

**THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE HOST COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF
WECHIAU IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA**

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to assess the impact of tourism on the development of the Wechiau community. These impacts can either be positive or negative. To carry out this, the research adopted both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in research. The respondents identified for the study included the community members and the Tourism Management Team. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the members of the community. However, the purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the Tourism Management Team. The main instruments used for data collection was a questionnaire and interview guide. The study revealed that the interaction between tourists and the host community has brought about a couple impacts. The study revealed that the interaction between tourists and the host community has brought about a couple of socio-cultural, environmental and economic impacts. The study revealed some of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in the community included preservation of culture, exchange of cultural values. Some of the environmental impacts also included the incidence of noise and air pollution. Some of the economic impacts also included the increment in the prices of goods, development of infrastructure and the increase in employment opportunities. It is recommended that the local people should be educated on the impacts tourism. This will help curb some of the negative impacts associated with tourism that affects the culture of the local people

Keywords: Tourism Management, socio-cultural, employment

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of tourism to economies of countries has been immense across the globe. It is amongst the fastest growing sectors of the world economy with increased revenue punctuating its growth (UNWTO, 2008). This manifests in the socio-economic development of many communities across the world. Its potential as a tool for poverty reduction especially in

developing countries cannot be overemphasized. If well-developed, tourism could be the panacea to most economies to oversee the accelerated growth and overall development of developing economies. In Tunisia and Sri Lanka for instance, there has been an overwhelming effect of tourism as there was a rapid boom in this sector in their economies in the 1970s.

Amedeo and Giorgio (2000) established that the tourism industry's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown faster than the world's GDP since the 1950s. There has been a boom in international tourism as one of the most important tradable sectors in recent times as buttressed by Pearce and Butter (2002) in their observation of the contribution of tourism to the world's economy between the periods of 1988 to 1997. Their study found that revenue generated doubled from US\$ 204 billion to US\$ 444 billion between the time frame. The tourism sector in Ghana has a great potential of generating financial resources for development and contributing to direct employment. In Ghana, the tourism industry has an enormous capacity of generating financial resources for development. According to ISSER report, the Ghana Tourist Board estimated the contribution of tourism to direct employment rose from 19,000 in 1996 to 52,742 in 2006. This gives a percentage increase of 180 while indirect employment within the same period increased from 40,000 to 130,450, a percentage increase of 184. Direct and indirect employments in 2007 were 60,000 and 147,000 respectively. The industry has a huge potential to create employment in the country if it is well developed throughout the country (ISSER, 2007).

Tourism is a business for the individual entrepreneur, and the community, which acts as host to this activity. Indeed the activities of tourism leave both benefits and cost on the host community.

The actors in tourism activities consist of travellers, hosts and employees in the tourism industry. The interactions between these actors produce impacts that affect not only tourists but also the host community. When the differences are bigger between the resident and the tourist more changes are expected (Rátz & Puczko 2002; Lundberg 1990). These impact include, socio-cultural, economic and environmental effects. The socio-cultural impacts are expressed in the residents' quality of life, labour division, individual value systems, behavior patterns, family relationships and the structure of social organizations, community life styles, safety, moral principles, creative expression and traditional ceremonies (Rátz&Puczko 2002; Hall & Brown 2006).The economic impact is also manifested in the revenue and costs incurred by tourism businesses, government costs for infrastructure to better serve tourists, as well as congestion and related costs borne by individuals in the community. The environmental impact also manifests in land use changes, pollution among others. In spite of the pros and cons of tourism development on various aspects of the tourist-host relationship, there seems to be uneven attention paid to the negative impact of tourism, as much emphasis are on the positive impacts (Mason, 2003). The purpose of this study is to assess both the negative and positive impacts of tourism on the host

community, using Wechiau as a case study. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine the economic impact of tourism on the development of the Wechiau community
- To determine the environmental impact of tourism on the development of Wechiau community
- To examine the socio-cultural influences of tourism on the development of the Wechiau community

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Tourism

For the purpose of this study, the definition given by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) cited by Harris and Howard (2001) will be adopted. Their definition does not only see tourism as only a leisure activity outside ones immediate environment but us at business activity.

They defined tourism to comprise the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. This definition equally includes periods of short term travel or movement of people outside their original place of residences for activities of pleasure and leisure which may not involve an overnight stay at tourist destination.

Sustainable Tourism

This definition of sustainable development highlights three key dimensions of the development process which must be sustained to uplift the well-being of mankind. These key aspects are economic, social and environmental. It emphasizes the achievement of economic growth without compromising the ability of future generations; cognizance should be taken of environmental resources that are being used to ensure their sustainability. The products of the economic growth are equitably distributed to create the necessary opportunities to the benefit of all in a geographical location and to achieve this, some standards must be set. These standards should be flexible instruments capable of evolving as community values should be based on issues identified in the communities. If development is not sustained in this context, the effort of development will be derailed.

According to Christ et al (2003), tourism "seeks to minimize the negative footprint of tourism developments and at the same time contribute to conservation and community development in the areas being developed". Some of the negative footprints they identified are pollution of the environment, destruction of alternative livelihoods and eroding of cultural values. Sustainable tourism has emerged as a more responsible form of tourism development. In the past, traditional tourism developments have been a major threat to biodiversity conservation as the environment

and wildlife were being depleted for the purposes of tourism. This can be attributed to unavailable management controls and elective planning systems.

According to Christ et al (2003) sustainable tourism can directly contribute to biodiversity conservation by:

- Offering less destructive livelihood alternatives to local communities and landowners in bushier zones and conservation corridors, away from unregulated logging, intensive cattle-ranching, monoculture, hunting and unsustainable tourism;
- Providing protected-area managers with additional financial resources from visitation and donations; and
- Raising visitor awareness, promoting community involvement and interest in conservation issues and generating political support for conservation through environmental education during travel.

Natural countryside, cultural and biological diversity are non-substitutable resources for tourist activities. Management and protection of these resources turn to have long-term sustainable economic benefits, Corsten (1998). There is great awareness of environmental pollution in the tourism industry and this to some extent influences the choice of destination by tourists. It is evident in Europe that the environment is a leading concern when tourists come to rank their level of satisfaction with destination. The greater concern and response to sustainability issues, the greater will be the long term employment opportunities and benefits for the competitive industry.

Impacts of Tourism

Tourism has impacted variously on different sectors of development as pointed out in some impact studies conducted by Kim (2002) in Virginia. The impacts notably are environmental, economic, social and cultural. These impacts could either be beneficial or otherwise. However, the net impact of tourism has been positive.

Economic Impact of tourism

Okech and Mwangi (2005) assert that tourism creates employment for people in communities where there are tourist sites, as the rural poor are employed in tourism enterprises through the supply of goods and services to tourists by the community. They also claim that tourism provides flexible job opportunities for the rural poor. The problems with employment in this industry they identified are competition for jobs by locals, and the seasonality of tourism employment.

According to Kim (2002), a study by Ritchie (1988) revealed that in British Columbia and Alberta Canada, 87 per cent of respondents accepted that tourism was an important contributor to the number of jobs in the province. He however found also that most jobs in the industry were

seasonal and hence created unemployment at certain periods.

It has also been argued that communities and their respective districts stand to benefit from tourism development if well planned and managed. This boost to the local economy according to Mwagona and Okech (2005) can only be achieved if the right structures are put in place to track from leaking out of the district or the community. This they claim can be curtailed through the improvement of trading conditions, licensing, quality improvements amongst petty traders, etc. The necessary conditions for success with micro community-based businesses should be designed together with the accompanying support. Efforts should be directed towards supporting local businesses through marketing assistance, networking between enterprises, avoiding institutional dependency and the need for local empowerment.

Kim (2002) argued that the net income or receipts from the tourism industry by a community is dependent on movement policies and the variety of local economic characteristics. The share of both national and local interests in tourism business activities may either encourage the development of the industry or not. Kim confirmed that improvement of income, standard of living, investment and business activities can be attributed to tourism. Citing some studies on some local residents in Hawaii, Kim claimed that tax revenue derived from tourist expenditures and tariffs could lower their own tax as well as increase their property tax too.

Looking at the sector in terms of gender, women constitute forty six per cent of employment in most countries as compared to the general labour force of thirty four to forty per cent given by the ILO. However contributions by women to the labour force in the tourism sector vary from country to country depending on the maturity of the industry in a particular country. The figures range between two to eighty per cent with the average figure for the mature tourist countries being fifty percent (Hemmati, 1999). This indicates that women's employment in the tourism sector is fairly high. This can be attributed to the large business activities in the industry that women can do to assist in the development of the industry. It also indicates the development potential of women that is being wasted in countries where these women are not engaged.

High cost of living is one of the negative economic impacts that tourism comes with in communities where there are tourist sites. Kim (2002) argues that tourism brings about increase in the prices of goods and services in the communities in which there are tourists' sites. This is due to the presence of the tourist in the community. Land rents increases as a result of competition for land for accommodation purposes. This leads to increase in housing rents, hence making it difficult for the poor in the communities to access these facilities. This is common especially in urban tourist sites and is gradually catching up with the rural areas as a result of

urbanization.

It is also essential to understand that tourism businesses often include a significant number of low-paying jobs, often at minimum wage or less. These jobs are often seasonal, causing under-employment or unemployment during off-seasons. Labor may be imported, rather than hired locally, especially if particular skills or expertise is required, or if local labor is unavailable. Some tourism-related businesses are volatile and high-risk ventures that are unsustainable.

Social-cultural Influence of Tourism

Socially, tourism has blessings and misfortunes to the communities in which tourism operates. The socio-cultural benefits from tourism development are mainly displayed in the following several respects (Cooper et al., 2008): promoting cultural communication and integration (Ap and Crompton, 1998). During tourism development, local residents have more opportunities to make contact with foreign cultures, which can lead them to improve their knowledge and broaden their horizons. Regarding the tourism industry as a bridge to connect the host population with outsiders, naturally cultural exchange could be considered part of tourism activity.

Every tourist has different cultural experiences, even though they visit the same destination. Tourism development helps to enhance local residents' pride and self-confidence (Besculides et al., 2002). With the development of society, modernization gradually replaces the traditional. Owing to the requirement of the tourism market, locals can rediscover something of value that is already overlooked by people in modern life. In an age of globalization, old crafts and traditional rituals and ceremonies can highlight the uniqueness of a particular community. This uniqueness not only brings economic benefits to destinations, but can also enhance the sense of national pride. Naturally, seeing their own community become a popular and well-known resort can improve the superiority and pride of residents.

Tourism development is conducive to the protection of cultural heritage and historical relics (Liu and Var, 1986). As mentioned above, there are many benefits to be gained from traditional cultures and crafts; therefore, these old skills or traditional things might naturally arouse more attention from the local government and people. On the other hand, the economic benefit obtained from tourism provides subsidized funds for the preservation of culture and heritage (Liu and Var, 1986).

Tourism has also been lauded for its ability to contribute to the renaissance of traditional art, Crafts, dance and music (McKean, 1976). It appears as a vehicle for the preservation and enrichment of local culture for the purposes of attraction. Thus tourism serves to have a positive impact on our cultural identity. Tourism also brings about cultural exchange between residents

and tourists which could be valuable to both partners.

Despite the positive influence of tourism on the socio-cultural characteristic of the host community, a number of negative influences abound. First, a problem identified by Kim that emanates from tourism is the high crime rate in the tourist destinations. He conceptualized this problem to be an increase in the use of drugs and the abusive consumption of alcohol in the area. This contributed to high crime in most tourist site communities. These lead to prostitution and hence an increase in sexually transmitted diseases in these areas.

Traditional, social and cultural structures and behaviour patterns tend to change with development of tourism in a particular area. Ascendancy in enculturation becomes the order of the day. This situation is more pronounced in developing countries and local communities. Most of their cultures and customs tend to be overwhelmed by more developed cultures from the western world (Kim, 2002). This is true especially when two different cultures come into contact; there is always the tendency of diffusion of cultures. But this does not always go in favour of developing countries as we are always the first to copy the western style of dressing, housing, cooking and many others to the detriment of our own culture. This turns to deplete the tourism potential of most areas in developing countries. Instead of us preserving our culture and values, we rather adulterate it with the western culture.

Tourism development has led to issues of excessive commercialization in many destinations. I argue that the commercialization is the result of social and economic development and the degree of commercialization can be divided into moderate commercialization and over-commercialization. Over-commercialization can be thought of as the destination not only wanting to meet the tourists' demand as far as possible, but also wanting to generate revenues as much as possible. More specifically, tourism managers are more concerned about present profits while ignoring the essential value of culture. When local cultural values have been used as a commodity and marketing tool, they have become over-commercialized by use (Tosun, 1998); Erkuş-Öztürk (2010) commented that over-commercialization will result in degradation of the environmental and cultural resources in a tourism area. Commodification, lack of authenticity, and standardization are all outcomes of commercialization, and will be analyzed in detail below.

Commodification is generally recognized as a major negative socio-cultural impact of tourism (King and Stewart, 1996) that could result in the vulgarization of the traditional culture. It is said to destroy the authenticity of local cultural products and human relations; instead, a surrogate, covert —staged authenticity‖ emerges (Erik, 1988). Staged authenticity means that the traditional cultural preference makes a distinction between front stage and backstage (MacCannell, 1976). The front stage is commercial cultural performance as a tourism-oriented product, and is chosen from some part of a feast or ritual that tourists are most interested in and in accordance with the

preference and requirement of the tourism market is modified and finally appointed a place for cultural display. Regarding the backstage that is prepared for the host population or researchers, contrary to the front stage, it treats the authentic rituals or ceremonies as a necessary part of real life. In relation to staged authenticity, To sun (1998) described the performances as not only not compatible with the original dances or dramas, but also involving contents of the dramas that are so changed that they are inconsistent with reality. In theory, staged authenticity already achieves its goal by attracting tourists and preventing the culture from suffering from the tourism impact. However, in practice, this approach could cause two problems. First, staged authenticity may take into account the problem of cultural authenticity. MacCannell (1976) commented that this practice misleads visitors to accept contrived attractions as —authentic, creating a —false touristic consciousness. Second, along with cultural performance, it becomes part of the local tourism product that could lead to the frequency of cultural performance increasing. This situation risks blurring the distinctions between the front stage and the backstage, and indicates certain potential hazards to the inheritance of ethnic culture. Authenticity in tourism is referred to as traditional culture and its origin, and the sense of reality and uniqueness, by Sharpley (1994). As the tourism area becomes increasingly commercialized, the authenticity is gradually destroyed. The authenticity is of the same importance to visitors and residents. From the residents' perspective, they may have unique feelings towards the heritage sites compared with people from outside because they have experienced the heritage sites since they were born there or have lived there (Zhang, 2011); the lack of authenticity may influence their feeling of community attachment.

Environmental Impact of Tourism

In terms of the environment, tourism has both negative and positive impacts. According to Kim (2002) tourism creates a greater environmental awareness and appreciation for the need to preserve the environment. This adds value in terms of beauty for tourist purposes and thus calls for investment in environmental campaign and infrastructure. Ritchie cited by Kim claimed in his study that ninety-three (93) per cent of respondents accepted that tourism affected the quality of natural parks. Kim pointed out that tourism contributes significantly to the preservation of some wildlife species. Beneficiaries from environmental tourism do well to protect the environment in order not to lose their source of livelihood.

Some researchers have mentioned that tourism is beneficial to the improvement of public infrastructure, such as the water system, sewage system, and power system. The reason is that the economic benefits from tourism development provide comparatively large amounts of funds for the construction of urban infrastructure facilities. Furthermore, destinations with good infrastructures are necessary, due to insufficient infrastructure limiting the development of the

travel industry. Secondly, a beautiful and unspoiled landscape is a primary attraction for many visitors, and even some tourism activities only take place in certain environments (such as diving trips and skiing), which have a higher requirement for environmental quality. Based on the above reasons, increasing numbers of people are realizing that the environment is an important parameter for tourism development; in another words, destinations have an incentive to protect and enhance their environmental assessment (Weaver and Lawton, 2006), which could help to improve the environmental awareness of residents.

On the contrary, tourism has also contributed negatively to the environment. According to Kim (2002) tourism produces large quantities of waste products. This poses a severe problem particularly in developing countries who are less sophisticated in technology to effectively manage the waste generated. Pollution of the environment as a result of tourist activities is now of greater concern to society. Kim (2002) argued that air pollution as a result of emissions from vehicles at congested tourism sites harms vegetation, dusty soil also affect human visibility. This type of pollution he however pointed out is less in rural areas. Water resources also suffer some pollution from the effect of activities of some tourism facilities. Hotels close to water bodies drain their waste into these water bodies and end up causing eutrophication, thus affecting aquatic life. According to him, the primary pollutant of water is wastewater generated that run into water bodies. This goes a long way to affect aquatic life which is another important area of development.

Christ et al (2003) also highlights the pollution problem associated with tourism as a worrisome issue particularly in developing countries. They identified littering and water pollution as some problems associated with mainstream tourism that can have negative consequences. The littering problem is exacerbated in remote areas, where waste collection can be logistically difficult as they do not have the capacity to manage the waste.

Summary of literature

The chapter attempted to define major concepts in the subject area which are relevant to the achievement of the objectives of the study. Thus, from the review some issues that came to light are summarized here.

From the preceding discussions, tourism has various impacts on the characteristics of the host community including the economic, socio-cultural and environmental facets. Available literature has demonstrated that these factors do not happen in isolation from each other, but rather they are interrelated. Economic changes will affect local lifestyles, which can change morals and traditions, which can change how people perceive and interact with natural environments and so on.

In the light of this, for tourism to be sustainable, proper planning and management of activities of tourism should be put in place. This is to ensure that the negative effects of tourism on the community are curtailed while enhancing the positive benefits of the industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a case study approach in assessing the impact of tourism activities on a host community. Sarantakos (1996) defined case study as an empirical inquiry of a contemporary phenomenon within its real context using multiple sources of evidence. The case study is a type of research different from the other forms of investigations with its unique characteristics. The principal objective of case study approach according to Bell (1992) is concerned with the interaction of factors and events giving a vivid practical picture of the interactions. The case study approach employs several data collection methods in order to avoid errors. Mostly, observations and interviews are used in case studies (Bell, 1992). The respondents in this type of research are treated as experts instead of mere sources of data (Sarantakos, 1996). The major concern of case study is generalizing findings, because it is limited to a particular area. However Bell citing Denscombe, mentioned that generalization is possible if the situations are similar and the details are sufficient and appropriate.

Population

Goddard and Melville (2001) refer to a population as any group or collection of elements that is the focus of research interest. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) describe the target population as the population “to which the researchers ideally would like to generalize his or her results”. The target population for this research study involved the all community members of Wechiau. The population of Wechiau is 1,661 (2010).

Sample Size Determination

The sample population is the total number of individuals in the study area. This study covers the Wechiau community with a total population of 1,661. The sample size was calculated using the sample size formula which is given below;

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e^2))}$$

Where n represents the sample size

N represents the total population under consideration, N=1,661

e represents the sample error; e= 10%

Therefore the sample size for the community members is 94.

Sampling Procedure

A sample is a subset of the research population and has the necessary properties that will allow it to be representative of the entire population. Samples must be determined in such a way that the best representation of the study population is obtained in order to allow for the accurate generation of results (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2000). The process of deciding who will be observed in a particular study is known as sampling. Sampling is used to select representatives from the target population in order to provide representative information about this population (Rossouw, 2003:108). The sample technique that is the best fit for this research is probability simple random sampling. This sampling technique gives all the interview subjects the chance of being selected and to form part of the sample frame.

Data Sources

There are several methods of data collection in research. However in this study, two main data collection tools were largely employed for empirical data; these are both direct and indirect observations, and questionnaire. Secondary data from existing literature were consulted to complement the empirical data.

Data collection Instruments

The main instruments used for collecting the data for the research included questionnaire and interviews. These were complemented with personal observation during the research process at the study area.

- **Questionnaire**

This is the key tool for data collection in this study. Questions were designed for respondents to give their opinions regarding the state of tourism in their respective community. This method was employed because of its ability to gather efficient information for both quantitative and qualitative analysis (Kontey 2000 & Twumasi, 2000). This method is also less time consuming and efficient particularly in this research because many of the respondents were accessible.

- **Interviews**

Interviews were used to gather information on the management of tourism facilities in the community. These were granted to the Tourism Management Team. It assisted in soliciting information concerning the management of tourism in the community and the constraints faced in the process.

- **Observation**

Observation was also used in the data collection exercise. Direct observations were made at

places where direct contacts with tourist's sites are possible and indirect observation was employed for indirect impact of tourism in the community. Transect walks were made under the guidance of the tourists guides and some members of the community. This was within the week data collection exercise in the community.

Data Analysis

During this study, data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are concerned with the description and/or summarisation of the data obtained for a group of individual units of analysis (Welman et al., 2005). Data collected from the field will be cross-checked and edited. It was also coded and processed using software such as SPSS and Excel. The data was then analysed and the results presented in the form of Tables and Figures to facilitate easy understanding and interpretation.

Ethical considerations

Ethical concern is very important when planning research simply because of the human life involved. It is my ethical duty as researchers to protect the identity of the vulnerable informants in order to keep their confidence and guard the integrity. For the respondents selected for interview, the researchers will respect their wishes and not to disclose any salient markers of their identity. The consent of respondents will be sought prior to the interview and interventions sessions. Where the aims of the researchers conflicted with the privacy or otherwise of the participants, those of the participants were considered. Respondents were also made aware that they could pull out of the interview process at any stage.

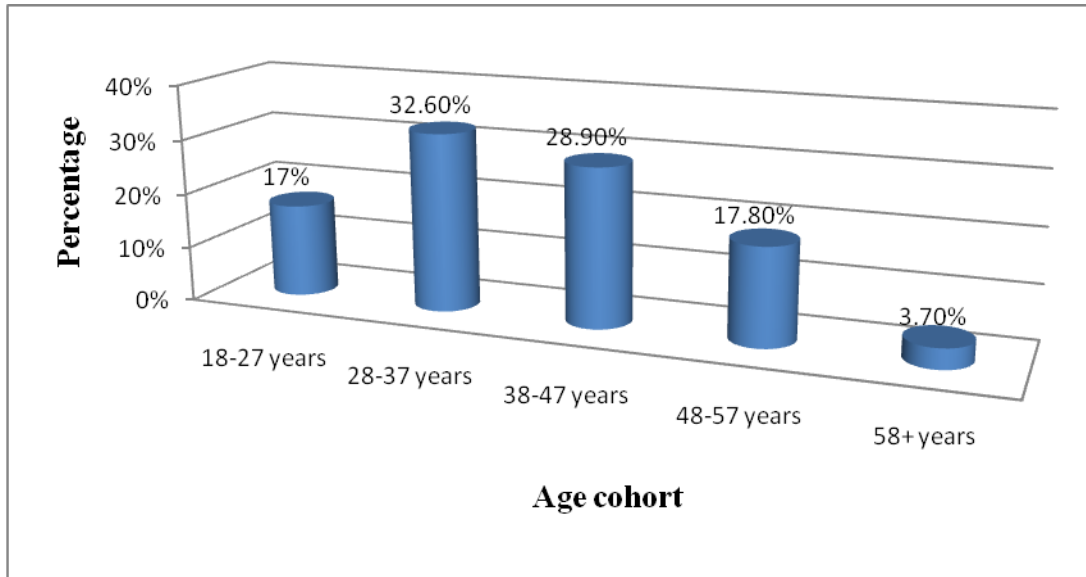
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Respondents

Age of Respondents

This section is crucial in understanding the representation of the various age cohorts in the study. A base age of 18 years was used for the classification because in Ghana it is the legal age at which one is considered mature enough to make decisions on his or her own. Figure 4.1.1 shows the age distribution of respondents in the community.

Figure 4.1.1: Age Distribution of Respondents



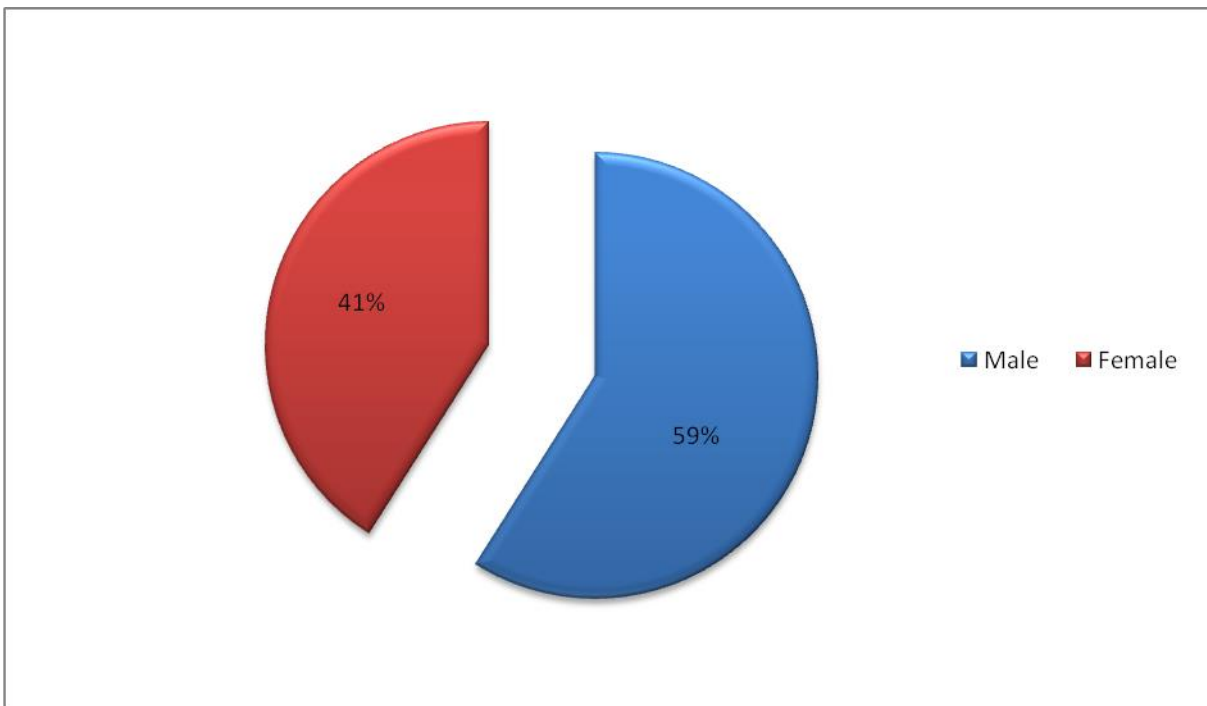
Source: Field Survey, 2016

Figure 1 shows that majority (32.60%) of the respondents were within the ages of 28-37 years. However, only 3.7% of the respondents were 58 years or above. This implies that the community averagely has an economically active population.

Sex of Respondents

The sample was selected based on the female - male ratio in the community. This is to allow for gender version of the perception of the impact of tourism in the community and some of the potentials and constraints that exist. However, due some cultural prohibitions, fifty nine percent (59%) were men and forty one percent (41%) were women.

Figure4.1.2: Sex Distribution of Respondents



Source: Field Survey, 2016

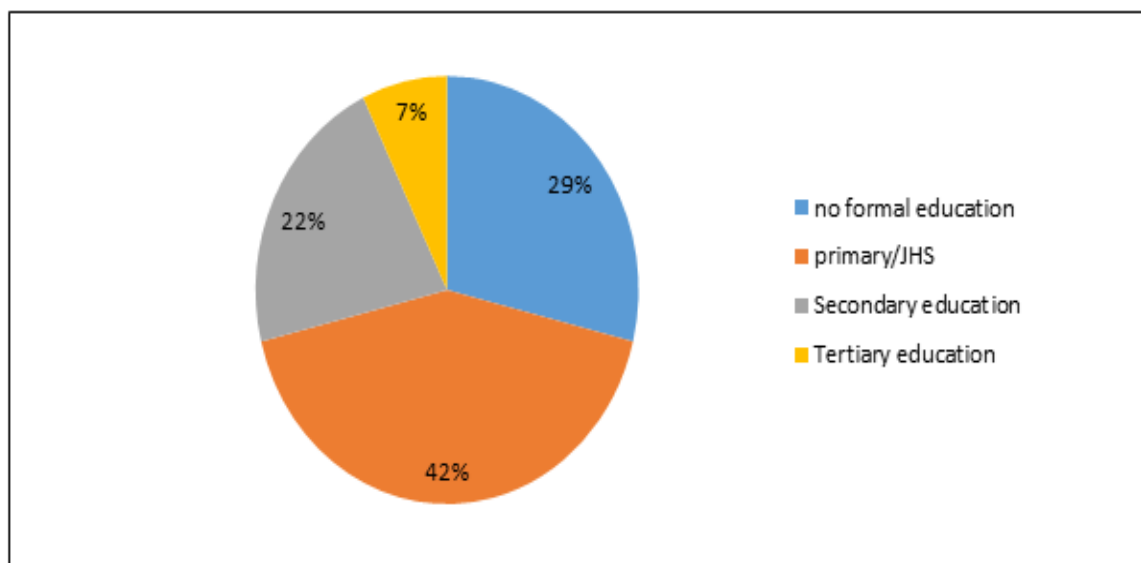
The Figure above shows that majority of the respondents were men. The gender distribution of respondents is explained by the cultural practices in this community. In their culture, women do not grant audience to outsiders (strangers) without permission from their male spouses.

Educational Level of Respondents

For any community to develop, the caliber of its human resource is an important issue to be considered. Educational attainment informs the type of responses and the understanding of respondents of the issues pertaining to tourism and the advantages taken by them. It also influences the type of employment opportunities available to the people in the community. This confirms Okech and Mwangone (2005) assertion that the quality of labour in the community controls migration of experts from other areas into the community.

The effectiveness and quality of participation of the people in tourism development in the community is also influenced by education. The tourism industry will be able to estimate the skilled labour that they can mobilize in the community and how to fill any gap that may exist. It will also be possible to know the type of jobs that tourism industry should stimulate to engage the unskilled labour force. This will bring all hands on deck to contribute to the development of the community. Figure 4.1.3 presents the educational attainment of respondents in the community.

Figure 4.1.3: Educational Level of Respondents



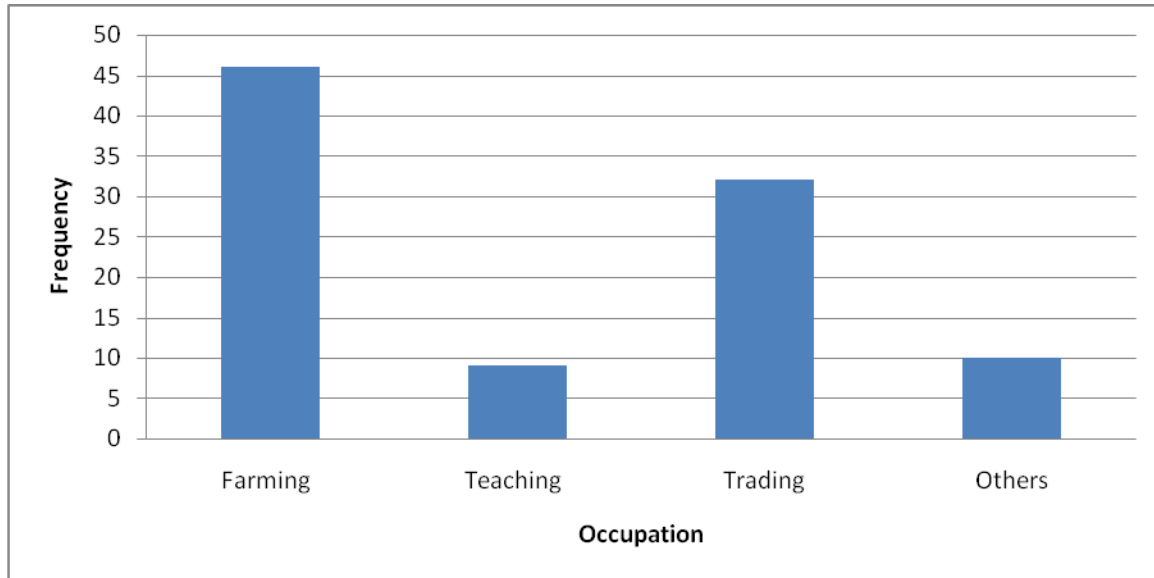
Source: Field Survey, 2016

As shown in Figure 3, majority of the respondents only had basic education. They cited their inability to meet the financial requirements as the major reason for their lower education attainment. This situation had resulted to their limited access to white collar jobs that are strictly based on academic achievement. This explains the reason why majority of the respondents are farmers. To reverse the situation, there is the need for scholarship schemes that would sponsor students throughout their education career and to reduce instance of school drop-out.

Occupation of Respondents

Members of the community have various economic activities through which they make their living. The main occupations in the community included farming, teaching and trading. Others include tour guiding among others. As indicated in Figure 4.1.4, majority of the respondents were into farming.

Figure 4.1.4: The Occupation of Respondents



Source: Field Survey, 2016

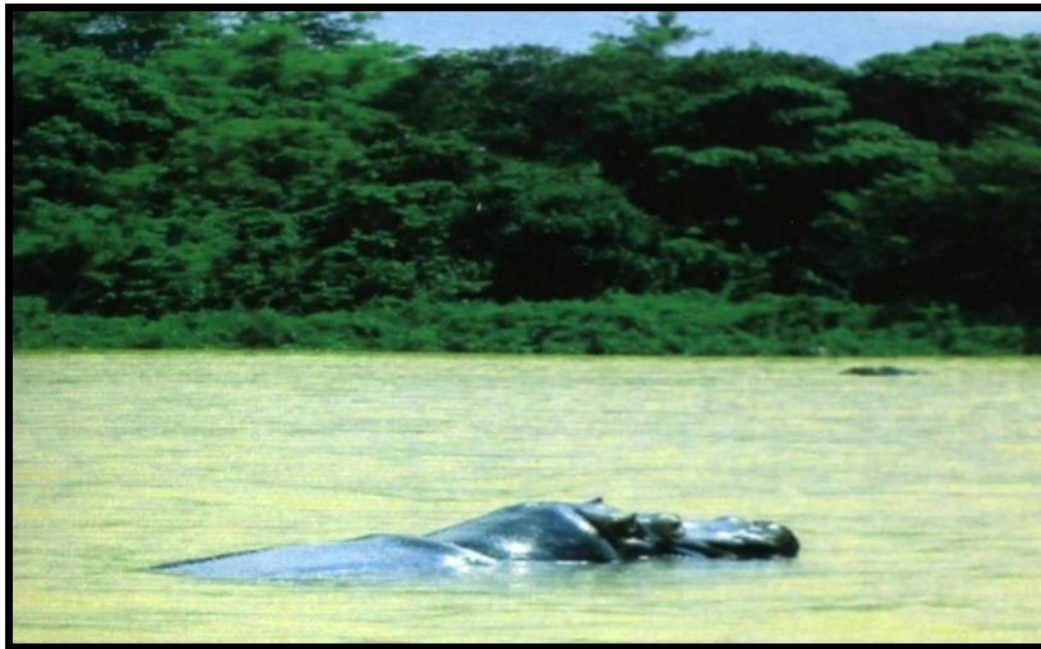
Figure 4.1.4 shows that the major economic activity in the Wechiau community is farming, and that represents their main source of livelihood in the community. Farming is done on subsistence basis as households cultivate to feed their families. However, they added that at times of bumper harvests, some of the farm produce were sold. Farming activities are generally rain-fed and the short span of the rainy season makes it difficult for farmers to farm twice in a season. This is because the farmers in the community rely solely on the rains, they are unable to practice dry season farming due to lack of irrigation facilities.

TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN WECHIAU

The main tourists' attraction in the community is the Wechiau Sanctuary. The sanctuary was established by the local community members in 1999. It attracts both international and local visitors. The only problem facing the sanctuary is its inability to accommodate large numbers at a time.

Other tourism potentials in the community included the 300-year old mosque and the local lobbi houses. While these have the potential of complementing the main tourist attraction, they have not been developed.

Plate: WechiauHippoSanctuary



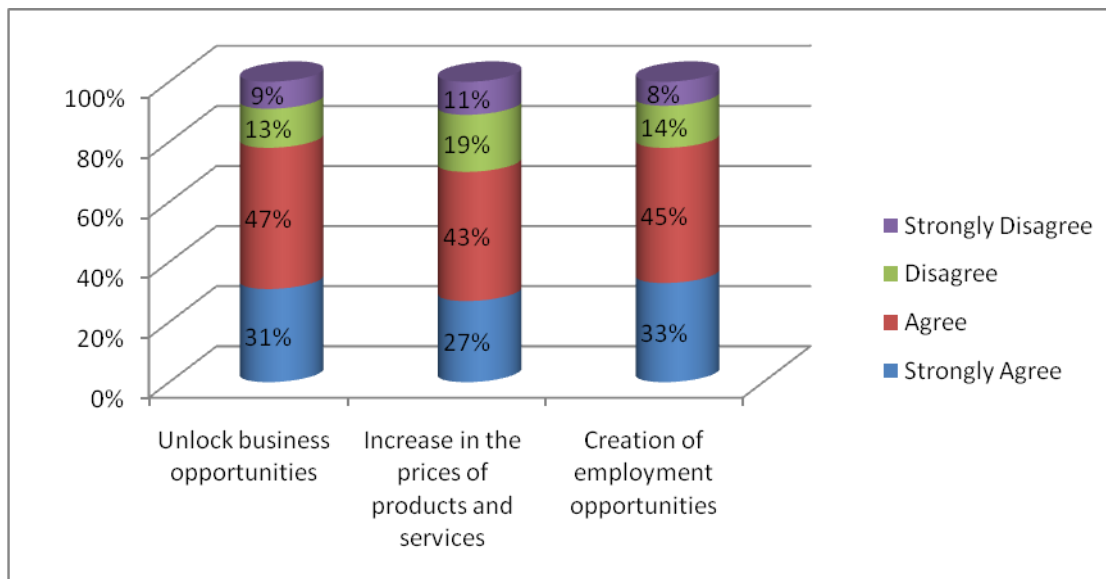
Impacts of Tourism

The influence of tourism in any area or community becomes relevant when it impacts positively on the lives of the people. It is for this reason that people in the community will embrace the idea of contributing to develop tourism in the community. However, it is also important to highlight some of the negative impacts of tourism on the community in order to develop strategies targeted at addressing them. In the community, the impact of tourism manifests in three main ways: economic impacts, environmental impacts and socio-cultural influences of tourism.

Economic Impacts

Tourism activities in the community were found to have some economic impacts (both positive and negative) on the development of the community. Figure 5 illustrates the economic impacts associated with tourism in the community.

Figure 4.3.1: The Economic Impact of Tourism



Source: Field Survey, 2016

The survey revealed that tourism has had some economic impact on the development of Wechiau. As indicated in Figure 5 some of the economic impact of tourism on the community included; tourism employment unlocking opportunities, business opportunities and tourism and increase in the prices of products and services.

As shown in the Figure above majority of the respondents agreed that tourism presents the employment opportunities for the community members. Those who agreed explained that the employment opportunities include the employment of some members in the Tourism Management Team. According to the Tourism Management Team, employment generated from tourism for people in the community has turned around to increase the revenue base of the District Assembly in the form of businesses emanating from tourism activities in the community.

Also, it was found out that tourism has presented some business opportunities for community members of Wechiau. Forty seven percent (47%) agreed that tourism in the community has open up some business opportunities. However, 13% disagreed about the business potentials that tourism opens up for the community. Those who agreed to the business opportunities that tourism in the community create cited the taxi business, restaurant sector and business opportunities that spring up as a result of the influx of tourist to the community.

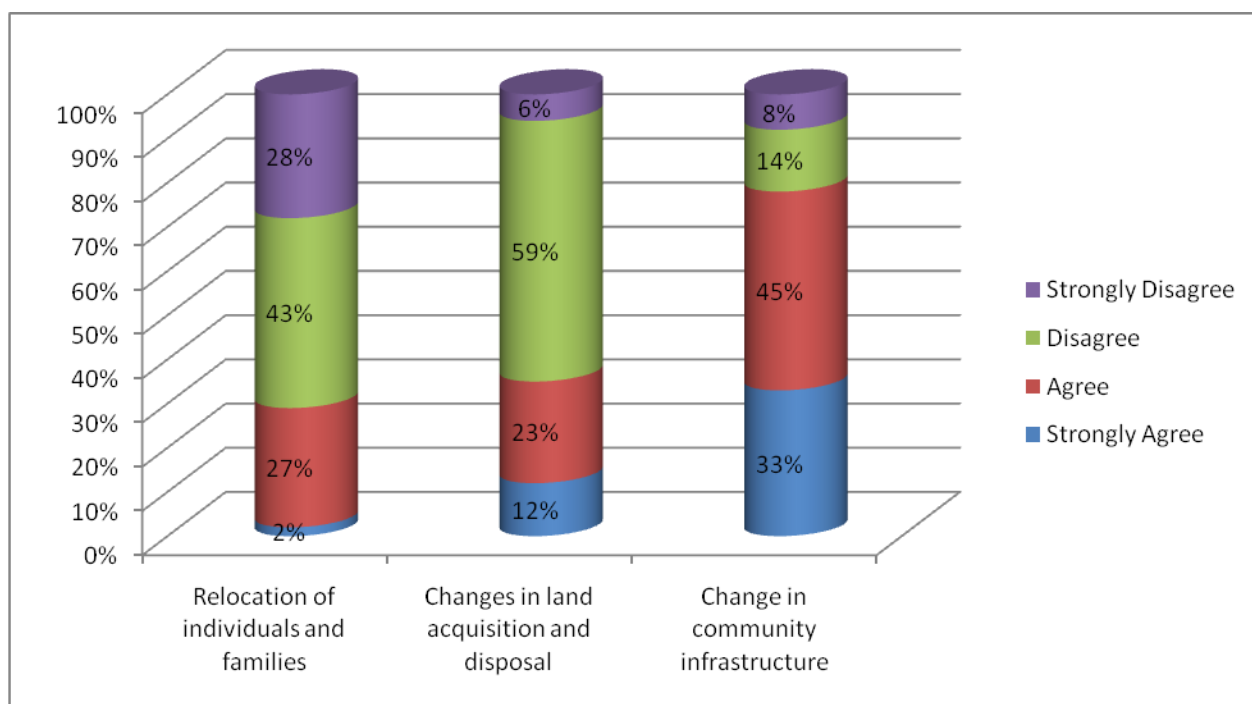
Apart from the positive economic benefits that tourism brings to the community, the study also revealed that the activities of tourism in the community have also had some negative impacts

particularly on the prices of goods and services. The income level of residents in the community is averagely low and makes it difficult for members to meet increased commodity prices. In the Figure above majority of the respondents (38%) felt that tourism activities has resulted in the increment in the prices of goods and services which makes it relatively unbearable for local community members to afford.

Environmental Impacts of tourism

The impacts of tourism on the community also manifests on the environment. It includes both positive and negative impacts. Figure 6 illustrates the environmental impacts that tourism leaves on the community.

Figure 4.3.2: Environmental Impacts



Source: Field Survey, 2016

First of all, the survey revealed that the presence of tourists at the destination has implications on the relocation of individuals and families, although just two percent (2%) strongly agreed and twenty seven percent (27%) agreed that tourism has had this kind of impact. However, majority

of the respondents (43% and 28% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively) because they felt there is still enough land available for any development projects in the community.

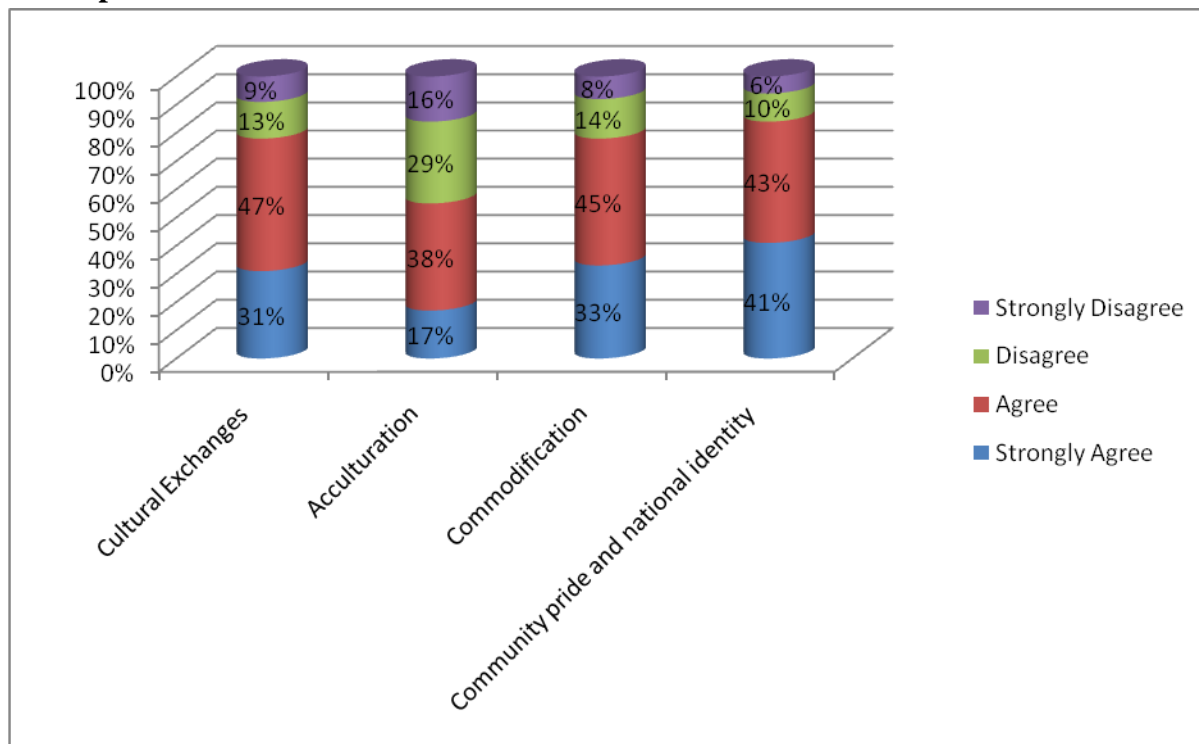
The survey also revealed that there has not been any major change in land acquisition and disposal procedure. Lands for any activity may be acquired from the various heads of the four sections within the community although the chief is the overall custodian of lands in the community. Majority of the respondents generally disagreed that there has been any major changes in the land acquisition process.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that the activities of tourism have had some impact on the infrastructure development in the community. As shown in the Figure above, 33% of the respondents strongly agreed while 44% just agreed that tourism has brought about infrastructural development in the community. This means majority of the respondents agreed that there has been some contribution of tourism towards infrastructural development. They added that these infrastructural developments have led to the improvement in the lives of people in the community in one way or the other.

Socio-Cultural Influences

The activities of tourism in the community were found to have some socio-cultural implication for the development of the community. The socio-cultural influences of tourism on the community also manifest both in negative and positive forms. Some of the positive influences tourism had on the community included the opportunity for cultural exchanges between the host community and the visitors; the promotion of community pride and national identity. Some of the negative influences also included acculturation and commoditization of culture. Figure 7 presents the statistical representation of the socio-cultural influences of tourism in the community.

Figure 4.3.3: The Socio-Cultural Influences of Tourism on Wechiau Community Development



Source: Field Survey, 2016

As shown in Figure 4.3.3, one of the positive ways in which affected the socio-cultural fabric of the community included the opportunities for both entities (host community members and the visitors) to learn from the others culture. Overall, about 78% of the respondents agreed that tourism enhances cultural exchanges between the two cultures. Tourism in the community was rated to have a positive impact on national identity. Fortythree percent (43%) agreed that tourism has a positive impact on the national identity. Those who agreed with the assertion justified that tourism in the community has projected the name of the community and therefore makes them proud to belong to the community in particular and to belong to Ghana as a whole. In spite of the positive socio-cultural influences of tourism, there are other negative socio-cultural consequences that comes with tourism in the community. They included commoditization and acculturation. Forty-five percent of the respondents agreed that the community has succumbed to the demands to make tourists' experience a memorable one, and hence indirectly commoditizing the culture of the residents to tourists. In terms of acculturation, the survey revealed that the youth are the victims of this consequence. It manifests in the change in their lives as they adopt foreign lifestyle. Some of the respondents recounted that some for example some of the dresses

the youth wear in the community is a true reflection of the consequence of tourism on the socio-cultural fabric of the society through the youth. Behavioural changes occur as one interacts with people outside their milieu. This behavioural influence could either be good or bad. Bad behaviours turn to affect the social cohesion of society. The youth turn to acquire bad behaviours such as drinking alcoholic beverages and smoking. For this reason, caution must be taken to regulate the extent to which people are influenced by bad character and the impact on society. Responding to the extent to which this has influenced the youth and members of the community 38% agreed that tourism had resulted in the increase in social problems in the community while 29% per cent disagreed that tourism has contributed to the increase in social problems in the community. This indicates that there is a well-entrenched interaction between members of the community and the tourists who visit the areas. Ensuring strong cultural and moral standards of the community could be a contributory factor to ensuring an impermeable influence of external behaviours.

Constraints of Tourism Development in Wechiau

There are no doubts that tourism if explored and managed properly could be a path for rural development as this community is well endowed with natural resources and attractions. The study of the community potentials that can be maximized if some identified bottlenecks are eliminated. Collating responses from the household survey in the community, it was realized that members of the community placed different emphasis on the extent to which the constraints affect tourism development even though most responses agreed with Tourism Management Teams that the issues raised are really hindering the development of tourism in the community.

- **Poor road network and means of transport**

Following responses from the community, poor road network and means of transport are among the upper quartile of the community. These constraints are dependent on each other. The quality of the roads determines the flow of vehicles on the roads. It also influences the transport fare charged by the transport providers. Certainly bad roads tell the number of vehicles willing to ply that route and this will attract higher transport cost. This invariably also determines the number of tourists that visit the tourist sites in the community and the revenue generation of the Team Management Team.

- **Poor Telecommunication services**

Provision of telecommunication services is a necessity to the development of any economy. It facilitates business transactions and thus dictates the pace of business in this era of technological advancement. This could account for the identification of telecommunication as a top constraint

to Wecheau community. This probably could be as a result of two major mobile telecommunication services in the community including MTN and Vodafone.

- **Poor Sanitary Facilities**

Sanitary and health facilities are of importance in the social development of any society. Poor sanitary conditions lead to health problems that will require that, resources have to be shifted to cover medical bills. Sanitary facilities such as places of convenience are necessities in any society, particularly in places where there are tourists; sites. However in most rural communities in Ghana, these facilities are scarce. Respondents in Wechiau identified the inadequacy of these facilities as a problem in tourism development in the community. This is a major constraint and affects the community especially if visitors have to use these facilities in the course of their visit in the area, indiscriminate defecation by residents of the community makes them filthy and unattractive to tourist.

- **Poor Health facilities**

Health facilities in these areas should be provided with necessary equipment and logistics to serve as a first point of call for medical attention in the event of casualties. There is however health centers in the community but the problem associated with these facilities is inadequate staff and logistics. In emergency situations there are no ambulance services. These are the reasons that respondents see health as a constraint hampering tourism development in the community. Tourists would want to visit places where they are assured that quality health care will be provided in emergency situations.

- **Lack of accommodation facilities**

The respondents (community members and the Tourism Management Team) saw accommodation as a problem to the development of tourism in the community. Accommodation is important to the development of any tourism industry. This is because some tourist who visit may want to pass the night to enjoy the beauty of the country side but are limited by the unavailability of accommodation facilities. This affects tourism that would have been generated from accommodation. The presence of accommodation encourages the springing up of restaurants even though the two variables are not necessarily dependent on each other. Lack of decent restaurants in the community is one of the constraints highlighted by respondents and the Tourism Management Teams.

- **Logistical Constraints for Tourism Management Team**

The lack of logistics like vehicles and stationery materials to facilitate the operations of the tourism management board impedes their effective delivery of services to tourists when they

visit the community. Technological advancements have not also been embraced by the management team, and activities are still being run by the pen and paper style.

KEY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

The main objective of this study was to assess the impact of tourism on the development of Wechiau. The sector being the fastest growing in Ghana, the study intended to investigate how tourism has affected the lives of host community. In order to achieve this objective the study dwelt on questions related to analysis of the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impact of tourism in the community. The following represents the summary of the key findings of the study.

Tourism Attractions in Wechiau

The main tourist attraction in the community is the Wechiau Hippocampus Sanctuary. However, there is a lot of tourism potential in the community which are unexploited. These included the local lobbi houses and the 300-year old mosque.

IMPACTS OF TOURISM

• Economic Impacts

The survey revealed that tourism has had some economic impact on the development of Wechiau which included; tourism employment unlocking opportunities, business opportunities and increase in the prices of products and services.

• Environmental Impacts

The survey revealed that the environmental impact of tourism on the community included relocation of individuals and families and changes in land acquisition and disposal procedure. Although these changes are minimal, they were worth mentioning as some community members were affected. Another impact was the positive influence of tourism on the infrastructure development in the community. Respondents indicated that these infrastructural developments have led to the improvement in the lives of people in the community in one way or the other.

• Socio-cultural Impacts

The socio-cultural influences of tourism on the community also manifest both in negative and positive forms. Some of the positive influences tourism had on the community included the opportunity for cultural exchanges between the host community and the visitors; the promotion

of community pride and national identity. Some of the negative influences also included acculturation and commoditization of culture.

CONSTRAINTS TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- The study revealed the Road networks of the community are in deplorable state to the extent that few passenger vehicles are willing to ply these roads. Apart from organized means of transport by tourists, most vehicles fear taking the risk to the community especially in the rainy season.
- Accommodation has been found to be one of the important facilities which is inadequate not only in the community but in the entire region. Its unavailability inconveniences tourists who come from long journeys and intend to stay for a while in the community.
- The study also revealed that while there were health centers in the community but the problem associated with these facilities is inadequate staff and logistics. In emergency situations there are no ambulance services. These are the reasons that respondents see health as a constraint hampering tourism development in the community
- The study found that there were only two major mobile telecommunication services in the community including MTN and Vodafone. However, the communication services of these two service providers are not stable and therefore not reliable in this part of the country.
- The study also revealed the inadequacy of sanitary facilities as a problem in tourism development in the community. This is a major constraint and affects this tourist community as there is indiscriminate defecation which is unattractive to tourist.
- The study also revealed that the Tourism Management Team was handicapped in terms of logistics to aid them in carrying out their management responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Wechiau is a popular tourist destination in the Upper West Region. The Wechiau community Hippopotamus Sanctuary attracts not only domestic tourists but also international tourists from across the globe. The community also hosts two tourist attraction potentials including the Traditional Lobbi Houses and the 300-year old mosque that could be developed to maximize returns from tourism. The interaction between tourist and the host community result mainly in some impacts which are classified into economic, environmental and socio-economic impacts in this study. The analysis of the case study demonstrated that these impacts do not happen in isolation from each other, but rather they are interrelated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the aforementioned findings of the study, the researchers puts forward the following recommendation to ensure maximum utilization and development of tourism attraction and potentials in Wechiau.

- The District Assembly should try to create feeder roads to areas that have potentials of accelerating the development of the community and the district as a whole. Good motorable roads will not only improve the tourism industry, it will also help in the development of other sectors such as agriculture. Good motorable roads will attract the services of vehicles to the community. This would make the movement in and out of the community very smooth, and would boost the development of tourism in the community.
- Government through Ministry of Tourism should partner the private sector to develop the numerous tourism potentials which are yet to be developed. This will make these sites vibrant and generate revenue to the district assemblies for the development of the community and the district. Private partnership will inject some competition and efficiency into the tourism industry. The community should be encouraged to participate in the identification and development of tourist sites to generate revenue to supplement royalties obtained from the residents of the community.
- The problems with health centers in the community should be addressed by providing them with enough staff and logistics. This has an indirect effect on the promotion of tourism.
- It is also recommended that the Ministry of Communication in partnership with Telecommunication Service providers should ensure there is quality and efficient mobile telecommunication services across the country in general and in tourist destinations in specific.
- Government through Ministry of Tourism should ensure that the Tourism Management Team is well resourced in terms of the logistics with which they work with. This would facilitate the quick and easy execution of their duties as the management body of tourism in the community.

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