

This is a pre-print version (accepted version before journal formatting) of [Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong](#), (2017) " Divided We Stand: Institutional Collaboration in Tourism Planning and Development in the Central Region of Ghana", *Current Issues in Tourism*, 20:3, 295-314

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE TITLE

Divided We Stand: Institutional Collaboration in Tourism Planning and Development in the Central Region of Ghana

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**Biographical Notes:** Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong is currently a PhD Candidate at the Department of Town and Regional Planning, The University of Sheffield, UK. His PhD research is on the political economy of tourism governance in Ghana. Specifically, the research deals with how institutional and stakeholder interactions shape the governance capacity of tourism policymakers in utilising tourism development as a tool for poverty reduction. This article is based on research findings from his dissertation as part of the Erasmus Mundus Erasmus Mundus Masters Programme in Public Policy (Mundus MAPP) from 2011-2013.

**Acknowledgements:** The author acknowledges the comments of the two anonymous referees which helped make this paper stronger. A special thanks and acknowledgement goes to Marre Adu-Ampong for her support, positive critique and proof reading of the final manuscript.

Thanks also go to Glyn Williams, Tom Goodfellow and Enrique Wedgwood-Young for their helpful comments and proof reading at various stages of the manuscript development.

## **Abstract**

This research is an exploratory study that examines collaboration at the institutional level in the tourism sector of the Central Region, Ghana. The research begins with a review of the key issues related to collaboration in tourism planning and development followed by an extensive exploration of three main issues related to institutional collaboration in tourism in the Central Region. The three main issues are the vision of tourism development shared among stakeholders, collaboration and coordination within the public sector and between the public and private sectors and the factors that constrain and facilitate collaboration and coordination. Using extensive interviews with key stakeholders and reviewing policy documents, the research indicates low levels of collaboration between tourism institutions both within the public sector and across the public-private sectors. This is notwithstanding a shared awareness of the benefits of collaboration among all actors. The research thus contributes interesting insights into the politics of collaboration in tourism destinations. Given tourism's contribution to the Ghanaian economy, it is imperative that efforts are made towards improving the levels of collaboration and coordination between tourism agencies and institutions.

**Keywords:** tourism planning, collaboration, coordination, institutions, stakeholders, Ghana

## **Introduction**

Tourism continues to be touted as key to economic development in developing countries especially as the number of international tourist arrivals is forecasted to keep increasing. Notwithstanding the potential positive effects of this increase in international tourist arrivals, a number of criticisms are made about the negative impact of the tourism industry (Britton, 1982; Pleumarom, 1994; Schilcher, 2007). The main thrust of these criticisms has revolved around the fact that, in many developing countries the development of the tourism industry is more often undertaken in an unplanned manner (Hall, 2008) or at best in a very centralised manner (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998; Tosun, 2000; Yuksel et al., 2005). Thus, the issue of tourism's contribution to economic development and poverty reduction in developing countries is still engrossed in endless and unresolved controversies (Steiner, 2006). What is clear is that the benefits of tourism accruing to developing countries depend to a large extent on the critical role played by the state in encouraging participation in the planning process (Hall, 1998; Jeffries, 2001; Hall, 2008).

Within the planning literature, there is currently an emphasis on communicative and collaborative planning processes with broad public participation (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Healey, 2006; Hillier & Healey, 2010). These developments in planning theory have spilled over into the tourism literature where there is now increased awareness about the need for comprehensive planning approaches to the development of tourism. Contemporary planning approaches such as comprehensive, flexible, community-driven and systematic planning aim to sustain tourism as an agent for socio-cultural and economic development in order to ensure long term benefits to destination countries (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998; Hall, 2000; Connell et al., 2009; Simao & Partidario, 2012; Marzuki & Hay, 2013). These approaches to tourism planning, while not easily implementable in developing countries due to some socio-cultural factors, provide a framework for encouraging collaboration in the tourism planning and development process.

Given the current nature of the tourism industry – high fragmentation and interdependencies across geographical spaces – there is now a renewed focus on the need for coordination and collaboration between the different actors in tourism governance and planning in tourist destinations (Waayers et al., 2011). A number of reasons account for the increased academic and management interest in the issue of coordination and collaboration in tourism governance. First, the characteristics of fragmentation, diffusion and high interdependencies

in the tourism sector intensify the need for inter-organisational relationships (Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Hall, 2008). Secondly, the processes of marketization that came with the 'new public management' pursuit of effectiveness and efficiency gains in the public sector led to new governance forms that supports partnerships, collaboration and the outsourcing of public services (Hood, 1991; Peters, 1999; Hall, 1999). Thirdly, the redefinition of the state and its role in what has increasingly become a networked society (Pierre, 2000), has resulted in a relational interventionist model of state involvement that is accomplished through newly developing network governance frameworks (Rhodes, 1994, 1996; Stoker, 2006; Bult-Spiering & Dewulf, 2006).

This explorative research is informed by three main rationales. First is the idea that collaboration in planning and governance between public and private sector actors is fairly new in developing countries. Unlike in developed countries where collaboration has been extensively utilised in such areas as health, education and tourism, in many developing countries collaboration in the policymaking process is relatively new (Tosun, 2000). Nonetheless, the idea of collaboration and partnership is rapidly catching on and being used increasingly in tourism planning processes in developing countries (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Aas et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2011; Robertson, 2011; Pansiri, 2013). Research into collaboration in the planning process is therefore crucial, especially as it is developing countries that stand to gain or lose the most in tourism development. Developing countries often depend on foreign investment for tourism development and the success of attracting these investments hinges on effective planning processes (Harrison, 2001; Mowforth & Munt, 2009). A collaborative planning process therefore, enables developing country destinations to remain competitive in attracting investment and tourism (Pansiri, 2013).

The second rationale for this research is the need for empirical exploration of the ideas of collaboration and partnership. There exists an extensive literature pertaining to collaboration and partnership in the tourism planning process albeit at the level of concepts and theories (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Bramwell & Lane, 1999, 2000; Hall, 1999, 2000, 2011). Given this wealth of conceptual literature, and the relative absence of empirical literature, it is crucial to examine these approaches in the real-world settings of tourist destinations. Lastly, research into the case of the Central Region in Ghana adds to our understanding of collaboration in tourism planning and development. Much of the existing research on collaboration in tourism planning is focused on developed country destinations (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Hall, 1999; Shone & Memon, 2008; Zapata & Hall, 2012) in comparison to research focused on

developing countries (Aas et al., 2005; Pansiri, 2013). Moreover, the example of a Sub-Saharan African country, specifically a tourist destination in the West African sub region that seeks to put itself more visibly on the tourism map, may yield key lessons for other destinations facing similar issues.

This research paper examines the level and extent of collaboration at the institutional level in the tourism sector of the Central Region, Ghana. An exploration is also made into some of the main factors that constrain or facilitate collaboration in tourism planning and development. In this regard, this paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, tenets of collaboration and coordination are outlined. An explanation of the research methodology in the third section is followed by an overview of the case study of the Central Region, Ghana. The fifth section discusses three pertinent issues of the research findings namely: the vision of tourism development shared among stakeholders; collaboration and coordination with the public sector and between the public and private sectors; and the factors that constrain and facilitate collaboration and coordination. The final section of this paper provides a conclusion to the research with an evaluation of the research findings vis-à-vis the future of institutional collaboration in the tourism sector of the Central Region, Ghana.

### **Collaboration and coordination in tourism planning and development**

Tourism as an economic activity is recognized as being a highly complex and dynamic system that comprises a multitude of actors and stakeholders (Britton, 1982; Ioannides & Debbage, 1998; Mosedale, 2011; Hall, 1998, 2000; Bramwell, 2011; Slocum & Backman, 2011). There is therefore a shared awareness about the need for collaboration and coordination in the tourism planning and development process. The characteristic high level of fragmentation in the tourism industry is recognized as a primary reason for the need to coordinate the needs and interests of different stakeholders in the development of tourism. For tourism to be a catalyst for positive development outcomes, it becomes imperative for stakeholders to share information and decisions related to the tourism planning process.

There are a number of definitions ascribed to the meaning of collaboration and coordination and hence there exists no consensus on their exact meanings (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Nonetheless, the idea of collaboration carries with it an inherent acknowledgement and recognition that the problems and issues facing society cannot be unilaterally dealt with by a

single institutional body (Gray, 1985; Mandell, 1999). A refined understanding of collaboration by Gray (1989:227) is that of “a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain”. Thus collaboration in terms of tourism planning and development can be understood as; “(1) the pooling of appreciations and/or tangible resources, e.g., information, money, labour, etc., (2) by two or more stakeholders, (3) to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually” (Gray, 1985:227, 912). Collaboration in the tourism planning process therefore aims at consensus in the making and implementation of policies by bringing together multiple stakeholders. This is accomplished by engaging private sector and civil sector agencies with public sector agencies (Ansell & Gash, 2008) in order to solve an issue and/or plan for the future of the tourism problem domain.

A problem domain according to Gray (1985:912), is a “set of actors (individuals, groups, and/or organizations) that become joined by a common problem or interest”. Jamal and Getz (1995:188) on their part explain that a problem domain is “a situation where the problems are complex and require an inter-or-multi-organizational response, since they are beyond the capability of any single individual or group to solve single-handedly”. Consequently, the tourism sector is seen as a problem domain that requires collaboration for effective planning because the issues affecting the sector are beyond the management capacity of a single stakeholder.

### **Benefits of coordination and collaboration in tourism planning and development**

Collaboration in the tourism sector is not only about public-private-civil sectors coordination but more often involves coordination between various public agencies which have jurisdictions that may affect the tourism sector. Good levels of coordination between public agencies provide a better environment for developing collaboration between public sector and civil society agencies and vice versa.

There are numerous benefits to collaboration in tourism planning which have been identified in the existing literature. Some of these benefits include the avoidance of stakeholder conflicts, the pooling together of resources for cost-effectiveness and increasing competitive advantage of a given tourism destination (Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Gray, 1985). Jamal and Getz (1999) for example, report on the benefits of a

community-based round table collaborative effort between different stakeholders in the mountain town of Canmore, adjacent to Banff National Park, Canada. They note that the collaborative processes improved the inter-organisational relationship between stakeholders and helped to develop the capacities of individual stakeholders and the community in addressing planning issues within the problem domain. Thus, collaboration on a political level provides an inclusive process of planning and policy formulation that ensures that the voice and opinions of all affected stakeholders are heard. On the other hand, a lack of collaboration may adversely affect tourism development in any destination. Lovelock (2001) shows how the contentious inter-organisational relations between two federal organizations in Canada – Parks Canada and the Canadian Tourism Commission – has resulted in difficulties in policy making regarding the policy domain of tourism development in natural parks.

Notwithstanding the benefits of collaboration, there is a failure in collaboration theory to adequately factor in systematic constraints such as existing power structures. There is an assumption that the collaborative process in itself can overcome power imbalances (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). Another critique is offered by Tosun (2000) who rightly states that having emerged and been refined in the context of developed countries, collaboration in the tourism planning process may not necessarily be appropriate in developing countries. In some instances, funding and investments for establishing collaborative processes are provided by development organisations based in Western countries. Tosun goes on to argue that in such situations, there are operational, structural and cultural limits to collaboration that all too often are ignored and hence collaboration may become an imposition on developing countries by developed Western economies.

### **Factors that facilitate and constrain collaboration**

A key requirement of successful collaboration is the identification and legitimisation of potential stakeholders. In tourism planning this issue is further complicated due to the existence of a varied number of organisations with differing vested interests (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). The central importance of stakeholders in the collaborative process raises two important questions: 1) who should be considered a stakeholder in collaborative tourism planning; 2) how should the state involve the identified stakeholders in the process? The stakeholder concept provides a useful framework for answering these questions. Gray (1985) defines a stakeholder as one who is affected by the actions of others. A stakeholder must also



have the right capacity and skill set to effectively participate in the collaborative process. Consequently, whereas not all stakeholders can and necessarily should be equally involved in the collaborative process (Donaldson & Preston 1995; Byrd, 2007), the stakeholder concept makes clear the importance of identifying and understanding the interests of all stakeholders.

Hall (1999; 2008) notes that collaboration in the tourism planning process does not take place in a systematic and linear way. Having identified the key stakeholders, the success of advancing collaborative efforts depends on a number of factors. A primary success factor is a feeling of mutually-beneficial interdependence between stakeholders. Such awareness of interdependence must then lead to a joint formulation of planning aims and objectives (Healey, 1998; 2006). Through a joint formulation of objectives stakeholders are able to build trust that is centred on a shared vision (Jamal and Getz, 1995; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Waayers et al., 2011) increasing the odds for a successful collaborative process.

A significant challenge to successful collaboration is an inadequate involvement of key stakeholders in the planning process (Healey, 1998; de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999). The centralisation of planning authority also constrains collaborative efforts (Yuksel et al., 2005) and may lead to a lack of consensus on strategic planning at the local level. Bramwell and Pomfret (2007) in their study of planning issues at the lake shores of Windermere, UK, noted that historical legacies of mistrust can potentially offset collaboration. The authors highlight the need to resolve previous issues to prevent apathy and mistrust in new collaborative planning processes.

As with any strategic planning, a collaborative planning process should start with a joint formulation of aims and objectives by stakeholders (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Healey, 1998; 2006). Competition for resources may derail collaborative efforts and hence there is a need to ensure that the stakeholders responsible for formulating plans are also responsible for their implementation.

### **Conceptualisation of collaboration in tourism planning and development**

Within the tourism literature, a variety of conceptualisations have been advanced assessing collaborative planning and development in tourism destinations. These conceptualisations are vital in the search for ways through which tourism planning can result in the maximum benefit to destinations. Timothy (1998) develops a normative model of tourism planning that

examines cooperation between government agencies, cooperation between levels of administration, cooperation between same-level polities, and private-and public-sector cooperation. A three-stage model comprising of problem setting, direction setting and implementation has been developed by Jamal and Getz (1995) to describe the development of collaborative tourism planning. On an analytical level, Bramwell and Sharman (1999) develop a concept of partial consensus in their examination of collaboration arrangements in the development of a visitor management plan in the Hope Valley of the Peak District in the UK. In measuring the extent of collaboration, the paper also outlines a three-category process consisting of; scope of collaboration, intensity of collaboration and the degree of consensus.

Many of the frameworks for assessing collaboration have been developed and refined in the context of developed countries making them not easily adaptable to developing country contexts. Developed countries have a much longer history of bureaucratic arrangements that favour collaboration in comparison to many developing countries where traditional and more formal bureaucracies operate side by side (Abrahamsen, 2000; Engel & Olsen, 2005). This means that there are socio-cultural and political characteristics unique to developing countries that cannot be fully captured with a rigid framework of collaboration refined in a developed country setting. It is to this end that Mandell's (1999) continuum of collaborative efforts is seen as most appropriate for the current study.

Mandell's continuum of collaborative efforts is chosen because it allows the different kind of relationships and interactions that exist between the various stakeholders in both public and private sectors of the tourism policy domain to be clearly shown. The usefulness of this framework is that it makes room to account for unique socio-cultural and political particularities found in a developing country context. Unlike other frameworks, Mandell's continuum flexibly enables data collection and analysis to be organised in a way that easily makes recognisable the extent and depth of collaboration between various stakeholders. Pearce (2001:928) notes that a feature of a good framework is to provide structure rather than act as a straitjacket for the study in order to "offer both a general overview of the field and a means of putting specific studies and problems in context". Mandell's framework of collaborative efforts satisfies this key requirement.

Within this framework the efforts at collaboration occur along a continuum that ranges from loose linkages and one-time coalitions to more enduring structural arrangements. Mandell (1999) identifies the continuum as follows;

- Linkages or interactive contacts between two or more organizations.
- Intermittent co-ordination or mutual adjustment of the policies and procedures of two or more organizations to accomplish some objective.
- *Ad hoc* or temporary task force activity among organizations to accomplish a purpose or purposes.
- Permanent and/or regular co-ordination between two or more organizations through a formal arrangement (i.e., a council, partnership, etc.) to engage in limited activity to achieve a purpose or purposes.
- A coalition where interdependent and strategic actions are taken, but where purposes are narrow in scope and all actions occur within the participant organizations themselves or involve the sequential or simultaneous activity of the participant organizations.
- A collective or network structure where there is a broad mission and joint and strategically interdependent action. The structural arrangement takes on broad tasks that reach beyond the simultaneous actions of independently operating organizations (i.e. action may include, but reaches beyond, linkages, co-ordination, task force or coalitions).

Mandell notes that in a bid to achieve individual goals, stakeholders need to be able to establish contact with and interact with key people. As policy issues become multifaceted and crosscutting, it becomes imperative that individual players within a policy domain reach out to and link up with other stakeholders in order to coordinate the resolution of issues (Gray, 1985; Kooiman, 1993, 2000; Ruhanen, 2013). As the tourism sector of Central Region in Ghana is still in the early stages of developing collaboration, the wide spectrum of relationships can be appropriately analysed within this continuum.

### **Research methodology**

A case study of the Central Region in Ghana is utilised in this research. The case study approach is deemed most appropriate due to the focus of this research which examines the level and extent of collaboration with its changing configurations in the tourism sector. As Yin (2009:2) explains, the case study approach is appropriate when “how” or “why” questions are being asked concerning a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life setting with

the researcher having little control. The question of how collaborative processes are unfolding in the Central Region is one that as a researcher I have no control over. The case study approach therefore provides an entry point into examining this phenomenon without having any significant influence over the responses of stakeholders.

There are a number of reasons for choosing the Central Region as the case study. The region is endowed with the biggest share of developed tourist attractions in Ghana. Home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites, scenic beaches, forest reserves and parks as well as colonial and cultural edifices, the region is considered as the tourism hub of Ghana. This diversity of attractions means there are also a diversity of interest groups and individuals linked to tourism development directly and indirectly. The region exemplifies the notion of a fragmented destination which has been recognised in the literature as necessitating the use of collaboration in order to avoid struggles over limited resources.

In line with the main research question, detailed qualitative data was collected. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants from the public and private spheres of the tourism sector. A purposive sampling method followed by a snowball technique was used to identify the stakeholders whose views are considered representative. A total of twelve interviews were carried out between June and August 2013 with highly placed individuals in six institutions. The original intention of the research was to undertake the interviews on a face to face basis. However, due to external influences this was not possible. Consequently, a combination of telephone interviews and emails was used in the data collection process.

After identifying the sample, respondents were first contacted by telephone during which the research was introduced and up to 15 minutes of initial interviewing was carried out which was taped and transcribed. Respondents were then sent an email with a set of open-ended questions to be completed in detail. After receiving responses from the email questions, a more detailed set of questions and issue areas was drawn up based on initial analysis. A second set of telephone interviews was then arranged with respondents to discuss the set of issues drawn up and to clarify conflicting responses. These set of interviews lasted up to 30 minutes and were also taped and transcribed.

The primary data collected was supplemented by documentary and archival records which included government policies on tourism and policy documents of the institutions involved in the tourism sector of the Central Region. Both primary and secondary data were analysed

using the framework approach for qualitative analysis developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). The five step process of: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and mapping and interpretation enabled the data to be scrutinised for meaning, salience and connections. Data analysis focused on building up broad sub-themes of commonalities rather than looking for individual differences. These sub-themes were further analysed for commonalities on the basis of which three broad themes emerged. The final three themes arrived at for this research reflected the main issue points highlighted by the interviewees and identified in the secondary data. These themes are also consistent with earlier research on tourism partnership and collaboration (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Waayers et al., 2011).

#### **TABLE 1 HERE**

In exploratory research, a targeted sample is considered appropriate and acceptable (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002), notwithstanding the issue of potential biases due to the sample size. This is because the research seeks to illustrate the institutional interaction and collaboration in the tourism sector. The findings from the qualitative and in-depth interviews enabled the general trends in institutional collaboration in the tourism sector of the Central Region to be illustrated. This fulfils the main goal of exploratory research being to outline the general boundaries of a specific phenomenon (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Yin, 2009). Consequently, the research findings are not affected by the sample size. The use of documentary and archival records also offered the opportunity to strengthen the research findings. This research therefore provides a broad view of general trends in collaboration in tourism planning in the Central Region. Further research is needed in order to fully explore the issues identified in this study in order to arrive at a more comprehensive picture of collaborative efforts in the tourism sector of the Central Region.

## **The Case Study: Central Region, Ghana**

In Ghana, tourism is considered as a significant sector of the economy and as a tool for poverty reduction. The tourism sector is currently the fastest growing sector of the economy (UNWTO, 2010); and the third highest foreign exchange earner generating \$1.8 billion of revenue in 2010, which constituted 6.2% of the Gross Domestic Product (Appaw Agbola & Dehlor, 2011; Ministry of Tourism, 2011). The Government of Ghana has identified the tourism sector as a key area to be harnessed to boost the economy, generate employment and contribute to poverty reduction efforts. The 15-year National Tourism Development Plan (1996-2010) had regional tourism plans for each of the 10 regions in Ghana. Attempts have therefore been made in developing the tourism potential of each region. However, a number of unresolved issues continue to hinder the full realisation of the potential in the tourism sector. Principal among these issues are an inadequate human resource base, poor infrastructure, low investments, poor marketing and branding, underdeveloped tourist products and a low level of tourism awareness across Ghanaian society (UNWTO, 2010; Konadu-Agyemang, 2001; Teye, 2000). The most pertinent issue that impedes the development of tourism and the (re)distribution of accruing benefits is the high level of fragmentation in tourism governance, administration and management from the national to the local level. At the national level there are at least 85 different tourism stakeholders who influence and are influenced by tourism policies, plans and implementation (UNWTO, 2010:54). In addition, the tourism sector at regional levels involves a high number of stakeholders. The high number of stakeholders is not necessarily an issue as long as there is proper coordination.

Considered as the tourism hub of Ghana, the Central Region of Ghana is the former centre of government. Its capital Cape Coast served as the seat of the British colonial administration up until 1877. The major tourist attractions in the region include;

- a) Castles and forts; the Cape Coast Castle, the Elmina Castle and Fort Java have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites due to their role in the infamous Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- b) Kakum National Park; this 357km<sup>2</sup> rainforest contains rare butterflies, birds and game (including the forest elephant). An attractive feature of the park is the 350m long and 40m high treetop canopy walkway that provides a good top view of the park.

c) Pristine Beaches; palm-fringed beaches with gentle rollers to sizeable breakers adorn much of the coast of the region.

d) National and traditional festivals; the celebration of major traditional festivals in the region attracts a lot of people. The region is also the centre piece of the annual Emancipation Day celebrations and the biennial PANAFEST (Pan-African Historical Theatre Project), celebrations that attract largely people of African descent in the Diaspora.

Due to the existing resources and potentials, tourism is actively promoted as an economic activity within the region by national, regional and local governments as well as by private actors like NGOs and civil societies. Given the great variety and diversity of tourist attractions, there are consequently different governing authorities involved in tourism planning. Paradoxically, the Central Region is considered as one of the poorest regions together with the three northern regions of Ghana (IMF, 2006; GoG:NDPC, 2007) for variety of reasons. One would therefore expect a high level of collaboration between these governing bodies in order to ensure maximum benefits of the enormous tourism development potential available. The consensus in the literature is that the extent of tourism's contribution to local economic development and poverty reduction depends on the critical role played by the state and its ability to encourage collaboration.

### ***Overview of major stakeholders in the tourism sector of the Central Region***

An overview of the stakeholders in the Central Region is instructive in illustrating their diversity. This also points to the high levels of fragmentation in tourism planning and development.

#### ***Public Sector***

The highest public institution in tourism planning and development is the Ministry of Tourism (*MOT*). Since its creation in 1993, the functions of the ministry have undergone many changes with its portfolio currently including the Creative Industry. The *MOT* is the national tourism policy making body in Ghana with two implementing agencies – the Hotel, Tourism and Catering Training Institute (*HOTCATT*) and the Ghana Tourism Authority (*GTA*) which was established in 2011 by a Parliament of Ghana Act 817 (Tourism Act, 2011)

to replace the Ghana Tourist Board (*GTB*). The functions of the GTA are carried out through regional and district offices in the Central Region.

The Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (*GMMB*) is also a regional institution responsible for archaeological sites, preserved ancient buildings as well as the numerous forts and castles that line the shores of Ghana. The *GMMB* is thus in charge of the governance, regulation and planning of tourist activities that take place in the three UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites in the Central Region. The Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission (*WD-FC*) is one of three divisions of the Forestry Commission. The *WD-FC* has direct responsibility for all wildlife in the region, administering the Kakum National Park and other wildlife-protected areas and coastal sites in the region. The development of tourism and eco-tourism in the protected areas is seen as one way of providing socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities. Last but not the least, the Central Regional Development Commission (*CEDECOM*) established in 1990 is the regional development agency set up by the Central Regional Coordinating Council (*RCC*) as part of the decentralization process in Ghana. *CEDECOM* has as its objective the promotion of the integrated development of the region. In this regard, there is a specialized Integrated Tourism Development department that seeks to attract investment for the development of the tourism sector in the region – especially private sector involvement

### *Private Sector*

The Ghana Tourism Federation (*GHATOF*) is the umbrella organization for all the private sector bodies involved in the tourism sector of Ghana. The objective of *GHATOF* is to champion the cause of the private sector in the tourism sector of Ghana and it comprises of associations registered and licensed by the GTA as well as non-registered and/or unlicensed associations that are granted affiliates status. Members include; Ghana Association of Travel and Tour Agents (*GATTA*), Tour Operators Union of Ghana (*TOUGHGA*), Ghana Hotels Association, Tour Guides Association of Ghana (*TGAG*) and Ghana Traditional Caterers Association (*GTCA*). These member associations are represented in the Central Region. In addition, there is the Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust (*GHCT*) which is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization that seeks for the preservation and conservation of the historic, cultural and biodiversity resources in the Central Region. The *GHCT* aims for



socio-economic development through the unique combination of historical and natural resources conservation activities.

Aside from these stakeholders, there are other individuals and groups who affect and are affected by tourism governance policies. These include local metropolitan, municipal and district governments, the regional branch of the Environmental Protection Agency, the office of the Town and Country Planning units, traditional authorities like chiefs, heads of communities, fishermen's groups and local transport associations. These groups highlight the complexities in the sector but were not part of this study as the explorative nature of the research required a sampling of only the major stakeholders in the sector.

## **Research Findings**

This section discusses three main findings that are found to be important in providing an insight into the extent and nature of collaboration in the Central Region's tourism sector. The three main issues are the vision of tourism development shared among stakeholders; collaboration and coordination within the public sector and between the public and private sectors; and the factors that constrain and facilitate collaboration and coordination. These issues serve as key indicators in exploring the level of collaborative efforts.

### **Vision of and for tourism development among stakeholders**

There is an agreement in the literature that one of the most crucial elements needed for an effective collaborative efforts in tourism planning and development is the need for a shared vision of and for tourism development. The existence of a shared vision of and for tourism development makes it easier for stakeholders to work in a coordinated manner because of the feeling of a shared common problem (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Waayers et al., 2011).

The research findings from both the interviews and documentary records show that there is a high level of understanding among all stakeholders regarding what tourism can contribute to the region in terms of employment and socio-economic development. There is cohesion among stakeholders in the region with regards to their vision of tourism development for the region. This is in contrast to other developing countries such as Indonesia where Timothy

(1998, 1999) found in Yogyakarta, a distinct lack of a shared understanding by stakeholders about the benefits of tourism. Interviewee comment such as “to see more tourists visit the region and contribute towards socio-economic developments” clearly indicates the links stakeholders make between tourism and socio-economic development. This sense of shared vision of tourism’s contribution to socio-economic development is regarded as a key success factor in collaborative planning (Healey, 1998; 2006; Ladkin and Bertramini, 2002).

Notwithstanding the existence of a broadly shared vision, there is a difference in emphasis between the public sector and the private sector in terms of how to achieve this vision. Earlier research indicates that the highly centralised nature of tourism planning in developing countries tends to lead to a divergence in approaches of public sector bodies and the private sector (Tosun, 2000, 2005; Yuksel et al., 2005). Within the case study area, the public sector focuses on a broader view of sustainable tourism development that will make the region the preferred tourism destination for tourists. This public sector view is illustrated through remarks such “to create an enabling environment for a sustainable tourism development” in order to make the “Central Region the preferred region to be visited in Ghana”. For private sector actors, their emphasis on the shared vision centres mainly on diversifying the tourist products and experiences available in the region and improving service provision within the tourism industry. Responses such as “market the tourism attractions and potentials” and to “provide appropriate information to improve the quality of services delivered” typify this view. Interviewees pointed out that a focus on these issues will lead to an increase in the number of tourists and the length of their stay in the region, which contributes to job creation and socio-economic development. The absence of a joint collaborative marketing strategy in part explains why the private and public sector have different emphasis on the broadly shared vision. This finding echoes a study of tourism collaboration and partnership in Botswana by Pansiri (2013) which indicated that levels of collaboration are affected by whether organisations have established a marketing strategy.

Concomitant to the overriding vision among stakeholders in the region, most interviewees viewed tourism development as part of their institutional mandates. There exist however, some nuances in how interviewees perceived their role in tourism planning and development. For instance, private sector institutions conceived their role in tourism development as including the payment of “annual taxes and fees authorised by the Authority [GTA]” as well as the provision of “appropriate information to help in the formulation of policies”. On their part, public sector institutions acknowledged their role in tourism planning and development

to include among other things; the governance and regulation of the sector through “granting of licenses to operators in the industry”, forming “partnerships with District Assemblies and traditional authorities to help with the development of tourism sites” and “collaboration with other public and private sectors in tourism facilities development”.

The existence of a shared vision of and for tourism development in the region is yet to translate into a coherent and collaborative approach. This is rather interesting since the legislative instrument that established the GTA tasked it with the function to “ensure collaboration with other public, private and international agencies”. At present, there is no significant formalised partnership or collaboration in the region that will help push for the attainment of the broadly shared vision held by stakeholders in the sector.

### **Collaboration and coordination within the public sector and between the public and private sectors**

This research examined two forms of collaboration, one between public and private sector stakeholders and the other being collaboration within the public sector. Gray (1985) sees collaboration as the pooling together of resources by two or more stakeholders in solving a set of problems. Within this view, there is clearly some level of collaboration within the tourism sector. However, the research findings and analysis suggest an overall low level and intensity of collaboration between institutions. In providing a measure of the nature and extent of collaborative efforts in tourism planning and development in the Central Region, responses given by interviewees were related to Mandell’s (1999) continuum of collaborative efforts. Interviewees were in agreement that it is vital that all stakeholders collaborate and form partnerships in order to further develop the tourism sector of the region. These views expressed during the interviews although being consistent with the analysed documentary and archival records were yet to be fully implemented in practice.

#### *Public-Private sector collaboration*

The research identified that there is a shared understanding of the need for coordination and collaboration between the public, private and other interest groups within the sector. This awareness however is yet to translate into a comprehensive plan or efforts towards

collaboration. As the table below based on Mandell's continuum illustrates, coordination and collaboration is at best loose and for specific projects only.

**TABLE 2 HERE**

There appears to be very little effort being made in initiating and sustaining long term collaboration in the region. Interviewees from the private sector expressed the view that there is hardly any collaboration. In the words of one interviewee, collaboration in any meaningful sense is "non-existent" in the region. On their part, interviewees from the public sector especially CEDECOM and the GTA felt that there is some level of collaboration. As de Araujo and Bramwell (1999) have identified in Brazil, public sector institutions often look at private sector bodies with suspicion – in the sense that the private sector is only out to make profit – and hence do not fully involve them in the tourism development and planning process. The research findings suggest that public sector institutions on some occasions do organise tourism related seminars and workshops during which they extend invitations to private sector stakeholders. While private sector interviewees admitted to having participated in such workshops organised by CEDECOM and the GTA, they were quick to add that participation at such workshops does not qualify as collaboration. Thus the lack of a formalised structure to the interactions between the public and private sector means that the little collaborative efforts that do exist happen in an ad hoc fashion rather than in a sustained way. In general public-private sector collaboration is informal, patchy and ad hoc, and is usually centred on the execution of projects or events as and when they occur.

### *Public sector collaboration*

The bureaucratic structure across all sectors of the Ghanaian economy has a long history. It is therefore not surprising that the public sector within the tourism sector in the Central Region consists of a large and diverse number of institutions. This finding is common to other research in developing countries like Indonesia and Peru (Timothy, 1998; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002) where it has been established there are a number of government institutions directly and indirectly involved in the tourism sector. The table below illustrates the form and extent of collaboration between the public sector institutions.

### **TABLE 3 HERE**

Akin to the public-private sector relationship, the research analysis reveals that collaboration within the public sector is mainly purposive and ad hoc – i.e. informal linkages exist mostly for the purpose of solving a particular tourism problem or taking advantage of an opportunity. The informal nature of those linkages sometimes results in a failure to provide a solution to certain issues as was the case in the cancellation of Emancipation Day and PANAFEST in 2012 at short notice and close to the start date. Interviewees pointed this out as a classic result of a lack of collaboration and coordination between the various stakeholders. Emancipation Day and PANAFEST are huge tourist events that attract mainly Africans in the Diaspora and African Americans in particular in a ‘back-to-your-roots’ pilgrimage to Ghana. The centralisation of tourism planning and the inadequate capacity of institutions at national, regional and local levels account for the low levels of collaboration between public sector institutions (Tosun, 2000; Yuksel et al., 2005). In spite of the huge potentials and acknowledged benefits of collaboration the tourism sector of the Central Region continues to remain underdeveloped due to a lack of proactive drive towards deeper collaborative efforts.

## **Factors that constrain and facilitate collaboration and coordination**

As the research analysis has shown so far, there is an awareness for and willingness of stakeholders to engage within a formalised collaborative process. Given this willingness, the final issue was to tease out what stakeholders perceived to be the most crucial factors that impede and those that facilitate collaboration in tourism planning and development in the region.

For many of the interviewees, the key constraining factor hampering collaboration is the lack of a clearly defined policy framework on tourism development in the region. The resulting situation has been one where there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of planned activities even when ad hoc collaborative arrangements are made. Furthermore there is a constraining factor relating to overlaps in mandates and activities. The diversity of public sector institutions involved in the sector leads not only to duplication of activities but also to inactivity in certain ‘grey areas’ – action areas where each institution expects the other to act but none end up taking action. This is underlined with miscommunication and non-communication leaving important action areas like marketing unattended to. Timothy (1998) has identified such a situation in a tourist destination to be a barrier to effective collaborative efforts. Furthermore the lack of clearly defined roles creates hindrances towards coordination – a well-known problem in the tourism industry (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

In agreement with Ladkin and Bertramini (2002) and Tosun (2000), who note a scarcity of financial resources for tourism development, interviewees identified a limited budget and financing as a constraint to collaborative efforts. Within the public sector many institutions complained about how their limited finances restricted their ability to embark on collaborative ventures. As bureaucracies go, each institution is unwilling to commit their funds towards a larger good due to sometimes unhealthy competitions within the public sector. Interviewees responded that “funding has been hampering progress [of collaborative relationships] as funds are not released on time and sometimes it does not come at all”. A number of other constraining factors to collaboration were mentioned by interviewees including, low levels of participation in the planning process, unwillingness of some stakeholders to commit to the process and invest time and resources and the differing perspectives of stakeholders as to how to approach the issue of tourism planning and development in the region.

As a response to the factors that constrain collaborative efforts, interviewees also identified important factors they felt may facilitate collaborative efforts in the tourism sector. Many suggested that the key to promoting collaboration was good and open communication between stakeholders. This involves transparency and the need for public sector officials to implement agreed upon activities as well as the need for result-oriented personnel to be involved. These recommendations are consistent with findings from other research into collaboration (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999; Healey, 2006; Waayers et al., 2011). The importance of community participation in the tourism planning and development process was also highlighted as being crucial to improving collaborative efforts. However, as Tosun (2000) has emphasised in the case of Turkey, there are socio-cultural limits to community participation that require an overhaul of existing socio-economic and political structure of developing countries. Careful considerations of place specificities are therefore needed in collaborative processes especially as a lack of resources at the community destination level may hamper tourism development and planning.

The establishment of formal mechanisms for communication and feedback in the collaborative process enhances the level of participation of all stakeholders (Aas et al., 2005). This assertion is mirrored by the findings which indicate that interviewees see the establishment of a “coordinating committee for tourism related organisations to serve as a platform to discuss issues on tourism in the region” as important. This point signifies that stakeholders do prefer formalised collaborative processes as they are very aware of the benefits such collaboration can bring to tourism development in the region. In their view “to have a strong tourism federation made up of major stakeholders to meet at least quarterly to share ideas for implementation of policies, quality service delivery for sustainable tourism” is the best way forward in terms of collaborative efforts. The argument is that a formalised process ensures that collective initiatives rather than individual initiatives are undertaken (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999; Ladkin and Bertraminin, 2002). A formalised process also allows regular evaluation of progress in implementing agreed upon plans and objectives using indicators that all stakeholders agree to.

## **Conclusion**

Ongoing changes in contemporary tourism planning arrangements have seen the private and civil sectors becoming increasingly important actors in addition to the public sector. The

basic argument is that contemporary problems and opportunities in the tourism sector are highly complex, diverse and dynamic. Consequently no single institution has all the required resources to take up available opportunities or to solve new and existing problems. The need for institutional collaboration in the tourism planning and development process has been emphasised as being important in ensuring tourism's contribution to economic development. The high levels of fragmentation in tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1999), the 'new public management' pursuit of efficiency gains in the public sector (Hood, 1991; Hall, 1999) and the relational interventionist model of state involvement in the economy (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 2006) are commonly cited to highlight the need for collaboration.

Collaboration in the tourism planning and development processes while not taking place in a systematic way (Hall, 2000, 2008), can be assessed using factors such as the existence of a shared vision among stakeholders, joint formulation of tourism development objectives and an acknowledgment of interdependence. These factors are intrinsic to the development of what Mandell (1999) calls networks of linkages which are more or less formalised in relation to sustaining common interests. The findings from this explorative research show that in the tourism sector of the Central Region in Ghana, collaborative tourism planning is yet to fully take place. The tourism planning and development process is in the early stages of network formation.

Although there is an acknowledged need for collaboration, stakeholders continue to act singularly in most of their work. As the interdependence between stakeholders is yet to be formalised, coordination is usually undertaken informally. These informal coordination efforts are further constrained by the lack of a clearly defined policy framework, overlaps and duplication of roles and responsibilities as well as inadequate financial resources. The research analysis shows that, within the tourism sector of the Central Region, institutions are divided when it comes to collaboration. The institutional structure of tourism-related agencies also negatively impacts on collaborative efforts. As Timothy (1998, 1999), Tosun (2000) and Ladkin and Bertramini (2002) have also identified in other developing countries, local private sector stakeholders in the Central Region felt excluded from the tourism planning and development process.

At the level of policy, this research has highlighted crucial areas that ought to be acted upon. Importantly, there is a need for a definite clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders within the tourism sector. This has to be the first step towards



collaborative efforts since stakeholders should know what is expected of them and what they should expect from others. Additionally, there is a need for a broad-based stakeholder consultation as a prelude to establishing a formalised forum for regular interaction among stakeholders. Finally, deliberate efforts need to be made towards open communication in order to properly coordinate the development and implementation of tourism policies. If tourism is to make meaningful contributions to socio-economic development, there is also a need to make tourism planning and development a collaborative process. Ultimately, a successful tourism planning and development process in the Central Region will serve as a good example for the remaining nine regions of Ghana and have positive implications for other countries.

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**Table 1** Composition of sample

	Public Sector	Private Sector
Ghana Tourism Authority (Regional Office)	2	
Ghana Museums and Monument Board (Regional Office)	2	
Wildlife Division of Forestry Commission (Kakum National Park)	1	
Central Region Development Commission (Integrated Tourism Development Department)	3	
Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust		1
Ghana Tourism Federation		3



**Table 2** Collaborative efforts between the Public and Private Sector

<b>Mandell's continuum of collaborative efforts</b>	<b>Public-Private collaboration in the tourism sector of the Central Region</b>
Linkages or interactive contacts between two or more actors	There is neither a formal joint body of public and private stakeholders nor a formal forum for interaction. Any form of coordination or interaction is undertaken in an informal way to address specific emergent issues as and when it is needed
Intermittent coordination of the policies and procedures of two or more actors	Non-existent
<i>Ad hoc</i> or temporary task-force activity among actors to accomplish a purpose or purposes	This is most commonly used in collaborative efforts within the tourism sector. Specific project coordination committees are usually set up which then gets dissolved at the completion of projects. Even for recurring events like PANAFEST and Emancipation Day celebrations, there is no structured interactive platform for actors. Ad hoc collaborative efforts are embarked upon once the event is about to take place
Permanent and/or regular coordination between two or more actors through a formal arrangement to engage in limited activity to achieve a purpose or purposes	Non-existent
A coalition where interdependent and strategic actions are taken, but where purposes are narrow in scope	Non-existent

A collective or network structure where there is a broad mission and joint strategically interdependent action	Non-existent
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**Table 3** Collaborative efforts within the public sector

<b>Mandell's continuum of collaborative efforts</b>	<b>Public sector collaboration in the tourism sector of the Central Region</b>
Linkages or interactive contacts between two or more actors	Interactive contacts within the public sector involve both formal and informal coordination – usually more informal than formal due to the bureaucratic nature of public sector activities
Intermittent coordination of the policies and procedures of two or more actors	On a purely policy level there is no established formal coordination. What little intermittent coordination there is relates to the implementation of policies and projects most often devised at the national level
<i>Ad hoc</i> or temporary task-force activity among actors to accomplish a purpose or purposes	Each institution relies on ad hoc collaborative efforts with others in order to undertake specific projects or tasks. This is the most entrenched form of collaboration within the public sector. For example, in the rehabilitation of the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles, an ad hoc coalition of CEDECOM, GTA and the GMMB was formed with funding from USAID. This coalition did not continue past the completion of the project
Permanent and/or regular coordination between two or more actors through a formal arrangement to engage in limited activity to achieve a purpose or purposes	Non-existent
A coalition where interdependent and strategic actions are taken, but where purposes are narrow in	Non-existent

scope	
A collective or network structure where there is a broad mission and joint strategically interdependent action	Non-existent