(28)14%	(124)62%
There are enough accommodation facilities nearer to the tourist destinations	(116)58%	(20)10%	(64)32%
The facilities in the Hotels, Motels, Guest Houses, etc. at the tourism destinations are up to accepted standard for an ordinary person to use	(72)36%	(36)18%	(92)46%
Other associated facilities like snack bars, handicrafts, shops, etc. are available at the destinations to enable visitors buy things they can keep for remembrance	(156)78%	(16)8%	(28)14%
The tourist destinations have personal safety and security facilities	(108)54%	(32)16%	(60)30%

From the Table, 104 (52%) of the total respondents were undecided on the statement that tourist destinations have deteriorated, 64 representing 32% of the total respondents agreed that the tourist destinations have deteriorated, and 32(16%) did not agree with the statement. This clearly shows that majority of the tourists sampled are the first time visitors to the sites that is why they cannot decide if the places have deteriorated or not. Majority of the remaining respondents



64(32%) of the total respondents who paid visit to the places more than once agreed that the places have deteriorated, and the remaining 32 (16%) of the total respondents) who might had also visited the sites more than once disagreed that the places have deteriorated.

116 respondents representing 58% agreed to the assertion that the tourist sites are less developed, 52 (26%) respondents disagreed that the tourist sites are less developed, and 32 representing 16% were undecided. This implies that majority of the participants have seen no development to the places. Managers of the tourism destinations have not done anything that can bring about changes at the places. This lack of development would make the tourists feel unhappy to pay visit to the destinations in the future. This is what Mayo and Jarvis (2005) said as captured in the literature; tourists look for benefits of destinations as enhanced by their attributes.

In assessing the attractiveness of the environment, it was found that 124 (62%) of the total respondents agreed with the assertion that the environment of the tourism sites looks neat and attractive, 48 (24%) respondents disagreed that the environment of the tourism sites looks neat and maintained regularly, and 28 (14%) respondents were undecided. The tourists are considering the natural environment of the place and many of them appreciated the natural environment and for that matter would be attracted to visit more and more. And the few who were not satisfied with the natural environment might not have seen all that they expected to see. Mayo and Jarvis (2005) said as captured in the literature; tourists look for attractiveness of the places and are encouraged to pay visit to those places.

Further, majority of the respondents disagreed that there are enough Hotels, Motels, Guest Houses, etc. that can provide comfortable accommodation for the visitors around the destinations. Referring to the analysis shown above, 116 of the respondents representing 58% disagreed that there are enough accommodation around the tourist destinations, 64 (32%) respondents agreed that there are enough accommodation like Hotels, Motels, Guest house around the tourist destinations, and 20 respondents representing 10% were undecided on the assertion. This can also scare tourists to visit the destinations because normally, having travelled long distance to a place, you need to relax and think about the environment and appreciate the nature. Buhalis (2000), as captured in the literature; tourism destinations offer mixture of tourism products and services, which are consumed under a brand name of the destinations.

The study again assessed the opinions of the tourists on whether the facilities in the Hotels, Motels, Guest Houses, etc are up to accepted standard for an ordinary person to use; the findings indicated that the accommodations have accepted facilities and can be used by an ordinary person. Out of 200 tourists who participated in the study, 92 (46%) agreed that the facilities in the hotels, motels, etc. are up to standard and could be used by any ordinary person, 72 (36%) respondents disagreed with the assertion, and 36 (18%) of them were undecided on

the statement as captured above. In this case the majority like the facilities in the hotels and other places of the lodging available at the destinations.

However, the study found out if the tourist destinations have associated facilities like snack bars, local handicrafts, shops, etc. where souvenirs, and other things could be purchased and kept for remembrance or given to friends; and it was realized that 156 of the respondents representing 78% disagreed with the statement, 28 of the respondents representing 14% agreed with the statement that the tourist destinations have items that tourists can purchase as souvenirs, and 16 of them representing 8% were undecided of the assertion. This is supported by Buhalis, (2000) that such facilities are necessary to be at tourism destinations.

Finally, the study considered personal safety and security facilities at the tourism destinations. The findings indicated that 108 participants representing 54% disagreed with the statement, 60 of the respondents representing 30% agreed that the tourist destinations have personal safety and security facilities for tourists, and 32 of the respondents representing 16% were undecided. The opinions expressed by the visitors to the sites showed that security facilities must be worked upon.

### **Factors considered by tourists in choosing tourism destinations to visit**

This section of the study found the factors considered by tourists in choosing eco-tourist destinations. This view was expressed by only both the local and foreign tourists who are participants in the study. Table 2 shown below presents results of the data analysed.

Table 2 Factors that influence the choice of tourism destinations

<b>Question</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
What factors do you consider when choosing tourism destinations	Availability of security measures (122)	61% 5
	Road Networks (48)	24% 7
	Income Level of visitors (26)	13% 8
	Availability of transportation facilities (128)	64% 4
	Nearness to the Sites (72)	36% 6
	Good and neat Accommodation (160)	80% 1
	Quality Customer Service (154)	77% 2
	Attractiveness(Environment) of the sites (150)	75% 3
	Price (4)	2% 9

To find out what tourists consider in choosing tourism destinations to visit, they are asked to choose as many factors that influence choices of tourist destinations to visit. The result shows that out of 184 participants who were tourists, 160 (80%) selected 'Good and neat

Accommodation' as what they consider in choosing destination, 154 respondents representing 77% of the tourist respondents also selected 'quality customer service' as the factor they consider in choosing destination, and 'attractiveness (neatness of Environment) of the sites' was indicated by 150 (75%) respondents as the factor they consider.

The Table again showed that 'availability of transport facilities' was chosen by 128 representing 64% of the participants, 122 (61%) of the tourist respondents chose 'availability of security facilities' as the factor considered by them in choosing destinations, and 'nearness to tourist destination' was selected by 72 (36%) respondents as the factor they consider. The factor chosen by 48 (24%) of respondents was 'road network', 26 respondents representing 13% chose 'income level of tourists as the factor they consider in choosing destinations, and 4 respondents representing 2% of tourists chose 'price, (amount paid to be led round various places) as the factor determined in choosing tourist destination to visit.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the reasons for the low patronage of tourist destinations in the Volta Region of Ghana and the researcher assessed the state of the destinations and the factors considered by the tourists in choosing a place to visit. Assessing the present state of eco-tourism destinations in the Volta Region (Likpe Caves, Wli Waterfalls at Agumatsa, and TafiAtome monkey sanctuary), the results show that the places are unattractive and in deplorable state; meaning that the places have been deteriorating as confirmed by those who have paid visits to the places more than once. It was revealed also that the sites are not developed in any way, the road networks (roads linking the places to the towns where the places are located) and the facilities available are not developed. The visitors said that the environments are neat and attractive. By the environment, the tourists are referring to the natural environment and not the artificial one. This implies that the caves, waterfalls and the monkey sanctuary sites look very attractive and exciting to see. Accommodation as expressed by the visitors was not adequate but facilities available in them meet an accepted standard and can be used by any ordinary person. Other facilities that can motivate tourists to keep visiting the places were not available. Other facilities (snack bars, handicrafts, recreational centre, shops, etc.) where handicrafts and souvenirs can be bought are not available. These facilities really add to the satisfaction of tourists with the places because they can buy things to keep, they can have a feel of the true culture of the people. Above all, there are inadequate safety and security facilities at the destinations. This really scared the tourist to visit the places and keep on visiting because they will not feel safe and secured.

These research results cannot be generalised or applied to other tourism destinations because the researcher did not consider variables that are common to all destinations. In view of this other research can be conducted to measure variables that are common or general to tourism destination centres. It is again therefore recommended that the communities must take the initiative to develop the sites and provide the associated facilities that need to be enjoyed by the tourist. Managers of the sites could create attracting physical environment at the sites.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1



### Appendix 2

