

Alleviating Rural Poverty in Ghana through Marketing Of Tourism

Sites And Protected Areas

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Abstract

Alleviating poverty, marketing of tourism sites and protected areas in Ghana is the three of the biggest issues facing the country today. In developing country like Ghana, poverty and environmental degradation is linked and this inhibits environmental sustainability. Marketing of tourism sites in Ghana can help address the challenges of reducing poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability. The paper seeks to address rural poverty and ensure environmental sustainability with a focus on protected areas in Ghana .Again the paper seeks to examine how tourism sites in Ghana can be marketed worldwide to generate socio-economic benefits that can help reduced poverty in tourism sites.

Key words: Rural poverty, tourism sites, Ghana, environmental sustainability, protected sites

1.0 Background

Poverty in developing countries especially Ghana has frequently been for mismanaging the natural resources lands, forest, water, wildlife on which their lives depend. However, research in developing countries has shown that co-management and participatory approach is effective alternative in many circumstances to reduce management (Vernooy, 2009).Effective conservation of these natural resources and its management is important not only in strategies to promote tourism but also improving livelihoods of poor people who live in and around these areas.Protection and conservation of natural resources especially, land, forest, wildlife and water provides food, income and raw materials this can be used to provide shelter, medicines and other services. Such as maintenance of soil fertility and meat which are essential to human survival.

Although, Ghana's resource base for tourism is exceptionally strong, various governments have not been able to utilize this potential into opportunities to create jobs and reduce poverty. It is hard to imagine the achievement of the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without sustainable and sustained efforts to reduce management of natural resources rural poverty through tourism. Currently, the country earns \$894,000annually from tourism. The sector is the third largest foreign exchange earner, which comes after cocoa, gold and remittances. Resource management in these areas and national parks is therefore necessary because it forms part of the priority areas of investment in order to diversify the national economy. National parks and other areas will attract tourist into the country and increase employment in hotel and services sector as well as tourist receipts to improve the balance of payment position.

Sustainable management of national parks and protected areas to promote tourism for poverty reduction is also necessary because in Ghana, there is a strong link and a significant overlap between areas of widespread poverty.

In Ghana, for example, poverty is widespread in communities located within and around tourist areas. Although, resources conservation and protection can safeguard the climate and integrity and ensure quality of drinking water in protected areas which can contribute to human well – being and poverty reduction, protection also presents a major challenge to poverty alleviation. As the world's population grows and pressure on natural resources increases, protection can exacerbate rural poverty .The creation of protected areas often results in costs on adjacent communities, including loss of access to natural capital within protected areas as food, timber and non- timber forest products (NTFPs).In addition, conflicts and cost are often generated outside these areas boundaries such as crop damage and other negative human-wildlife interactions as well as other negative socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism growth associated with protected areas.

In order to maximize the flow of benefits of protection to reduce poverty in these areas and adjacent communities, governments in tourism resource-rich countries have been called upon to pay more attention to conservation and protection of marine and terrestrial resources.

Several initiatives such as environmental education and conservation awareness programmes have been introduced to ensure local participation in decision making and ensure the commitment of communities located in and around these tourist areas, to mitigate these problems, and ensure that protection generates significant socio-economic benefits at local level.

However, it has been observed in Ghana that, in many areas such as Mole Game Reserves a tourist site, protection has led to marginalization of the poor, increased human –life conflicts, intensified inequity in the flow of economic benefits and costs, exacerbated poverty and eroded local support for resource conservation. For example, in many African countries, where forested lands were taken away from indigenous usage and put under reserves, forest policy, which deprived the rural population of legitimate use of the forests, resulted in encroachment on the forest reserves. Due to government’s inability to deal with widespread encroachment and serious threats on forest and wildlife resources, state agencies have been forced to adopt participatory approaches to spread out the responsibilities for forest management for mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

The main stream governing principle of community participation, including decision-making, equitable access to resources, sustainable livelihoods, poverty reduction, good governance and sustainable management of National parks, Museums and Protected Areas are amongst the key issues of this study.

Experience from many developing countries, which is confirmed by documented evidence show that unless the rights and needs of local people are taken into account in decisions to allocate large tracts of land for conservation, many protected areas will come under increasing threat from poor households whose livelihoods depend on the land and forest resources being protected (Dudley et al1999; Barrow and Fabricius, 2002).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the study is to find out how tourism sites in Ghana can be marketed through wildlife protection, proper management of Museums and conservation of natural resources for poverty reduction. In furtherance to the main objectives, the study will also consider the following specific objectives:

1. How to address the challenges of reducing poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability through a focus on protected reduction in tourism communities in Ghana.
2. How to support and foster mutual learning, capacity building and the creation of knowledge that will be of direct use to local Communities and government agencies.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Ghana has fifteen wildlife protected tourism areas including six national parks, six resource reserves, two wildlife sanctuaries and one strict nature reserve. In addition, there are other museums like Manhyia Palace Museums etc. The national parks at Bui, Mole and Kakum provide the natural habitat for plant and animal species and tourists have the opportunity to catch close view of animal such as the elephant, monkeys and birds. At the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, monkeys live at peace with human beings. However, most of the forest and animal resources are under threat of destruction due to unsustainable human activities including deforestation, agriculture, and indiscriminate bush burning, illegal hunting and poor natural resource management. The study will provide information required to promote tourism through wildlife protection and conservation of natural resources for poverty reduction. This would be achieved through increased employment opportunity, income and local participation in natural resource management for socio-economic development.

3.1 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

The creation of national parks and protected areas can preserve pristine natural and historic sites in an era when unchecked exploitation of natural resource-land, water, forest and livestock- are leading to environmental degradation and undermining livelihoods of the poorest of the poor in the rural areas. National Parks and Protected

areas bring in much-needed funds from tourists. In addition to the revenue, there are much educational, moral, health, recreational, and other intangible benefits which arise from the establishment of National Parks and Protected Areas provide the major source of government revenue. The well developed tourism industry in Kenya and Tanzania is a major source of employment and income for people who work in hotels, restaurants and service sector of the tourist-based economy. For many Ghanaians, the positive benefits of National parks and protected areas far outweigh the disadvantages because among other benefits, protected areas remain the only locations where certain animals such as monkey's birds and other rare plants and animals are found. They are also found in areas where environmentally destructive activities such as mining, logging and illegal hunting can lead to environmental, water and air pollution, widespread poverty and deprivation.

Despite the many benefits of conservation, there are many resource-uses and human-wildlife conflicts in and around National-Park and Protected areas in Ghana. It is a well known fact that poverty and degradation environments are intimately linked because more often than not, the money derived from tourists fail to benefit local people and their communities who are deprived use of resources in the protected areas. Poverty has become the unintended consequence of many protected areas in Ghana because poor people are force to degrade the areas set aside for protection in their struggle to make a living. In many protected areas such as Bui National Park and Mole Game Reserve, illegal hunting poaching of wildlife and trade in bush meat, which are major source of income and nutrition for poor households, defeat conservation objectives. Animal damage to Crops is also a key issue in communities around wildlife protected areas (WPAs). In Ghana, there are reported cases of massive destruction of crops by animals, particularly elephants and cows. Elephants also sometimes destroy rivers and streams which serve as sources of drinking water for people in communities around National Park and Wildlife reserve. In the Bui and Mole National Parks, for example, many communities around the National Parks and WPAs lions and hyenas often attack goats and other livestock at night. The rights of people to have access to natural resources for maintaining a basic standard of living have also often been conflicted with the responsibility of communities to protect forest and wildlife resources. For example, since the early 1980s, the population of Ghana has increased so much that pressure has been exerted on the natural resources especially forests and wildlife. Deforestation and encroachment of agriculture on national parks and protected areas to ensure food security and illegal hunting for bush meat in and around national parks and protected areas have adversely affected development of the tourism industry.

For example, Tanzania has used about 30 percent of its total land area for conservation and very few African countries can measure to the people's level of interest and commitment to wildlife protection. In addition, managers have developed instruments and strategies to ensure sustainable resource utilization and wildlife management in the national parks and protected areas. Moreover, Ghana should learn from Tanzania. Tanzania has successfully implemented Community-based participatory conservation and wildlife protection initiatives, which have led to positive impacts on the environment and livelihoods of the poor living in Communities adjacent to the protected areas. For example, Saadani was a Game Reserve for many years before it becomes a National Park.

During that time, considerable poaching or illegal hunting for bush meat took place. However through effective wildlife policy, strict enforcement of laws regarding wildlife protection and by adopting participatory wildlife management approaches, animal Population has increased in the last five years. These lessons need to be replicated in areas such as Ghana where poaching and unsustainable resource exploitation is leading to the disappearance and the extinction of certain plant and animal species.

3.2 FIELD OBSERVATIONS

The research on protected areas and poverty reduction is in line with the objectives of this study and a number of key strategies that are target at poverty reduction in communities within and the areas in Ghana. The National parks at Bui and Mole and the Avu Lagoon Complex are important tourist sites in Ghana which provide a natural habitat for wildlife. They have abundant game population including elephants, antelopes, buffalos, leopards, water bucks, warthogs, crocodiles and rare plants. They protect thousands of migratory birds and serves as breeding grounds for wildlife. Except the Bui National Park and Kakum Forest Reserve, most of the tourist sites have limited visitor's facilities for tourists.

In Ghana, rural poverty and serious environmental degradation are prevalent in the protected areas. Local people lacked access to resources and there is low capacity for managing the protected areas. In the Bui National Park, population pressure, extensive agriculture, annual bush fires and meeting the survival needs by poor and vulnerable households posed major threats to wildlife and long-term sustainability of the protected areas.

In Bui National Park, another challenge that makes protection particularly difficult for the local population is the construction of the Bui Dam for electricity generation and construction of the Bui city. The construction of the dam has affected more than 2,500 people who have been resettled because of flooding by the dam. In addition, large area has been cleared to make way for the Bui city for farmland. Farmers must be courage to plant trees on their land to give them real hope for the future.

4.0 MANAGING A HERITAGE SITE FOR VISITOR SATISFACTION IN GHANA

Traditionally, museums in Ghana have not relied upon marketing techniques to draw customers. Several difficulties contribute to this. Firstly, there is no national marketing plan and current administrative arrangements vary tremendously. Secondary, many musicologists regard themselves as professional whose true work is the care of artifacts. They view management and its techniques as an intrusion on their real work. A third hindrance is the fear that active promotion of public museum services will result in excessive demand and inadequate funds. In developing a marketing strategy, museums need to predict and anticipate 'customers' needs. A client-centred philosophy needs to be adopted in which user's participate in both the definition of requirements and the evaluation of the organization's offerings.

Customer satisfaction is a basic element of marketing museums. Satisfaction serves as an important basis for customer retention, word-of-mouth recommendations and any complaining behaviour, Price elasticities are reduced, cost of transactions and attracting new customers are reduced. Thus, it has a strong effect on profitability (Fornell, 1992; Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994; Reichheld, 1996), and plays an important role in the formulation of marketing strategies (Matzler, Sauerwein and Pechlaner, 2000). Services and technologies available to museums and other entertainment facilities have made it easier to imitate products and services. It is therefore increasingly difficult to rely on features alone for differentiation from competitors. In order to establish products and service that guarantees a high level of customer satisfaction we first need to fully understand the relevant attributes. Relevant attributes can be classified in three categories according to the Kano model of customer satisfaction (Matzler, Sauerwein and Penhlaner, 2000):

1. **Basic factors:** minimum requirements that cause dissatisfaction if not fulfilled but do not lead to customer satisfaction if fulfilled or exceeded. The fulfillment of basic requirements is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for satisfaction.
2. **Performance factors:** lead to satisfaction is fulfilled or exceeded and lead to dissatisfaction if not fulfilled. Thus, they can cause both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
3. **Excitement factors:** factors that increase customer satisfaction if delivered but do not cause dissatisfaction if they are not delivered or if their performance is perceived to be below expectations.

4.1 GETTING THE 'VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER'

There are several ways to get the voice of your customer. Commonly then following are used (Rickard, 1996; Naumann and Giel, 1995)

- ❖ **Customer councils**
Councils are employed to bring together a group of customers so that one can better understand future needs, what the museum is doing right and, by far the most important, identify critical areas in which improvements can be made. These councils consist of tourist guides, tourists and teachers.
- ❖ **Focus groups**
This traditional market research process is used to understand requirements and/or problems in a specific area. It is employed twice a year.

❖ **Executive communication exchange**

Top management is brought together with the customers in order to focus on issues customers want to discuss, including their future needs. This is done especially for travel agents, school teachers and customers of cultural departments of the local government.

❖ **Surveys**

These surveys provide input about how customers rate the museums and can be used for internal and external benchmarking reasons. A survey is the main instrument used in the customer satisfaction programme of the museums.

❖ **Customer queries and complaints**

These instruments provide additional sources of input that identify specific areas and opportunities for improvement. There is a Praise/complaint box at the exit of the museums. Furthermore, every complaint or suggestions is to be written down on a complaint form at the cash desk. Complaint forms can be completed on-screen, too, and this is accessible to all employees. Once a customer raises an issue, the employee taking the complaint owns it until it is resolved.

❖ **Market research**

Market research is done by analyzing secondary market studies about trends in leisure behaviour and attitudes.

❖ **Benchmarking, analyzing of competitors**

In order to compare with other open air museums the top management regularly visits other museums, conferences and analyses newspapers. Market research studies are also bought. Each one of these instruments provides helpful insights into customer requirements. Understanding the voice of the customer enables the service development process to begin, using the customer's requirements as the basis on which to design and develop new service offerings. In addition, they should be trained to adopt alternative livelihood strategies such as mushroom farming, grass-cutter rearing, fish farming, livestock, batik, and tie and dye production so that they can improve their incomes and reduce poverty in and around National Parks and Protected Areas.

4.2 BRANDING MANHYIA PALACE MUSEUM FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM MARKETS

The concept of 'branding' products and services has become a very common marketing practice. Branding has developed to such a level that brand names are sometimes more valuable than the products or services they represent. In 1994 the most valued brand was Coca-Cola, worth estimated US\$36 billion dollars to its owners (Upshaw, 1995). The simple rationale underlying the concept of branding is that a product's image can mean the difference between success and failure of a new product. It provides information about a product or a destination the customers have not used or visited previously. While we may not have travelled on The Orient Express or visited Las Vegas, we know a lot about them and this influences our choice to buy. Developing and managing a destination brand stakeholders as well as support from research and marketing specialists.

4.3 MANYHIA PALACE MUSEUM

Manhyia palace is Ghana's major holiday destination for both international and domestic holiday visitors. It is located in the Ashanti region of Ghana where the Great King of Asante resides. The Museum is located at centre of the Garden city of African Kumasi. The Museum is owned by the Great King of the Asante Kingdom and the People of the Ashanti. The Museum has in stock the rich history of the Great history of the Asante Kingdom, the history the past history of the past Great Kings of the Asante Kingdom. People from all walk of life both domestic and international visit the Museum to know the rich history of the Asante Kingdom.

4.4 MARKET SEGMENTS

Just as there is spectrum of holiday destination from undeveloped to develop and different types of activities and sights, there are also different types of visitors that may wish to go to those destinations. The task of a brand manager is to ensure that the right information about a destination is communicated to the right people. In order to do this it is necessary to match the activities and features of the destination to those segments of the market for which these are most attractive. Targeting the right market means that promotional expenditure is not used to advertise to people who are not likely to be interested in visiting the destination. The visitor markets for the Manhyia palace museum may be divided into domestic and international segments. An audit of the characteristics of visitors conducted as part of the branding exercise for the Manhyia Palace Museum highlighted the importance of the domestic segments. Domestic

holiday-makers are the principal market segment for the Manhyia Palace, accounting for 62% of the visitor visit at the destination. However, there view also noted that the international markets (15%).

The potential market for the Manhyia Palace Museum is primarily determined by the cost and distance variables. However, the actual market achieved and the scale of tourism of the Manhyia Palace Museum is a reflection of the development and marketing over many years. Much of this development has been the result of the actions of tourism entrepreneurs (Russell and Faulkner, 1999). A number of niches markets are also important for Manhyia Palace, including schools where many students from all over Ghana visit the Museum.

4.5 ORGANIZATION OF MANYHIA PALACE MESEUM TOURISM AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The planning and marketing functions for the Manyhia Palace Museum are not separate. The planning and marketing function resides primarily in the hands of the Manhyia council. Tourism marketing functions are centralized with the Manhyia council having overall responsible for cooperative marketing activities for its members. The council provides funding for the running of the Museum with other funding coming from a number of private companies. The objectives are to increase the economic contribution of tourism to the local economy and this is achieved through a variety of individual marketing programmes, including domestic television advertising, travel trade promotions, cooperative overseas marketing, and visiting journalist tours and travel agent familiarization trips. The marketing activities are conducted in conjunction with a variety of other organizations including the Ghana Tourism Commission (GTC), responsible for marketing of Ghana in international markets. Tourism Manhyia has a small marketing team dedicated to the marketing of the Manyhia Palace Museum which performs a variety of promotional tasks and in addition operates two-self funded commercial operations, a wholesaler of Manyhia holiday product and the Government Travel Centers (a chain of retail travel agents). These operations provide access to the tourism distribution systems for a wider variety of 'product' than otherwise would be available as well as performing an information provision role for potential visitors to Manyhia Palace Museum. The Ghana Tourism Commission also conducts marketing of Ghana and the Manyhia Museum in international markets. Finally, individual operators of tourism product both Cooperative and stand-alone promotion and marketing programmes are directed at their own preferred segments.

4.6 BRANDING AS A MARKETING TASK

Clearly there are a number of stakeholders involved in marketing the Manyhia Museum. The combined effort of these organizations on their marketing activities involves thousands of dollars a year. This expenditure may be spread over more individual marketing activities. Central to the development of a Manyhia Museum brand was the realization that coordinated marketing activity would increase the effectiveness of the expenditure. A number of authors have discussed destination marketing (Ashworth and Goodall, 1990; Buhalis, 2000; Calantone and Mazanec, 1991; Kotler, Heider and Rein 1993) and while the costs of this activity are often recognized, there is little discussion of means to improve performance. Branding is one such means of increasing efficiency of marketing and is appropriate for destinations that seek to create destination awareness (knowledge of the destination) and destination image (a positive image of the destination) within a consumer market.

The aim of a branding programme is to create brand equity. Increasing brand equity means that an increasing percentage of a particular market is both aware of a brand and favorably disposed to buy it compared to alternative brands. Keller (1993) identifies six key elements that enhance brand awareness and facilitate the information strong brand associations in the mind of the consumer. These are brand name, logo, symbols, character, packaging and slogan; it involves the development of a whole 'personality, with which a consumer can relate.

The advantages of a well-designed branding programme are that they allow a consistent attractive consumer message about a destination to be clearly communicated. It provides a coordination mechanism, as all involved in the branding programme will often involve the development of standard photographic images that convey specific messages about the destination. These images may then be made available to destination. These images may then be made available to destination operators at a reduced cost to encourage their use. Cooperative marketing programmes involving these images may be organized at reduced prices due to bulk purchase of advertising space. A well coordinated brand programme means that the stakeholders speak with one voice, obtain economies of scale in advertising and reduce confusion in the consumer's mind.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Throughout history, women have the stewards of natural resources, especially water and indigenous technical knowledge. It must be recognized that women's empowerment is essential to poverty eradication, environment regeneration and sustainable management of National Parks and Protected Areas. Therefore, if we would succeed in reducing poverty and ensure environment sustainability in protected areas, strategies must be adopted, firstly, to empower the communities, especially women in communities within and outside National Parks and protected areas. It is also important to adopt measures to maximize the delivery of equitable benefits to the poor in the communities within and outside National Parks and protected areas. In Ghana, the preliminary survey of communities revealed that the destruction of crops by animals constitutes a major source of human wild –life conflict around National Parks protected areas. Therefore, human –wildlife interactions should be better managed in order to reduce conflicts resulting from the destruction of crops by animals.

Alternative livelihood systems such as mushroom farming, snail cultivation, batik-tie and dye and craftwork should be promoted so that locals will be gainfully employed in activities which demand little use of land and forest. If protected areas and national parks can be used to promote tourism and as a key development sector to reduce poverty and ensure environmental sustainability, strategies should be adopted to ensure the participation of local people in national park and wildlife management, maximizing the delivery of equitable benefits and better manage human and wildlife interactions. In addition, innovative research and development would be required to collect relevant information and share new knowledge with resource managers and users whose livelihoods depend on the resources under protection.

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