

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**MARKETING IMPLICATIONS IN BUILDING GHANA'S
DESTINATION IMAGE – A TOURISM PERSPECTIVE**

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil
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DECLARATION

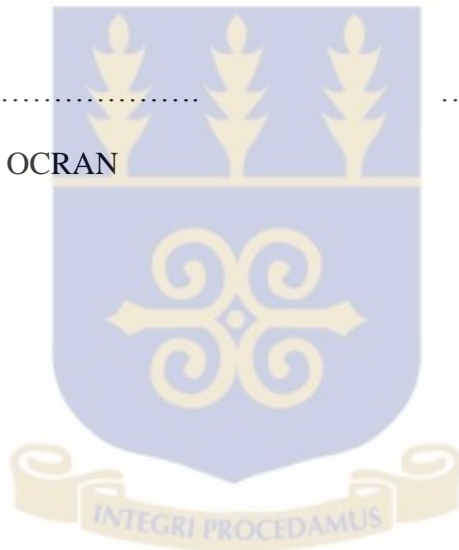
I hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

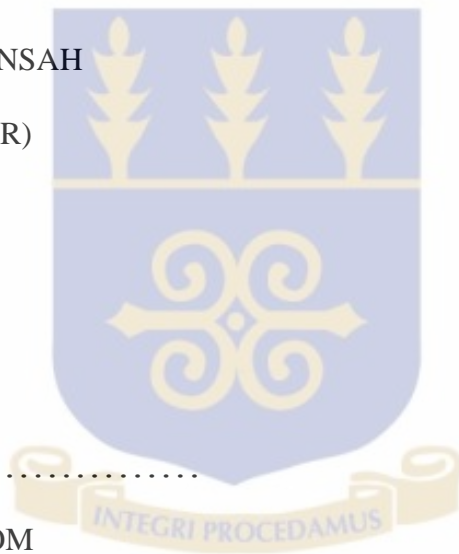
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God and my family. I would not have made it this far without them.



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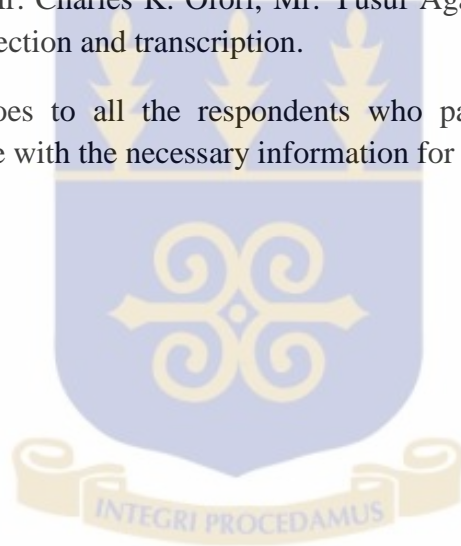


TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Content | Page |
|--|------|
| DECLARATION | i |
| CERTIFICATION | ii |
| DEDICATION..... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | iv |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | v |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | ix |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... | x |
| ABSTRACT | xi |
| CHAPTER ONE..... | 1 |
| 1.0 Background of the Study | 1 |
| 1.1 The Purpose of the Study..... | 3 |
| 1.2 Objectives | 5 |
| 1.3 Research Questions..... | 5 |
| 1.4 The Significance of the Study..... | 6 |
| 1.5 Chapter Outline..... | 6 |
| CHAPTER TWO | 8 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 8 |
| 2.0 Introduction..... | 8 |
| 2.1 Brand Image and Destination Brand Image (Destination Image)..... | 8 |
| 2.2 The Components of Destination image..... | 12 |
| 2.2.1 The Cognitive Dimension..... | 13 |
| 2.2.2 The Affective Dimension..... | 13 |
| 2.2.3 The Conative Dimension | 14 |
| 2.3 Factors that influence destination image..... | 15 |
| 2.3.1 Information Sources..... | 15 |
| 2.3.2 Personal Factors..... | 18 |
| 2.4 Destination image formation | 21 |
| 2.4.1 Static Image formation: Destination Image and Its Influence on Tourists' Behaviour . | 21 |

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| 2.4.2 | Dynamic Image formation | 23 |
| 2.5 | Measurement of destination image | 26 |
| CHAPTER THREE | | 30 |
| COUNTRY CONTEXT: THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF GHANA | | 30 |
| 3.0 | Introduction..... | 30 |
| 3.1 | Structure of the Industry | 31 |
| 3.2 | Performance of the Tourism Sector | 31 |
| 3.3 | Ghana’s Major Tourism Resources | 33 |
| 3.4 | Marketing Ghana as a destination..... | 34 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | | 37 |
| METHODOLOGY | | 37 |
| 4.0 | Introduction..... | 37 |
| 4.1 | Research Design | 37 |
| 4.2 | Research Strategy | 38 |
| 4.3 | Time Dimension | 40 |
| 4.4 | Study Population..... | 41 |
| 4.5 | Data Sources | 41 |
| 4.6 | Data Collection Method..... | 42 |
| 4.7 | Sampling Technique | 44 |
| 4.8 | Sample Size and Data Collection..... | 45 |
| 4.9 | Data Analysis..... | 46 |
| 4.10 | Ethical considerations | 47 |
| 4.11 | Limitations of the Study | 47 |
| CHAPTER FIVE | | 49 |
| DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION | | 49 |
| 5.0 | Introduction..... | 49 |
| 5.1 | Analysis of Data | 49 |
| 5.1.1 | Demographic Information..... | 49 |
| 5.1.2 | Cognitive Impressions of Ghana..... | 51 |
| 5.1.3 | Affective Impressions of Ghana | 66 |
| 5.1.4 | Conative Impressions of Ghana | 71 |
| 5.1.5 | Overall Impressions of Ghana | 73 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|----|
| 5.2 | Discussion of Findings | 78 |
| 5.2.1 | Cognitive Impressions of Ghana (Research Objective/Question 1) | 78 |
| 5.2.2 | Affective Impressions of Ghana (Research Objective/ Question 2) | 79 |
| 5.2.3 | Conative Impression of Ghana (Research Objective/ Question 3) | 80 |
| 5.2.4 | Overall Impressions (Image) of Ghana..... | 81 |
| CHAPTER SIX..... | | 82 |
| CONCLUSION..... | | 82 |
| 6.0 | Introduction and Summary of the Study..... | 82 |
| 6.1 | Summary of findings | 83 |
| 6.1.1 | Cognitive impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 1) | 83 |
| 6.1.2 | Affective impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 2)..... | 83 |
| 6.1.3 | Conative impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 3) | 83 |
| 6.1.4 | Overall impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 4)..... | 84 |
| 6.1.5 | Other notable findings | 84 |
| 6.2 | Conclusions..... | 85 |
| 6.3 | Recommendations (restructured)..... | 85 |
| 6.4 | Suggestions for Future Research | 86 |
| REFERENCES | | 88 |
| APPENDIX..... | | 96 |
| Interview Guide | | 96 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 2.1: Popular Definitions of Destination Image..... | 11 |
| Table 3.1: Performance of the Tourism Industry from 2007-2013..... | 32 |
| Table 5.1: Demographic Information | 50 |
| Table 5.2: Duration of Visit..... | 50 |
| Table 5.3: Countries visited by Respondents..... | 76 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 2.1: Model for Destination Image..... | 29 |
| Figure 5.1: Sources of Pre-visit Information..... | 53 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| DMO – | Destination Marketing Organisation |
| GHATOF – | Ghana Tourism Federation |
| GTA – | Ghana Tourism Authority |
| ISSER – | Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research |
| MOT – | Ministry of Tourism |
| UNDP – | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNWTO – | United Nations World Tourism Organisation |
| USAID – | United States Agency for International Development |

ABSTRACT

Tourism has become a prominent global industry. In light of this, it is a fiercely competitive industry, with countries constantly working to identify various means of increasing their attractiveness. Destination image is one primary means that destinations use to distinguish themselves and draw more tourists. This study seeks to understand how tourists' cognitive, affective and conative perceptions of a destination influence the image formation. Data is collected from a sample of international tourists through focus group discussions and interviews, and analyzed thematically. Findings show that tourists' cultural or societal orientations influence how they evaluate their experiences of destination attributes. These resultant evaluations (cognition) in turn influence visitors' feelings (affection) about the destination and ultimately determine their behavioural intentions (conation) towards the destination. Furthermore, the study shows that Ghana's strongest tourism attributes are the country's culture, people, history and natural resources. The study recommends that destination marketing organizations design their campaigns around these attributes and consider potential visitors' motivations and cultural values and orientations.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Tourism has become one of the largest global industries and arguably, could be described as the world's largest industry (Benfield, 2004; Shantha, 2005). Global tourism arrivals have been estimated to increase to 1.6 billion by the year 2020 (Havi & Enu, 2013). This promising prospect has propelled this industry into its current position as one of the world's biggest employers. Consequently, the industry makes a substantial contribution to global economies. In light of this, tourism has become fiercely competitive with countries constantly working to identify various means of increasing their attractiveness.

Teye (2000) notes that Ghana's attempts to develop a viable tourism industry, can be traced to the period directly following independence. The author also observes that the earliest documented attempt to formally establish the tourism sector in the country occurred in 1970. The aim of that research was to index and categorise potential tourism resources for a development plan that would cover the period from 1972-1976. In the ensuing years, a number of similar studies were also undertaken. Notable among them were:

1. The 1973 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assessment and review of tourism planning and development resource requirement (Teye, 1988);
2. United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) work to identify the prerequisites for a comprehensive strategy for tourism development (Teye, 1988);
3. The project for the effective use of tourism development resources funded by the United States International Executive Service Corps (Teye, 1988).

This interest in the potential of tourism led to the design of a 15 year development plan for the sector to cover 1975-1990. However, due to the political instability that plagued Ghana in the subsequent years, the plan was never implemented (Teye, 2000). In 1993, after Ghana had attained a considerable level of political stability, the government set up the Ministry of Tourism to manage the country's tourism affairs. This ministry, in conjunction with the UNDP and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), implemented a 15-year development plan from 1996-2010. This plan has been replaced by a successor plan which is to cover the 2013-2027 time period. The successor plan is meant to build on the successes of the first plan and address its failings as well as other emerging tourism issues (Ministry of Tourism, 2013). Additionally, in September 2009, the former president, His Excellency Professor John Atta Mills, announced the establishment of the Brand Ghana Office (Modern Ghana, 2009). This office is mandated to work with other related institutions and entities to “create and coordinate a brand position for the country in order to establish a compelling image for Ghana” (Brand Ghana Office, 2009). In spite of this considerable effort, it appears that Ghana's tourism sector has still not reached its full potential (ISSER, 2014). This could be because the country does not possess an adequately competitive destination image.

Destination image is one primary tool that various destinations use to distinguish themselves and draw more tourists. According to Lee et al. (2013), the importance of destination image lies in its influence on tourists' behaviours. This observation affirms Chon's (1992) position that destination image plays a crucial role in a tourist's buying behaviour. Chon further notes that a tourist's level of satisfaction with a destination choice is significantly dependent on the comparison of the destination's perceived performance with his or her expectations of the destination or a prior perceived image of the destination.

Destination marketing literature identifies three components of image: cognitive, affective and conative dimensions (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Vaughan, 2007; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Dominique & Lopes, 2011; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Lee et al, 2012; Lee et al, 2013, Mwaura et al, 2013). The cognitive component is formed from the tourists knowledge and beliefs about the attributes of a destination (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Lee et al, 2012). The affective dimension, on the other hand, focuses on the tourist's feelings and emotions about the destination and its surroundings (Dominique & Lopes, 2011; Lee et al, 2012). These emotions may be positive, negative or neutral (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). And the conative component of destination image refers to how a tourist is likely to act towards a particular destination based on cognition and affection (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Lee et al, 2012).

In the various studies about the image components and image formation, qualitative research appears to be under-represented. Out of the 142 papers Pike (2002) reviewed, only 63 reported using qualitative methods at any stage in their research. In his follow-up review, Pike (2007) found that this deficiency in literature was still persistent. In light of this deficit, this study will seek to add to literature by exploring how all three image dimensions influence image formation using qualitative methods.

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to elicit tourists' impressions and perceptions of Ghana in order to acquire necessary information to bolster Ghana's image as a tourist destination because,

despite the steady increase of international tourist arrivals, which account for the bulk of Ghana's tourism earnings, this sector is still struggling to achieve its objectives (ISSER, 2014). According to the Ministry of Tourism (2013), one reason for this situation is that the country does not possess an adequately competitive image in the global tourism arena.

A cursory look at the tourism literature in the Ghanaian context gives the impression that studies are mainly focused on:

- efforts to establish and expand the industry (Teye, 1988; 1999; 2000; 2008);
- attitudes towards tourism development (Teye et al., 2002);
- trends and changes in tourism business practices (Hinson & Boateng, 2007; Mensah-Ansah et al., 2011) and;
- contributions it makes to economic growth (Havi & Enu, 2013; Ahiawodzi, 2013).

However, there have been a few studies that have broached the area of destination branding, positioning and other related destination marketing topics. For instance, Owusu-Frimpong et al.'s (2013) paper considers factors that could influence destination attractiveness with an emphasis on service quality and satisfaction and Blankson et al. (2004) inquiry into Ghana's tourism position and how it could be enhanced by a framework based on literature. Furthermore, Braimah et al. (2012) identify some key attributes that the country could use to build a brand. Thus, this study is in a position to contribute relevant insight to aid in the development of a more distinct image and establish a more competitive position for Ghana as a tourist destination.

1.2 Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the nature of destination image, specifically how tourists' cognitive, affective and conative impressions influence image formation. This aim is broken down into four objectives, as outlined below:

1. To identify the cognitive perceptions tourists have of Ghana
2. To identify the affective perceptions tourists have of Ghana
3. To determine likely behavioural intentions (conative perceptions) as a result of these perceptions
4. To determine the overall image of Ghana resulting from these beliefs, knowledge, feelings and intentions.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are tourists' beliefs and evaluations (cognitive perceptions) of Ghana?
2. What are tourists' feelings (affective perceptions) about Ghana?
3. What are tourists' behavioural intentions (conative perceptions) as a result of the above perceptions?
4. What is the resulting overall image of Ghana formed from these beliefs, knowledge, feelings and intentions?

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The significance of a research is generally viewed along three criteria, namely contributions of the study to theory or literature, contributions to practice and the contributions to policy. Concerning literature, this study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge of tourism marketing more specifically by adding to the discourse about the nature of the image phenomenon and its formation. It will also help address the apparent deficit of Ghana's literature on image building.

The findings and conclusions of the study could provide essential insight to Ghana's destination marketers to help enhancing marketing activities to provide better value to tourists, which would help create or reinforce a positive image in the minds of tourists.

Finally, the study could help policy makers in the formulation of policies that will reinforce tourism development in Ghana. These policies could in turn aid the creation of an encouraging tourism environment and improve Ghana's tourism competitiveness and eventually bolster the Ghanaian economy.

1.5 Chapter Outline

This study is organised into six chapters:

Chapter one: This chapter gives a general background as well as an introductory remark for the study. It shall contain the statement of the problem, the objectives as well as the rationale and the significance of the study.

Chapter two: This chapter reviews the relevant literature. It provides findings from other research studies in this field and forms the basis for the study.

Chapter three: This chapter will discuss industry information. This includes an overview of the Ghanaian tourism industry touching on issues including growth and marketing activities.

Chapter four: This chapter gives the methodology for the research. It shall give justifications concerning the Sampling procedures, Data collection methods and the approach to the analysis of data. The chapter shall also give techniques for the analysis of the data that were gathered for the study.

Chapter five: This chapter shall be divided into two parts. The first part shall present the findings from the data analysis whilst the second part shall discuss the results that have been obtained. Discussions shall be in line with the literature review.

Chapter six: This chapter shall conclude the study. It provides final summary of the entire study, conclusion and recommendations as well as areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents relevant literature. It discusses the concept of brand image and destination brand image, the influence of image on tourist behaviour, the components or dimension of destination image, factors that influence image, the process of image formation and the various ways the destination marketing scholars have presented to measure destination brand image.

2.1 Brand Image and Destination Brand Image (Destination Image)

Kotler (1991, p.442) describes a brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitions”. In reference to this definition, Keller (1993) opines that one of a firm’s most valuable marketing assests is the knowledge that it has created about its brand in the consumer’s mind. Furthermore, it has been argued that it is essential for marketing professionals to conscientiously manage the image of their brand as it is often the image that influences consumers’ purchase decisions (Dominique & Lopes, 2011). Aaker (1991), observes that image creates value in a variety of ways, helping consumers to process information, differentiating the brand, generating reasons to buy, giving positive feelings, and providing a basis for extensions. Although there appears to be no universally accepted definition of brand image, Keller’s (1993) definition remains quite popular. He defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993 p. 3). Capriotti (1992, as cited in Dominique & Lopes, 2011) categorised the construct of brand image into three theoretical positions. These positions are:

- ***Image as fiction***: this perspective holds that image is an idea the consumer creates in his mind and is different from what the image really is.
- ***Image as an icon***: this is a theoretical perspective which considers the image construct as an iconic representation of an object. Thus image works to associate the object or brand with specific qualities or attributes.
- ***Image as an attitude***: this viewpoint of image regards the construct as attitude comprised of cognitive, affective and conative or behavioural dimensions.

While, brand image is important to successful marketing, scholars observe that the image that consumers perceive and the image that the firm wishes to project are not always aligned (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Dominique & Lopes, 2011; Mwaura et al., 2013). As such, Dominique & Lopes (2011) observe that firms often analyse brand image on three levels:

- ***The analysis of the perceived image*** – this level of analysis focuses on how the targeted consumers perceive the brand
- ***The analysis of actual image*** – this level considers the strengths and weaknesses of the brand from an internal or firm perspective
- ***The analysis of desired image*** – this analysis level focuses on how the firm wishes the target population to perceive the brand.

The authors further argue that the rationale for the study of these levels is because the significant differences between these levels of image analysis could undermine the objectives of the firm and inhibit the usefulness of the branding exercise.

According to Ashworth & Kavaratzis (2010) the use of marketing knowledge and tools in place management is not new. However, these authors observe that how these knowledge and tools are used in the management process have evolved as a result of various changes in both the planning and marketing disciplines. Shelby (2004) asserts that development of place image has been greatly furthered in tourism literature. This assertion appears to be aligned with Ashworth & Kavaratzis's (2010) observation that tourism marketing emphasizes branding which is established around the task of brand image building. Dominique & Lopes (2011) argue that there is a need for a detailed analysis of brand image because it is the image aspect of a brand that actually influences consumer behaviour. In light of this, it is important for destination marketing organizations to effectively manage destination image.

While the concept of destination brand image has remained a popular area of enquiry in destination marketing literature, some scholars (Chon, 1990; Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002; White, 2004) indicate that because of the phenomenon's subjectivity and complexity, researchers tend to conceptualise it differently. Thus, there is no universally accepted definition for destination image. It appears destination marketing scholars widely adopt Capriotti's third theoretical position in conceptualising the image construct. In support of this, White (2004) makes the observation that the conceptualisation of image in various studies is more closely linked with the popular tri-component model of attitude in psychology. Table 2.1 presents some popular definitions for the concept.

Table 2.1: Popular Definitions of Destination Image

| Author(s) | Definition of Destination Image |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lawson & Baud-Bovy (1977) | An individual's or group's overarching knowledge, predispositions, emotions and imaginations regarding a particular location. |
| Crompton (1979) | The sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has a destination. |
| Chon (1990) | The result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectation, and impressions about a destination |
| Fakeye & Crompton (1991) | An individual's conception of a destination on the basis of knowledge, feelings, and other impressions. |
| Gartner (1993;1996) | A construct developed from three hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative. |
| Baloglu & MCcleary (1999a) | An individual's attitudes or mental notion of an entity. |
| Bigné et al. (2001) | A tourist's subjective interpretation of reality |
| Kim & Richardson (2003) | A totality of impression, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings towards a place that have been accumulated over time. |

Adapted from Gallarza et al. (2002), San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque (2008) and

Zhang et al. (2014)

In light of these definitions, destination image could be said to refer to an individual's perception of a destination based on certain impressions. Thus, destination image could be considered as a composite of the knowledge, beliefs, emotions and other impressions that an individual ascribes to a particular destination.

2.2 The Components of Destination image

Destination marketing literature generally views image as a construct comprised of cognitive or perceptual and affective dimensions. Thus, the majority of studies conducted on the subject has focused on these dimensions (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; 2003; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004a, b; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Lee et al, 2012; Lee et al, 2013; Pan et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014). However, Gartner (1993) included the conative dimension as an essential component of the destination image construct. Echtner & Ritchie (1991; 2003) further argue that destination image is made up of three continuums: attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique. Their description of the functional-psychological dimension appear consistent with the description of the cognitive and the affective. Functional aspects are aligned with the cognitive component, while the affective is similar to the psychological component of the image construct. While, their work is widely cited, destination marketing scholars usually focus on the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions.

2.2.1 The Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive element of image also called the perceptual or evaluative component refers to the tourist's knowledge and belief about the attributes of a destination and how tourists evaluate the destination (Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Lee et al, 2012). The cognitive attributes form the most common dimension since cognition includes both tangible and intangible qualities. The cognitive component is formed from the tourists knowledge (either through first-hand experience or through commercial and non-commercial sources) and beliefs about these attributes (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Lee et al, 2012). Bonn et al. (2005) have observed that destination attributes can often be classified into two categories: service and atmosphere or environment. On the other hand, Beerli & Martin (2004a, b) and Chon (1990;1992) suggest that it is a tourist's knowledge and beliefs about a destination's attributes that form the basis upon which expectations of the destination are built and that these expectations in turn are used to assess the destination's performance.

2.2.2 The Affective Dimension

The affective dimension, on the other hand, focuses on the tourist's feelings and emotions about the destination and its surroundings (Dominique & Lopes, 2011; Lee et al, 2012). These emotions may be positive, negative or neutral (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Although the tourism literature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, b; Pike, 2002; Beerli & Martín, 2004a, b; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008) generally accepts that destination image is comprised of two major components, destination image studies tend to emphasize the cognitive dimension. For instance, only 6 out the 142 papers reviewed by Pike (2002) show an overt examination of the affective component. This situation could be as a result of the general agreement that affective responses or evaluations are largely dependent on the cognitive (Baloglu &

McCleary, 1999; Wang & Hsu, 2010). While Stepchenkova & Morrison (2008) agree that the cognitive dimension does influence the affective dimension, they have argued that there is evidence to suggest that the affective component can exert more influence than the perceptual or cognitive components on tourist choice and that this dimension may be a better indicator of tourist behaviour and thus this dimension should not be overlooked. Wang & Hsu (2010) echo this position when they observe that while there has been an increase in papers that emphasise the multi-dimensional nature of the image construct, there is still a significant deficit that must be addressed.

2.2.3 The Conative Dimension

The conative component of destination image refers to how a tourist is likely to act towards a destination based on his or her perception and emotion (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Lee et al, 2012). The conative dimension of destination image, while recognised by some scholars (see Gartner, 1993; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Govers et al., 2007; Vaughan, 2007; Kwon & Vogt, 2009; Mwaura et al, 2013), is often overlooked since it is considered a consequence of the interaction of the cognitive and affective dimensions. It could be argued that since researchers adopt Capriotti's image as an attitude theoretical perspective, it is important to include the conative component as a dimension of the construct. This component is essentially the behavioural aspect of the construct. Pike & Ryan (2004) describe this dimension as the tourist's propensity to visit a particular destination within an identified time frame. Thus, it is an indicator of tourists' behaviour. The agreement in literature is that the more positive a tourist's cognitive and affective perceptions, the more favourable his or her conative reactions. And thus, the higher the likelihood that the tourist will make a favourable destination decision (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, b; Lee et al, 2004; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Vaughan, 2007; San Martín & Rodríguez, 2008; Stepchenkova &

Morrison, 2008; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Lee et al, 2012; Lee et al, 2013; Mwaura et al, 2013).

2.3 Factors that influence destination image

For destination marketing organisations (DMO) to effectively manage the image of their destinations, it is necessary for them to understand the factors that influence how tourists perceive destinations. There appears to be a consensus in the literature that destination brand image is influenced by various sources of information and personal factors. Baloglu & McCleary (1999a) categorise these factors into stimulus factors and personal factors. These authors classify information sources and experience of the actual destination as stimulus factors while they classify social and psychological values and characteristics as personal factors.

2.3.1 Information Sources

According to Lee et al. (2012), destination brand images are the result of available information about the destination. The authors further posit that the type of image formed is dependent on the source of information. Stern & Krakover (1993) similarly affirm that the source, type and frequency of exposure to information determine the type of image that a visitor will have of a destination. Tasci & Gartner (2007) identify three sources of information for image formation, namely: supply or destination sources; autonomous or independent sources and demand or image receiver sources. However, it appears, what these scholars reference as image receiver sources are what other scholars, including Beerli & Martin

(2004a, b) have termed personal factors. Image formation sources or agents from the supply side refer to the information from destination marketers. This is information from such sources which are designed to attract tourists (Mwaura et al, 2013). These sources include brochures, travel websites, travel agents, travel guidebooks, advertising and other forms of sponsored publicity (Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Lee et al, 2012). On the other hand, autonomous sources of information are the sources of information that provide general knowledge about the destination in question (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). These sources include various media outlets like news items, educational material, movies and popular culture. These sources are purported to have higher influence than information sources originating from the destination as they are regarded as more credible (Gartner, 1993; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). While Tasci & Gartner (2007) adopt different names for their classification, their work is aligned with those of Gunn (1988) and Gartner (1993). Gunn (1988), a pioneer in the study of image formation, identified three sources of information, namely: organic or non-commercial sources; induced or promotional sources and autonomous or primary sources. Gartner (1993) expanded Gunn's work by adding an information source typology that has broken down the original three information sources into eight. These sources are:

- Overt Induced I – information from traditional commercial sources of advertising such as radio, television and brochures
- Overt Induced II – information from travel intermediaries
- Covert Induced I – information from a paid sponsor endorsed by a known entity or expert.
- Covert Induced II – information from apparent independent and unbiased marketing entities

- Autonomous – information gleaned from news, documentaries and other independent sources
- Unsolicited Organic – information from people who have visited the destination or have some understanding of the destination's attributes
- Solicited Organic – information the traveler acquires from friends and family and other credible sources.
- Organic – information derived from the actual visitation of the destination

Even though, some scholars adopt different classifications and categories of information sources, Gunn's (1988) and Gartner's (1993) are quite popular and are widely referenced in the tourism marketing literature (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Chen & Hsu, 2000; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Lee et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2013).

The major role of information sources in the image formation process is to provide diverse knowledge about the destination (Stern & Krakover, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). Beerli & Martin (2004a, b) observe that the sources of information help reduce perceived risk in tourist decision making and are the basis of expectations that the destination will subsequently be assessed on. Thus, it can be argued that information sources, mainly influence the cognitive component of a destination's brand image since this is the dimension of the image construct that is concerned with the tourist's knowledge and beliefs about a destination.

The more positive information a tourist acquires, the higher the possibility that the destination in question will be selected (Stern & Krakover, 1993). However, Beerli and Martin (2004a) caution that the extent to which the different sources of information will influence the post-

visit image is dependent on the amount of credence a tourist attaches to the information provided. In their study of tourists to Lanzarote of Spain, they found that all induced sources employed in the study, with the exception of information provided by travel agencies, exerted little influence over the post-visit image. Conversely, autonomous and organic sources exerted significant influence over the cognitive component of image, notably the autonomous sources mainly influenced the general and tourist infrastructure. In line with this, Govers & Go (2005) detail that with the advent of the internet, social networks now occupy a primary role in providing inside information which will make it possible for potential visitors to develop stronger and lighter images of destinations. Conversely, Frías et al., (2008), in their study of the influence the internet exerts on tourist image formation in comparison to travel agencies, found that where tourists used the internet, the image they formed was more negative. These scholars posit that this situation is likely the result of information overload as there are massive amounts of information available to potential tourists. However, they also discovered that the internet's effect is influenced by the tourist's experience and message involvement.

2.3.2 Personal Factors

Although information plays a primary role in image formation, it is argued that how information is filtered and interpreted is dependent on the tourist's personal characteristics (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, b; Govers, Go, & Kunar, 2007). The personal factors that are often discussed within the destination image literature are tourist motivations and demographic variables such as country of origin, age, gender, level of education and social class.

Tourists Motivations: Baloglu & McCleary (1999a) argue that knowing tourist motivations is central to understanding tourist behaviour. This position is reinforced by San

Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque's (2008) observation that a tourist's motivations are the main determinant of tourist behaviour. Motivation has been described as the internal force resulting from an unsatisfied need which compels the individual to engage in certain behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). A number of authors have observed a direct relationship between tourist motivation and the affective dimension (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martin, 2004a). Gartner (1993) describe the affective dimension as the value that a tourist attaches to a destination as the result of his or her motivations. Motivations can also be considered as benefits that tourists seek from their visit to a destination. Beerli & Martin (2004a, b) observe that it is possible for tourists with different motivations to provide similar assessment for the same destination as long they perceive the benefits sought have been addressed in a satisfactory manner.

Demographic Variables: The tourists demographic characteristics also influence image formation. There is a general consensus in the literature that country of origin influences how a tourist will perceive a destination. For instance, Kozak's (2001) findings indicated that there was a significant difference in how British and German visitors perceived the destination under inquiry. However, within the literature, country of origin has been connected to other factors including race (Tasci, 2007), nationality (Firmino et al., 2006), and cultural values (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008; Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008). Regardless of the term used, this factor often seems to refer more to the larger society from which the individual tourist originates rather than to states or countries. Chen & Kerstetter (1999) found that there was a significant difference in how tourists from different cultural backgrounds perceived Pennsylvania as a destination while Beerli & Martin (2004a) discovered that country of origin influenced the affective component as well as the cognitive dimensions. Bonn et al. (2005) offer a possible explanation when they discovered that tourists societies and

cultural orientations influence the expectations that they have of destination and thus, influence how they evaluate destination and this in turn influences how they perceive a destination.

Other popular demographic attributes that have been studied within the literature include age, gender, and level of education. For instance, Stern & Krakover, (1993) who conducted a study on the formation of image for urban destinations found that there was a direct relationship between the level of education and image formation. Similarly, Firmino et al. (2006) found that image was influenced by visitors education levels as well as age and gender. However, Baloglu & McCleary (1999a) found only a moderate relationship between education levels and the cognitive evaluations. They found no relationship between education levels and the affect component but like Firmino et al. (2006), they found that age exerts significant influence on image especially the cognitive components. In addition to age, gender and educational levels, Beerli & Martin (2004a, b) discovered that travel experience and social class influence image formation. In their study of various tourists to destinations in Spain, they found that women tend to assess destinations more favourably than men (Beerli & Martín, 2004a). This aligned with the findings of Chen & Kerstetter (1999) who indicate that women are more predisposed to approve of cognitive dimensions with respect to tourist infrastructure and amenities. Further findings of interest in Beerli & Martín's, (2004a) study of first-time and repeat visitors to Spain's Lanzarote islands, show that the higher the social class of first-time visitors, the lower the natural and cultural attributes were rated. These scholars also found that how tourists assessed their experience of the current trip was affected by past experience thus showing that a tourist's past travel experience can also influence how a destination is perceived.

2.4 Destination image formation

Destination image formation may be described as “a construction of mental representation of a destination on the basis of information cues delivered by image formation agents and selected by a person” (Tasci & Gartner, 2007 p. 414). Baloglu & McCleary (1999) and Gallarza et al. (2002) note that there are two approaches to studying destination image formation: static image formation and dynamic image formation. The first is concerned with the image construct’s influence on tourist behaviour while the second emphasises the structure and formation of the tourist destination image construct and how it evolves during the travel experience.

2.4.1 Static Image formation: Destination Image and Its Influence on Tourists’ Behaviour

While extant literature does not provide an exact definition of destination image, it generally agrees about its significance in tourist decision-making and behaviour. According to Lee et al. (2013), the importance of destination image lies in its influence on tourists’ behaviours. This observation affirms Chon’s (1990; 1992) position that destination image plays a crucial role in a tourist’s buying behaviour.

There appear to be two main segments of destination image research with respect to how destination image influences tourist behaviour. One segment of research has focused on the influence of destination image on buying behaviour and agrees that destination image allows the tourist to preview the potential destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Chon, 1992; Chi & Qu, 2008; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011). While the other category of studies has focused on the after-purchase influence of the destination image (Bingé et al, 2001; Lee et al, 2005;

Castro et al, 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Lee & Lockshin, 2011; Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

Chon (1990) hypothesises that as a result of their limited familiarity with various destinations, tourists tend to make decisions based on the image of the destination. He further theorises that destinations with more positive images are likely to be selected by tourists. The author substantiates this assertion in a follow-up paper in which he uses an evaluative congruity framework to assess the role of destination image in tourist decision making (Chon, 1992). This study, of 192 visitors to Norfolk, Virginia in the USA, showed that tourists build expectations based on a destination's image and that these expectations are in turn compared to perceived performance to determine the extent of satisfaction with a particular destination. His position is reiterated by Chi & Qu (2008) in their suggestion that image allows a tourist to build expectations which aids them in making their destination choice. These authors also observe that a tourist is likely to choose a destination that he or she perceives will likely provide a more enjoyable and pleasant time. Lee et al. (2013) sum this up with observation that destination image allows a tourist to have a preview of his or her possible experiences with a destination. Thus, a tourist is more likely to choose a destination with a favourable image because he or she will believe that the destination in question will likely provide a high level of satisfaction.

The influence of destination image does not end after the choice is made. For instance, Bingé et al. (2001) in their study of tourists to Valencia, Spain found that destination image directly influenced how tourists perceived service quality, how they evaluated their experiences to determine satisfaction, and whether they were willing to return or recommend the destination. These findings are similar to those of Chi & Qu (2008) who found that destination image directly influenced satisfaction. However, these authors discovered an indirect relationship

between destination image and destination loyalty which is contrary to the results of Bingé et al (2001). However, this is allied with the results of Prayag & Ryan's (2012) study of French, British, South African, German and Indian tourists to Mauritius. They found that destination image influenced satisfaction which in turn influenced destination loyalty. Thus, destination image exerted an indirect influence on destination loyalty. On the other hand, Chen & Tsai (2007) discovered an indirect relationship between destination image and satisfaction. The results showed that the relationship between image and satisfaction was mediated by the perceived value and quality of the trip. The authors further learned that destination exerted both direct and indirect influence over tourists' willingness to return and recommend the destination. Regardless of the nature of influence, be it direct or indirect, there is enough evidence to support the position that destination image plays a significant role in a tourist's post-purchase behaviour.

2.4.2 Dynamic Image formation

With respect to the evolution of the image construct during the travel experience, Phelps (1986 as cited in Dominique & Lopes, 2011 and Lee et al., 2013) postulates that there are two levels of image: the primary image which is formed after visitation and the secondary image which is formed before visitation. Gunn (1988) presents a seven stage travel experience model of image formation as follows:

1. Accumulation of mental images of the destination
2. Modification of the image with additional information about the destination
3. Decision to take the trip
4. Travel to the destination

5. On-site experience of the destination
6. Return home
7. Modification of image based on recollection of the trip

From this model, three levels of image can be identified. Gunn (1988) labels the first of these as the organic image which is the result of information attained from non-commercial sources like news reports, educational sources and opinions from friends and family. This type of image is often formed at the first stage of the model. The next level of image is the induced image which is formed at the second stage of the model where information from more commercial sources modify the tourist's organic image. Then at the last stage, the induced image is modified by the tourists on-site experience to form the primary image which is more realistic than the others. It is based on this model that Chon (1992) and Baloglu & Brinberg (1997) theorise that the cognitive and affective components of a destination's image are formed as a result of the interaction of the individual's experience, commercial and non-commercial information and recommendations from other visitors to the destination. Fakeye & Crompton (1991) essentially condense Gunn's model of travel experience into informative, persuasive and reminding stages. These scholars recognise that tourists start out with an organic image which is formed at the informative stage. Then this level of image evolves to the induced image at the persuasive stage. The reminding stage is the stage at which, Fakeye & Crompton (1991) diverge from Gunn's work. At this stage, these authors posit that the complex image is formed. They argue that actual visitation produces a differentiated perspective and deeper understanding of the destination, thus making the image formed at this stage more realistic and complex.

Tocquer & Zins (2004) in their study of how tourist perceptions are influenced, present four classifications of image development:

1. ***Vague or unrealistic image***: Similar to Gunn and Fakeye & Crompton's organic and induced images, it is formed before the tourist travels and is a result of information derived from advertising, word-of-mouth and education.
2. ***Distorted image***: This class or level of image is formed when the tourist makes the decision to visit the destination. This image is expanded and clarified as the visitor acquires further information to make trip-related decisions such as the length of the trip and type of tourism product.
3. ***Improved image***: At this stage, the image formed is based on the tourist's on-site experience. It could be compared to the primary or complex image. The previous image of the destination is revised by experience and incorrect impressions are removed while the correct ones are strengthened.
4. ***Resulting image***: This is the class of image resulting from the tourists recent memory of the vacation or trip experience. This image influences future decisions concerning the destination.

In summing up existing literature, Lee et al. (2013) observe that four types of images can be identified during the travel experience:

1. ***The organic image*** which is formed when potential tourists begin to consider visiting a destination;
2. ***The induced or a priori image*** which is formed as they prepare for the trip as a result of their information search;
3. ***The complex image*** which is formed as a result of tourists experience at the destination and;
4. ***The posttrip image*** which is formed as tourists evaluate their experience of the destination.

In light of this, Lee et al. (2013) caution that it is imperative to identify the type of image a tourist is likely to have, depending the stage of travel experience, when studying how image influences tourist behaviour. On the issue of image formation, Echtner & Ritchie (1991; 2003) make two major observations; that individuals can form an image of a destination without visiting it and there are changes in the destination image before and after visitation. The authors advise that for the first observation, destination marketing organisations should measure the organic image as the base image and then proceed to address inaccuracies in their marketing strategy. Regarding the second observation, they counsel that destination marketers should distinguish between first-time visitors and repeat visitors.

It is necessary for various destination marketing organisations to consider the various classifications of image as they design their promotional campaigns as this could help in segmentation of the tourist market and allow for more targeted messages to be sent to tourists at different stages of the travel experience to create more favourable images and increase the destination's chances of being selected.

2.5 Measurement of destination image

The peculiarities of the image phenomenon make its measurement problematic (Gallarza et al., 2002). However, extant literature shows that most methodologies used to measure the construct are either structured, unstructured or a combination of both unstructured and structured methodologies (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991,1993, 2003; Murphy, 2000; Gallarza et al., 2002; Grosspietsch, 2006).

Structured approaches often employ quantitative techniques and emphasise the use of common image attributes that are specified and incorporated into a standardised instrument

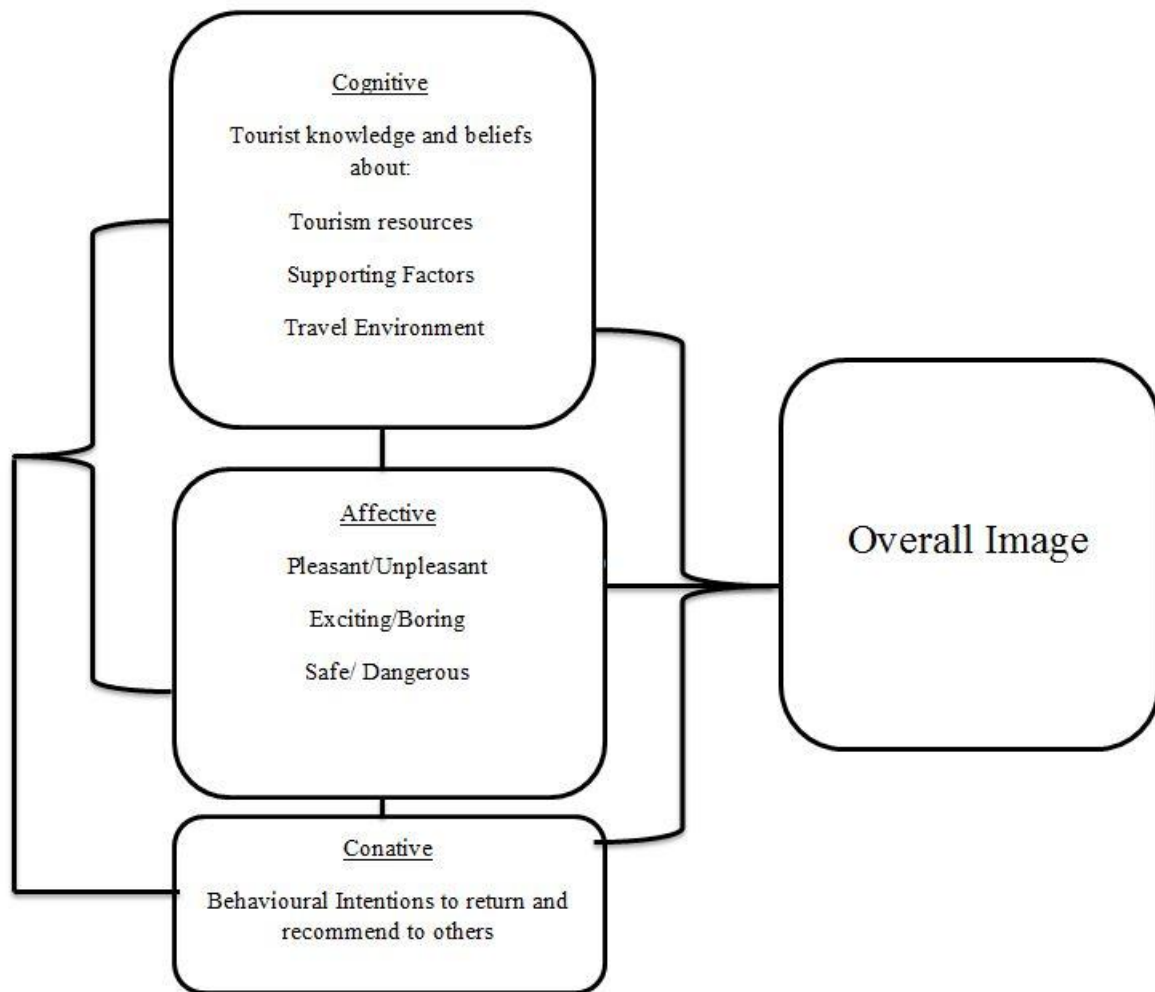
that is administered to respondents (Murphy, 2000). According to Pike's (2002; 2007) reviews, destination marketing scholars favour structured techniques in operationalising the image construct. The author notes that the most popular techniques include multivariate analysis techniques like factor analysis, analysis of means, cluster analysis, conjoint analysis, multiple regression, among others and bivariate analysis techniques like t-tests. This observation is affirmed by Gallarza et al. (2002) and more recently by Stepchenkova & Mills (2010) and Dolnicar & Grun (2012). In a study to identify a more valid means of measuring image using surveys, Dolnicar & Grun (2012) indicated that tourism researchers in academic show a preference for Likert scales while industry researchers are predisposed towards “pick any” formats. However, they recommend that both academics and practitioners adopt “forced-choice full binary” formats as they perform better with respondents. Destination image researchers’ affinity for adopting structured or quantitative methodologies is possibly because structured instruments are easy to administer and data derive from these instruments are easier to code and analyse compared to those obtained through unstructured methodologies (Jenkins, 1999; Murphy, 2000; Grosspietsch, 2006).

In spite of the advantages of structured methodologies, it is argued that these techniques are not entirely suited to capturing the holistic aspects of the image construct as well as the unique features a destination may possess (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; O’Leary & Deegan, 2003; Ryan & Cave, 2005). This is the domain of unstructured methodologies. Additionally, Jenkins (1999) notes that unstructured methods often reduce the likelihood of ignoring important dimensions of image and interviewer bias. Unstructured methodologies often allow respondents to freely describe their impressions of a destination and then data collected is subsequently sorted and categorized. The popular methodologies adopted in unstructured studies include focus group discussions, open-end questionnaires, content analysis and

reportory grid (Jenkins, 1999; Murphy, 2000; Pike, 2002; Svetlana Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). To address the shortcomings of both methodologies, Echtner & Ritchie (2003) have argued that researchers should adopt both structured and unstructured means so that the two categories of measurement will nullify each other's weaknesses and present a more comprehensive result.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The framework illustrates the study's intent to assess Ghana's image by determining the three dimensions of image (cognitive, affective, conative) that tourists form about Ghana. The cognitive component is assessed by inquiry into tourists knowledge and beliefs about three of the cognitive factors identified by Wang & Hsu (2010), namely tourist resources, supporting factors and travel environment. The affective component is assessed using attributes adapted from Beerli & Martin (2004a, b) and Mwaura et al. (2013) and finally the conative component is assessed using the tourists' intentions to return and recommend Ghana as a destination as identified by Mwaura et al. (2013). Figure 2.1 below represents this information in a diagram.

Figure 2.1: Model for Destination Image

Adapted from Beerli & Martín (2004a, b); Wang & Hsu (2010) and Mwaura et al. (2013)

CHAPTER THREE

COUNTRY CONTEXT: THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF GHANA

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the Ghanaian tourism industry. It will discuss issues such as its performance and development. Many African countries embark on tourism development in order to bolster their economies (Teye, 2000). According to this author, the industry's economic contribution is at the macro and micro economic levels. At the macro level, tourism contributes to overall government revenue while at the micro level tourism facilitates employment, income and revenue distribution and provides a more balanced regional development, which ultimately improves quality of life.

Although several attempts have been made at defining tourism, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) definition of tourism is widely accepted. According to UNWTO, tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure. Similarly, the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) defines tourism as the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment, for a period of not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. The tourism industry includes all firms, organisations and facilities, incidentally or intentionally provide facilities and services for tourists, to cater for their time of planning for their trip, to their return home (Ministry of Tourism, 2009). Thus, the tourism industry

appears to be a combination of several other industries such as the hospitality, transportation and telecommunication industries as well as other incidental industries.

3.1 Structure of the Industry

Ghana's tourism industry was largely controlled by the public sector until the early 1990s when the private sector began to take a more active role (Ministry of Tourism, 2006). In 1995, the Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF), an umbrella association for private sector tourism organizations and their affiliates was established. This institution, in addition to promoting the welfare of its member associations, is responsible for undertaking activities to help advance tourism in Ghana including the maintenance of high service standards of practitioners in the industry (GHATOF Profile, 2008). The main legislative instrument governing the tourism industry is the Tourism Act, Act 817 (2011). Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is in charge of making policies for the industry, while the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) is responsible for implementing these policies, coordinating of tourism activities, regulating and controlling the industry, marketing, researching, registering, classifying, licensing, and controlling standards.

3.2 Performance of the Tourism Sector

Tourism sector consistently makes a substantial contribution to the country's economy. According to Ahiawodzi (2013), the sub-sector is the third highest contributor to the Ghanaian economy behind mineral and cocoa export. International tourism arrivals have progressively increased over the years: from 113,784 in 1985 to 347,952 in 1998 (Ahiawodzi, 2013). By 2008, arrival figures had increased to 698,100. Arrivals continued to increase to 1,080,200 in 2011 but dropped to 903,300 in 2012. However, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research's (ISSER) 2014 report on the state of Ghana's economy,

showed that tourist arrivals and earnings both increased by 10% in 2013. According to Ministry of Tourism (2013), business travelers account for the bulk of international tourist arrivals followed by overseas Ghanaians and leisure tourists. Ghana's main internal markets are USA, Nigeria, Europe, Côte D'Ivoire, South Africa and India. The increase in arrivals has resulted in a steady rise in the number of hotels in the country, increasing from 1400 in 2007 to 2100 in 2011 (ISSER, 2014). The majority are in the 1- and 2-star categories with Greater Accra region dominating the supply of hotels, especially those in the 2- to 5 categories. Nevertheless, the quality of regional hotel supply is improving as Cape Coast, Takoradi, and Kumasi are witnessing the opening of new higher category hotels (Ministry of Tourism, 2013). Moreover, the industry is estimated to have generated 319,000 jobs in 2013. Table 3.1 presents some of these statistics.

Table 3.1: Performance of the Tourism Industry from 2007-2013

| Indicators | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Arrival (000) | 586.6 | 698.1 | 802.8 | 931.2 | 1,080.20 | 903.30 | 993.60 |
| Receipts (US\$ million) | 1,172.00 | 1,403.1 | 1,615.20 | 1,875.00 | 2,178.9 | 1,704.7 | 1,876.9 |
| Employment (000) | 206.1 | 234.7 | 260 | 291.2 | 330.5 | 287 | 319 |
| No. of Hotels (000) | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 2.1 | N.A | N.A |
| No. of Rooms (000) | 20.8 | 24.4 | 26.1 | 27.9 | 34.2 | N.A | N.A |
| No. of Beds (000) | 26.1 | 29.1 | 31.7 | 34.1 | 39.7 | N.A | N.A |

N.A denotes not available

Source: GTA as cited in ISSER, 2014

3.3 Ghana's Major Tourism Resources

According to Ministry of tourism (2006), the country's major tourism resources that draw tourists are the natural environment, cultural heritage, historical heritage and other man-made attractions.

With respect to the natural environment, the country boasts 222 species of mammals, 128 species of reptiles, 38 species of amphibians and 721 species of birdlife (Ministry of Tourism, 2006; 2013). This has made the country's 20 national parks and reserves very popular with visitors. In addition, the country has several picturesque sites, including a myriad of waterfalls, lakes, and beaches. This diverse natural resources have provided the country with the potential to create a position for itself as an ecotourism destination.

There are five major ethnic groups in Ghana; The major ethnic groups in Ghana include the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. However, taking the sub-divisions under each in consideration, there are roughly 100 recorded linguistic and cultural groups in the country (Ghanaweb, 2014). According to the Ministry of Tourism (2009), this has been a big draw for tourists, especially non-African visitors looking to experience different cultures.

Furthermore, the country's position as one of the first West African countries to achieve independence as well as the remnants and the influences of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the colonial period make Ghana an interesting destination for history enthusiasts especially African diaspora wishing to trace their roots.

In addition to the above resources, Ghana also has a plethora of man-made attractions to entice visitors, including colourful markets, conference facilities, bustling nightlife, casinos,

and art galleries. However, Braimah et al (2012) found that most of their respondents preferred the country's culture, history, natural environment to the other tourist resources.

3.4 Marketing Ghana as a destination

Blankson et al (2004) in their effort to gain a deeper understanding of Ghana's tourism positioning strategy found that tourism authorities aimed to make Ghana a niche tourist destination of choice for mainstream tourists from Europe, USA, Canada, the African diaspora and overseas resident Ghanaians. These scholars noted that the tourism authorities were not particularly interested in adventure tourism, but focused on the middle class and upper class markets. However, in a seeming bid to provide some diversity and expand the tourism sector's base, the 2013-2027 National Tourism Development Plan, makes specific provision for both adventure and nature tourism in addition to the targeted middle and upper class tourist segments. Some notable efforts made to create a favourable image include:

- The marketing campaign with the popular slogan "Ghana: the gateway to West Africa" in the late 1990's. (Akaba, 2006).
- The "Ghana: the golden experience" campaign in the mid 2000's (Akaba, 2006).
- The three- year national tourism marketing strategy implemented in 2009, the country adopted the catchphrase "Ghana: culture, warmth and much more". (Ministry of Tourism, 2009)

In 2009, the Brand Ghana Office was established to lead the concerted effort of national branding in Ghana. However, all marketing and positioning activities specific to tourism are

the domain of the GTA and the Ministry of Tourism. But, there appears to be a disconnect between these institutions which has resulted in duplication of efforts and a possible splinter in the projected image. For instance, while the Brand Ghana office has adopted the strap line “Ghana: Uniquely Welcoming” for their national branding activities, the GTA uses “Ghana: Culture, Warmth and Rhythm” in their marketing activities.

Ghana, mainly employs trade fairs and exhibitions, traditional advertising, promotional pamphlets, leaflets and brochures in its marketing and promotional activities (Ministry of Tourism, 2009). The country is also heavily reliant on work-of-mouth (Blankson et al, 2004). However, in 2008 the Ministry of Tourism and GTA set up a joint website and a YouTube channel as part of their marketing efforts. The research that was conducted to help prepare the tourism development plan covering the period of 2013-2027 observed that “Ghana lacks a creative, inspirational and commonly used tourism brand identity (Ministry of Tourism, 2013 p. 185)”. According to the plan, some of the consequences of this situation are;

- “Ghana does not have a clear and implementable tourism brand identity and guardianship
- The lack of clear tourism brand identity and guardianship has created a confused image among prospective customers. Thus, there is a danger that Ghana is dropped from the prospective customers’ shopping list.
- Brand communication is currently fragmented
- There is no clear brand custodian in tourism that has the mandate of taking care of brand management and communication (p. 185)”

The development plan’s aims to tackle these challenges over the stipulated time frame in three main ways;

1. In order to address the problems of clarity with respect to brand image and identity, GTA and related organisations and institutions will work together to apply the key brand elements consistently across all media and stakeholder channels.
2. To solidify the desired image among the various tourism audiences, brand promotion will be increasingly intensified over the stipulated period.
3. Manage and monitor collective brand application.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework of the study. It outlines the research design and strategy as well as the target population and the sampling techniques. This chapter further discusses the study's data collection and data analysis procedures including the ethical considerations employed.

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design. This approach helps acquire deeper insight into the research issue since it facilitates understanding rather than generalization. It is particularly suitable for this study because it emphasises the Ghanaian context in line with Sonmez & Sirakaya (2002) argument that since a destination's image is quite subjective, the context is essential when studying issues of image building and development.

There are three main approaches to research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The quantitative method is typically applied in studies where the researcher aims to generalise findings to the larger population under study. According to Malhotra (2007, p. 143) quantitative research "seeks to quantify data and typically applies some form of statistical analysis". Qualitative research on the other hand, "provides insights and understanding of the problem" (Malhotra, 2007, p. 143). This assertion is similar to Creswell's (2013) position that qualitative research is required in cases where the researcher aims to acquire a detailed understanding of the issue. This author further observes that qualitative studies are more suited to situations where the researcher wishes to understand the contextual nuances of the

problem. Mixed methods research involves collecting both qualitative and quantitative data in response to the research questions.

4.2 Research Strategy

The aim of this study is to examine the construct of destination image which has been a popular area of tourism marketing research for the last 30 years. The study does so within the Ghanaian context which suffers a seeming dearth of literature in this area. Thus, this research adopted a case study approach in line with Morris & Wood's (1991) observation that this strategy is especially suitable if one wishes to acquire contextual understanding. Furthermore, the study adopted a descriptive approach in presenting findings.

Saunders et al. (2009) discuss seven research strategies, namely: action research; case study; archival research; ethnography; experiment; grounded theory; and survey. They describe action research as involving a close collaboration between researchers and practitioners; case study involves the study of a phenomenon in its real context; archival research involves the analysis of administrative records. They further describe ethnography as research to explain social world first hand; experiment as research where a sample can be controlled; grounded theory as research by observation and survey as research that involves the structured collection of data from a population. Creswell (2013), on the other hand, identifies five main qualitative strategies. These strategies are narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. Narrative research often focuses on the collection and reporting of one or more individuals stories and experiences while phenomenology provides a description of the common meaning that several individuals ascribe to a shared experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It is necessary that these strategies are not

considered entirely independent of each other since it is common for researchers to combine one or more of them in addressing their objectives (Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al. (2009) advise that the study's objectives should be the primary criteria in strategy selection. The researcher should choose the strategy that will allow the effective achievement of objectives and provision of answers for the research questions.

Robson (2002, p. 178) defines case study research as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. The type of case study being undertaken may be distinguished by the size of the system under observation or by the intent of the case analysis (Creswell, 2013). Regarding the size of the system, case studies may be divided into studies that involve one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire programme, or an activity. On the other hand, the types of case study in terms of intent include: single instrument case study, collective or multiple case study, and intrinsic case study (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) further describes a single instrumental study as a case study that observes an issue within a single selected system while a multiple case study will include two or more observations of the same issue. With an intrinsic study, the entity or case under observation is the prime interest of study. This type of case study is conducted to learn more about the uniqueness of the case.

Each strategy can be used for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (Yin, 2003). Robson (2002) describes an exploratory study as a means of discovering what is happening or assessing a phenomenon in a new light while Neuman (2007) indicates that an exploratory study may be the first step in a series of research studies and its main objective is to refine or formulate questions related to the phenomenon in question to be addressed by further study. Descriptive research “presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or

relationship” (Neuman, 2007, p. 16). Saunders et al. (2009) caution that it is important for researchers to draw conclusions from the data they are describing in order to contribute more to knowledge creation. Neuman (2007) observes that in practice descriptive research and exploratory research are blurred and difficult to distinguish. However, the authors explain that unlike exploratory research, descriptive research starts with an adequately-defined concept and presents an accurate description of it. Explanatory research as its name implies aims to explain the relationship between variables.

4.3 Time Dimension

This study falls within the cross-sectional time dimension, thus it observes the concept of destination image at a specific point in time. With respect to time, Neuman (2007) and Saunders et al. (2009) identify two categories of research: cross-sectional research and longitudinal research. Cross-sectional studies are the most common studies. According to Saunders et al. (2009) this is because most academic research endeavours are time-bound. These studies often examine a concept or phenomenon at a single point in time. Robson (2002) observes that this type of study often adopts the survey strategy. However, Saunders et al. (2009) add that cross-sectional studies may adopt qualitative strategies too. These authors further note that a cross-sectional study could be used to describe the prevalence of a phenomenon or determine the relationship between two or more concepts or variables. Furthermore, Neuman (2007) observes that while a cross-sectional study could be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory, it is often more closely associated with descriptive studies. Conversely, longitudinal studies observe concepts or phenomena at more than one point in time. Neuman (2007, p. 17) maintains that a longitudinal study “is usually more complex and costly than cross-sectional research, but it is also more powerful and

informative”. This may be because it allows researchers to study the change and development of a concept (Saunders et al., 2009). There are three types of longitudinal studies, namely; time series, panel and cohort studies (Neuman, 2007). With time series studies the researcher collects the same time of data over the course of two or more time periods. On the hand, researchers conducting panel or cohort research focus on a specific group of people or category. While a panel study observes the same individual, group of people, organisation or entity over a period of time, a cohort study observes a category of people who have shared some similar experience (Neuman, 2007).

4.4 Study Population

This study focused on international tourism because this sector of Ghana’s tourism industry contributes the bulk of the country’s tourism earnings. Additionally, that section of the country’s tourism industry is relatively more developed and more organised than the domestic tourism sector. The respondents were sampled from international students studying at the University of Ghana. This population was selected because students spend a relatively long time in the country compared to the average tourist and are therefore, likely to experience more of the country. Additionally, this population was selected because they are more easily accessible to the researcher.

4.5 Data Sources

Of the two sources of data available to researchers, this study used primary data sources. Primary sources provide data that have been collected to address the specific issue under

consideration while secondary sources provide data that have been collected for purposes other than the issue under consideration (Malhotra, 2007). Secondary data are often easier and cheaper to access than primary data. However, researchers may encounter problems of reliability, availability, currency or relevance, comparability, categorisation and conceptualisation as a result of the time the data were collected, the methods they were collected with and the ways in which they were categorised.

4.6 Data Collection Method

This study made use of semi-structured individual interviews and an semi-structured focus-group discussions. Interviews and focus-group discussions were guided by an interview guide (see Appendix), which was designed using the conceptual framework and other relevant literature. Three (3) pilot interviews were conducted to refine the interview guide. Furthermore, with the aid of fellow graduate students and the principal supervisor of this study, questions were reviewed with respect to grammatical errors, syntax, spelling, and comprehensibility. This was intended to ensure that the questions were easily understood. Overall, the interview guide contained twenty-five (25) questions. The breakdown of these questions was as follows:

- Two (2) questions covered demographic details and duration of the visit.
- Three (3) questions covered issues of information about Ghana and the sources of information.
- Nine (9) questions covered issues of tourist resources, supporting factors and travel environment which together constituted the cognitive component.

- Three (3) questions covered issues of pleasantness, excitement and safety, which constituted the affective component
- Five (5) questions covered overall image and comparison of Ghana to other African countries
- Two (2) questions covered intentions to return and recommend to others which constituted the conative dimension of image.
- One (1) question covered additional thoughts and comments.

Methods used to collect qualitative data have been grouped into direct approaches or indirect approaches by Malhotra (2007). The author considers focus group discussion and in-depth interview as direct approaches because they are overt while he refers to projective techniques as indirect because these approaches are disguised. Creswell (2013), however, categorises qualitative data collection approaches into four (4): observations; interviews; documents and audiovisual materials, although he notes that some forms of data collection methods are not easily categorized. Observation requires the researcher to study subjects or members of the target population within their everyday environment and make notes about the phenomenon being studied. According to Yin (2011), this involves studying people's gestures, social interactions, actions, and the physical environment.

Interviews involve collecting an individual's account of a behaviour or an action or recollection of an event. Researchers can also collect qualitative data by assessing the content of pertinent documents and audiovisual materials. Saunders et al. (2009) observes that the most common classification of interviews is on the basis of formality and structure. Thus, interviews may be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Structured interviews use questionnaires based on a predetermined set of questions. They are used in situations where

the research aims to collect quantifiable data and are also referred to as quantitative research interviews (King, 2004). King (2004) further identifies semi-structured and unstructured interviews as qualitative research interviews. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, are completely informal. There are no predetermined questions or themes to guide the interview. In his interview category of qualitative data collection approaches. With semi-structured interviews, which are adopted for this study, the researcher uses a list of themes or questions to be discussed, however this may vary from interview to interview. Hence, the researcher may vary the order of questions or may omit certain questions depending on the conversational flow or other situational factors (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.7 Sampling Technique

Saunders et al. (2009) note that it is better to use a sample of the population under inquiry when:

- Access to all members of the population is impossible or unfeasible;
- There are budget and time constraints; and
- There is the need for quick results.

Since researchers are often faced with one or more of these circumstances, sampling is an essential part of research. It refers to the selection of a representative number of the target population. The results are subsequently generalised to the population, thus it is essential that the sample selected is representative.

For this study, an introductory letter, which detailed the identity of the researcher and the purpose for the study, was presented to the International Programmes Office (IPO) of the

University of Ghana. This was done in order for the researcher to acquire a sample frame of current international students at the university. However, the staff member in charge indicated that it would be a breach of policy to release such information. Nonetheless, the office gave the researcher permission to approach students and inquiry if they were willing to participate in the study. Because the researcher was unable to obtain a sampling frame, the study adopted a non-probability sampling approach specifically convenience sampling.

4.8 Sample Size and Data Collection

The sample size of thirty (30) was informed by the works of Lubbe (1998)-29 and Grosspietsch (2006)-42 and discussions with the supervisor. Approximately, forty (40) students were approached about joining focus group discussions in keeping with Rabiee's (2004) recommendation to over-recruit by 10-25% to cater for the problem of respondent non-attendance. Out of that number, twenty-five (25) attended the scheduled focus group discussions and three (3) indicated that they would prefer to have individual interviews. Therefore, data were collected from twenty-eight (28) out of the targeted thirty (30) respondents. Respondents comprised of international students from the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Nigeria and Gabon. It must be noted that the countries of origin were not specifically targeted. Overall, data were collected from seven (7) focus group discussions and three (3) individual interviews. Discussions and interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Interviews and discussions were conducted in an informal manner to allow for flexibility and respondents to feel comfortable enough to provide reliable information. The researcher also made notes during discussions

and interviews in order to keep track of data and this helped the researcher to note the themes and patterns that emerged during the process.

4.9 Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis has been critiqued as being primarily intuitive, soft and relativistic compared to quantitative data analysis. However, Creswell (2013) argues that the qualitative analysis process does fit a common outline. But the author explains that instead of moving in a linear fashion as is common with quantitative data analysis, qualitative data analysis takes the form of a spiral. While, a number of methods have been proposed for analysing qualitative data, the analysis in this paper predominantly followed Krueger's (1994) and Ritchie & Spencer's (1994) framework analysis. This method was adopted because it allows themes to be derived from both the research questions and participant narratives and is also recommended for novice qualitative researchers (Rabiee, 2004).

Data analysis principally followed the five stages of the framework analysis. At the first stage which is called the familiarisation stage, the researcher, attempted to get a sense of each discussion and interview before the detailed analysis by listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts and interview notes multiple times.

This was followed by the thematic framework stage which was the second stage. At this stage, the researcher identified and categorised emerging themes with respect to the research questions and objectives. This was followed by the indexing and mapping stage (the third stage) at which, the researcher sifted the data. The researcher sorted out quotes and compared patterns between and within groups and individuals. This stage was guide by Yin's (1981)

recommendations for within-case and cross-case analysis. According to Eisenhardt (1989), Yin's methods aid researchers to manage the volume of data they are working with.

The fourth stage involved charting quotes and arranging them under the appropriate themes. The final stage was the interpretation of the data at which knowledge was drawn from the themes developed from the data. The researcher interpreted data using Kreuger's (1994) recommended criteria: words; context; internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments; specificity of comments; intensity of comments; big ideas.

4.10 Ethical considerations

This research was complied with principles which were aimed at protecting the privacy of every individual who participated in interviews and discussions. Before an individual became a subject of research, he or she was notified of, the aims, methods, anticipated benefits and potential exposures of the research. Issues of confidentiality were also strictly adhered to. No person became a subject of research under duress and all who participated, freely gave their consent to be recorded and their comments subsequently transcribed.

4.11 Limitations of the Study

The results of the study are subject to the following limitations.

- The small sample size. This limits the application of the results in terms of generalization to the larger population.

- The mostly homogenous sample. Since the research focused on university students, there was little variation within the sample with respect to economic status, employment and age. Thus, the study was largely unable to substantiate if and how these factors influenced image.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussions of data collected for the study. The responses acquired from the interviews and focus group discussions with the twenty-eight (28) foreign students are presented with respect to the research purpose and objectives.

5.1 Analysis of Data

5.1.1 Demographic Information

The demographic information presented in this study includes age, nationality and gender. With respect to age, the population was quite youthful. Respondents ranged from 19-27 years. Approximately 18% of respondents were 19 years old, 39% were 20 years old, 7% were 21 years old, 14% were 23 years old, 7% were 24 years old, 3% were 25 years old, 7% were 26 years old and 4% were 27 years. Of this, 54% (15) were British, 21% (6) were Nigerian, 14% (4) were American and 11% (3) were Gabonese. Thus, the majority of visitors interviewed were from western countries. This is because African students approached were largely reluctant to be interviewed and others failed to attend the scheduled focus group discussions. The sample was almost evenly divided with regards to gender, males constituted 54% (15) of the sample and the remaining 46% (13) were female. At the time the interviews and discussions were conducted, 15 visitors (54%) had been in the country for less than a semester, 3 students (11%) for nearly a semester, 2 students (3%) almost one academic year

and 8 students (28%) for more than one academic year. This information is presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below. Overall, the African respondents had been in the country longer than those from the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) as none of them had been in the country for less than one academic year while none of the Westerners had been in Ghana for longer than an academic year.

Table 5.1: Demographic Information

| Age | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 19 | 5 | 17% |
| 20 | 11 | 39% |
| 21 | 2 | 7% |
| 23 | 4 | 14% |
| 24 | 2 | 7% |
| 25 | 1 | 4% |
| 26 | 2 | 7% |
| 27 | 1 | 4% |
| Total | 28 | 100% |
| Nationality | | |
| British | 15 | 54% |
| Nigerian | 6 | 21% |
| American | 4 | 14% |
| Gabonese | 3 | 11% |
| Total | 28 | 100% |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 15 | 54% |
| Female | 13 | 46% |
| Total | 28 | 100% |

Table 5.2: Duration of Visit

| Duration | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Less than a semester | 15 | 54% |
| A semester | 3 | 11% |
| One academic year | 2 | 7% |
| More than one academic year | 8 | 28% |
| Total | 28 | 100% |

5.1.2 Cognitive Impressions of Ghana

The cognitive dimension of Ghana's image was assessed by soliciting respondents' views on tourism resources; supporting factors such as access to tourist information, the transportation system, internet and telecommunication services; and the travel environment which included discussions on the culture, people and sanitation. However, before discussing their impressions of Ghana's tourist resources, respondents were asked about their pre-visit knowledge of the country and the sources of this information. Quotes are presented using the following coding system

R – Respondent

FG – Focus Group

I – Interview

Number (1, 2, 3, 4) – ordinal position used to identify respondents

Thus, **R1 of FG1** would represent the first respondent of the first focus group discussion.

On the issue of pre-visit knowledge, the overall population reported knowledge that mainly comprised of general information about the country. The responses below were offered by some of the respondents when questioned about their prior knowledge of the country:

“I did a lot research on the internet just to see. I mean obviously to understand the heat and stuff, what to wear, what to eat -like your food. That sort of thing. General sort of stuff just to get an idea of what it was going to be like when I got here” – **R1 of FG3**

“I knew it was more of a developed African country within Sub-Saharan Africa...I knew it was more progressive in terms of health care compared with other African countries” – R2 of FG5

“I heard that Ghana is [a] country of the former United Nations, president, Kofi Annan, I know that it’s the first country in Africa which [have] independence.” – R1 of FG7

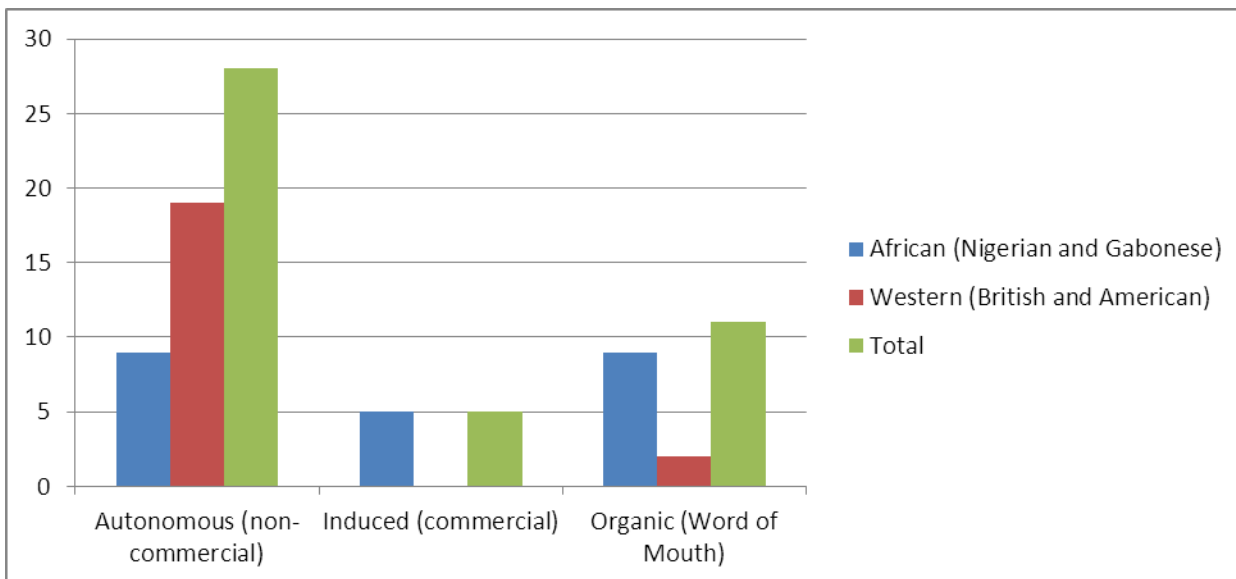
“Ghana for me it was... it was a country of democracy. My first opinion of Ghana was when Barack Obama came here in 2010, I guess. It was a great example for Africa.” – R2 of FG7

While, all respondents reported the use of non-commercial internet sources like Wikipedia, TripAdvisor, YouTube and other Google searches to some extent, the African respondents conveyed that their information was largely from friends and family. On the other hand, Western respondents reported that they acquired a majority of their information from autonomous sources, including their university officials and faculty and non-commercial internet sources. Only two (2) (R2 of FG1 and R1 of FG4) of them reported having received information about Ghana through word-of-mouth. Additionally, three (3) respondents (R1 of FG4, R1 of FG1 and R of I3) indicated that they had first learned about Ghana through the sports and one respondent (R of I3) reported that he had formed some impressions about Ghana from Ghanaian movies he had seen. Overall, respondents, showed a preference for autonomous and organic sources. The researcher posits that western visitors did not report a substantial use of word-of-mouth information because majority of them were not acquainted with persons who had visited or had experience with Ghana.

Only five respondents reported the use of induced (commercial) sources of information: one respondent (R of I2) reported using the official GTA website and four others reported

working with travel intermediaries (all respondents of FG6). Figure 5.1 presents the distribution of information sources respondents used before their visit.

Figure 5.1: Sources of Pre-visit information



Pertaining to Ghana's tourism resources, visitors showed a preference for Ghana's cultural and historical heritage as well as the country's natural attractions. For instance, one visitor gave the subsequent response when questioned about the country's attractions:

"My favourite one has been Cape Coast Castle because that's where you can feel the eerie atmosphere of what the slaves faced and also Nzulenzu, the canopy walk at Kakum, Boti falls, they're all beautiful places and I'm glad I chose Ghana because it's a very cool place." – **R1 of FG1**

Two other visitors had made the following observations about the Independence Square:

"We went to the independence square. We all split up into different group so, we were doing different stuff. I thought it was amazing actually" – **R3 of FG2**

“I went to the Black Star Square and got told by some university students about the history and the significance of the square and all of that. I don’t know if it’s touristy, but a lot of the time, you go away to understand a country’s history and culture so I think that was really interesting to find out. The Square is really impressive...” – R3 of FG3

However, it appeared not all the African visitors were particularly interested in the tourist attractions. Out of the nine (9) Africans, four (4) visitors (constituting 44% of African respondents and 14% of the total sample) stated that they had not visited any tourist attractions and were not particularly interested in doing so. Thus, they were unable to offer tangible impressions on this issue. Incidentally, all four respondents were female. However, since this pattern was only evident with the African respondents, there is not sufficient evidence to support the researcher’s supposition that gender likely influences a visitor’s willingness to interact with a destination. Another African respondent indicated that while he had visited some attractions, this was not his preferred pastime. He made the following submission when asked about Ghana’s tourist attractions:

“Myself, I am not the outgoing type and most of the times I would like to be in my room, but when I visited at the slave market at CC (Cape Coast), it was quite okay.” – R of I3

Of the remaining three (3) Africans, one stated that he had visited a number of attractions, but particularly enjoyed his trips to the Cape Coast Castle, Aburi and Kakum National Park. Below is an extract from his interview:

“R: I’ve been to the Cape Coast castle, Kakum National park, the Akosombo dam and I’ve been to Aburi. They were great--. Especially, the curators. They really had knowledge about what they were saying so it was quite knowledgeable.

I (Interviewer): The curators at the castles?

R: Yeah, the castles

I: How about Aburi? Did you enjoy the scenery?

R: Yeah, I did and at Kakum National park too. It's cool.” – **Excerpt from I2**

The remaining three (3) African (Gabonese) respondents indicated that they preferred visiting the various beaches as they reminded them of home. One indicated that:

“I have been to Tawala beach, Labadi beach, Kokrobite, Aburi. Ah, well it was fun, it was nice. It was cool. You know, where we are from, you can see the ocean almost every single day. So whenever, I go to the ocean I'm always happy.” – **R2 of FG7**

On the issue of supporting services, respondents were questioned on their impressions of Ghana's transportation system and internet and telecommunication services as well as their expenses and access to tourist information. About Ghana's transportation system, respondents, there was a significant difference in the opinions of visitors from the West and those from Africa. Visitors from the West expressed more concern for road safety and observed that there were limited means of public transport. The following is an excerpt from a discussion addressing this issue:

“R1: It's scary. A little bit. [Like the driving]. I'm not driving here, but it seems like it's a system that works here. Well from what we've seen. We've never really seen like--. Someone told us how you could be absolutely clogged up because everyone drives at once and you're stuck there for hours. We haven't experienced that

R2: [interjects] I saw something like that yesterday but that was because the traffic lights had stopped working along the main road down there [points]

R3: *I think [there's lanes] on the road, but nobody stays in their lane [all laugh]. Then why is there a lane on the road.*” – **Excerpt from FG4**

On the other hand, the African visitors expressed more concern about the prices of taxis and traffic. One Gabonese respondent stated that:

“For me, taking the bus, “tro-tro” (local name for commercial minibuses), and take long at the traffic side is very difficult for me because before I didn't do that. It's a new experience for me. And to take a taxi dropping, is very, very expensive because we are using loading car in our country and is not expensive there, you can pay, if for example if you are going to Circle, the driver can charge you right now 20 cedis . But 20 cedis in our country you can rent a car for the whole day. So it's difficult for us, sometime to, that's why” – **R3 of FG7**

He also indicated his preference for tro-tros and his dissatisfaction with the behaviour of some taxi drivers. He opines that:

“For me, tro-tro is kind of cool because people in the tro-tro are honest. Like, even if they don't know you and they think that the mate wants to take advantage of you they will complain for you and in order for you not to lose your money. But when you try to take taxi, me I like taxis but sometimes I get into arguments with them, most of the time cause as soon as they look at your face they know that you are a foreigner .first of all, he'll come and ask you, you'll come and mention the name of the place that you want to go, the guy will claim that he doesn't understand English, he'll start speaking Twi to you. So if you can't reply that means that you are a foreigner.as soon as, he already has a price in his head for you, so he'll make sure that when you agree on this price, he'll take [long road] to get to where you want to go, meanwhile there's a shorter way . It's annoying, it's really annoying” – **R3 of FG7**

Four (4) of the Nigerian respondents, (who constitute 14% of the entire sample and 44% of African visitors), expressed similar dissatisfaction with the attitude of public transport operators. Two of them expressed the following sentiments with respect to the issue:

“R3: Yes, something I really have to chip in, when cars were created, they were created with air conditioners and they are meant to be used. It is only in Ghana that when you enter a car, the taxi man would want to charge extra to enjoy air-condition. It’s crazy. What is he doing? It’s not done anywhere. Really it’s not done anywhere.”

“R1: They are also not hospitable, at all. I am paying the money for Christ sake and I think I am doing you the favour. I decided to pick your car and you are like yes, I have the taxi and I can do whatever I like, I think it’s wrong. Because I believe that if I get into your car, you should treat the person nicely. You should be hospitable because you are giving out a service don’t make it look like you paid me to go into the car.” – Excerpt from FG6

However, the remaining two Nigerian respondents indicated that the transportation system in Accra was similar to what they experienced at home and thus, they did not have much difficulty adjusting. One of them made the following submission:

“To me, it’s easier because I’m from West Africa. It’s quite easy for me. Where I come from, Lagos, transportation is not that perfect, but I find my way around.” – R of I2

Regarding, Ghana’s telecommunication and internet services, visitors generally agreed that while these services were not particularly reliable or fast. However, some respondents noted that these services were still better than expected; others were rather unimpressed as conveyed in the excerpts below. These sentiments were largely prevalent among the western respondents.

“R2: The internet is a lot slower than it is at home, but hasn’t been so bad

R3: [interjects] it’s more than I imagined it would be

Others (R1, R2, and R4): Yeah

R1: I didn’t think that we’d get any signal or Wi-Fi so it’s more than expected

R3: Probably works better since we turned off the mobile data so we only work off Wi-Fi” –

Excerpt from FG4

“R3: We’re on the Wi-Fi here and that’s ... [long pause]

I: Does it work? Is it reliable?

R3: Not as reliable as back home

R4: Not in the sense of reliable

R2: Not what we’re used to. The speed’s ...

R3: The speed’s okay

R2: [interjects] No

R3: I don’t think it’s too bad. I’ve had worse

R2: I think it depends on the device you’re using. It’s quite personal to what you’re using

R4: Or like how much you want or how much you would like

R1: I don’t think it compares to what we’re used to a home” – Excerpt from FG5

Though visitors from Nigeria allowed that the services in question were not entirely reliable, they stated that the services were comparatively better than what they were used to as indicated by the following submissions:

“I wouldn’t say it’s (telecommunications and internet services) 100% reliable, it’s quite manageable” – R of I2

“R2: I would say it’s moderate. It’s better compared to ours”

“R1: It’s better. For example, when you load a 2 cedi credit, it will take you for a while”

Markedly, the Gabonese respondents (11% of the total sample and 33% of the African visitors) seemed impressed with these services with one professing the following:

“I would rate it (internet and telecommunications) 9 over 10, 9 over 10. It’s very nice, here in Ghana is like, it’s really [respected] as compared to us that we just reached the 3G recently. Here in Ghana, we’ve been enjoying the 3G in Ghana, now we are even using the 4G Surfline. It’s very fine...” – R3 of FG

British and American visitors (approximately 68% of the total sample) largely indicated that compared to the prices they usually pay at home, prices in Ghana are much cheaper, when they were asked about the expenses. Two of the American students indicated that they chose to visit Ghana partly because it was the cheapest option available. They stated that:

“I learned about Ghana because it was the cheapest country. That’s why I came here. I also came here for a completely different experience that you’d get from say Europe or Latin America which, I’m familiar with, so that’s why I came here.” – R1 of FG1

“I also learned about it through the study abroad programme. It was the cheapest option but also I wanted to go to a place that was very different than I’m used to.” – R3 of FG

The researcher postulates that this is likely because, western currencies have higher purchasing power thus; by comparison, Ghana appears quite inexpensive.

The African visitors, on the other hand, rated that the cost of living in Ghana as either moderate or expensive compared to the home countries. The following exchange occurred during a focus group discussion.

“R3: Ok, I’ll say in some areas its moderate. I won’t say it’s too good and I say it’s too bad. Actually, it’s moderate

R1: She is saying that (referring to R1) because she is based in Abuja and that place, their cost of living is about just the same as Accra so the cost of living is very high, but for me I’m based in the eastern part of Nigeria and the cost of living there is affordable. House rent and everything is quite cheaper. So compared to Accra, here, it’s expensive” – Excerpt from

FG6

Furthermore, another respondent indicated that the current energy crisis was contributing to increases in his expenses.

‘Sometimes they take the light for like a day and the stuff in our fridge has to spoil which adds to the cost’ – R of I2

On the issue of sanitation, all respondents generally agreed that Ghana was not very clean though some noted that certain areas including the University of Ghana campus were rather clean. Some comments made in regards to this issue are presented below:

“R3: This area is really clean, but when you go more into the centre...

R4: [interjects] You do see rubbish on the streets

R3: Yeah

R2: Especially around market stalls” – **Excerpt from FG5**

“R3: Like here is kept very clean but outside; not so much

R2: The drains, gutters, and things aren’t great. And I’ve seen a lot of littering. In that sort of way it’s not fantastic.” – **Excerpt from FG4**

“It’s difficult to look past the empty sachets and just seeing people toss their trash. It’s second nature you know, I guess because the information isn’t as prevalent here about keeping Ghana clean so that’s disturbing” – R from I3

Inquiry into respondents’ views on the Ghanaian culture revealed that visitors typically enjoyed the culture as demonstrated by the subsequent exchange:

“R3: I’ve enjoyed the culture. I really like the market actually. In comparison to England, there’s a real community feel here. Everyone speaks to everyone. If you’re walking down the street, they say hi whereas I don’t even know my neighbours at home.

R1: [interjects] it’s a lot friendlier [R3 nods agreement]

R3 [continues] it’s so much friendlier. It’s a completely different culture

R2: [adds] of course. It’s incredible. We were just walking and these two guys just came up to us and started a conversation about football. For like 20 minutes. It’s incredible

R1: [adds] Well, footballs universal though

R2: I know, but it's amazing. They just came to us so easily. They don't do that in the UK.

R4: I like how important family is. I was talking to the director of one of the programmes today and she was explaining the family roles. It's amazing how close-knit everyone is and you always go back for celebrations and like you have a family home that everyone. Like everyone moves out but they always go back. Yeah, I think that's amazing. We don't have that at home. Like family is important, but not in the same way [others nod].

R3: [adds] not on the same level" – Excerpt from FG2

Furthermore, the respondents communicated their satisfaction with the available cuisine. Some responses to that effect are presented below:

"Oh yeah, I love the food. I think I like it more. I've tried all the popular ones" – R3 of FG1

"R2: Food's really good

R1: Yeah, I love it

R2: I had tilapia and ...banku. I had that today and it's really tasty. It's such simple ingredients but it's got so much flavour. To you plain rice to us is kind of heavily flavoured. One of your virtues was like "Oh I would have this but I don't know if you could because it's very spicy" whatever --. It's just really tasty." – Excerpt from FG3

However, one student remarked that there wasn't much variety of Ghanaian dishes. He noted that:

"I also feel like there's not much of a variety of foods here. It's kind of repetitive" – R2 of FG1

Some of the female Nigerians, who were largely unimpressed with the Ghanaian culture and cuisine, shared similar sentiments. Two of them noted that:

“Ghanaians when it comes to food, it’s all the same thing, unlike when you go to Nigeria, when you go to Nigeria the different states cook different dishes and it’s their way of life” –

R1 of FG6

“For the culture I will say there is nothing spectacular about it because I can compare it to Nigeria and when you talk about culture in Nigeria there are a lot of things that will attract you but in Ghana let me use their dishes, for example I’ve not seen anything special apart from their banku and kenkey... there is nothing so spectacular about it” – R3 of FG6

One respondent admitted that while he and his friends enjoyed some Ghanaian meals, they were uncomfortable with some dishes that were not familiar to them. He stated that:

“The food, oh, there some which are interesting and others we don’t like because we don’t eat it in our country. Myself, I like kontomire with yam. [But the banku], I’ve tried but it’s not easy for me to eat it... I don’t know why, I’m afraid of waakye” – R3 of FG7

The researcher theorises that because African cultures are more similar than western values, the Ghanaian culture is not overly impressive to fellow Africans. Thus, the difference in the perceptions of the Western and African visitors with respect to culture.

Relating to the people, Ghanaians were described as generally friendly and polite; however, one American respondent noted that while the people were generally friendly, some had ulterior motives for their actions. He observes that:

“I was told it was going to be friendly and it’s true, but I see that there are a lot of people that are like--. Some girls are friendly to me for no reason and then they want me to marry them or

something stupid like that and then some guys are friends with me because they think I have money but there are a lot of genuinely friendly people too. It's just taken me time to try to decipher the two. So I can imagine how some Americans can come here and spend like only two weeks, they might go back to the US and be like "Oh, everyone's friendly, but they might not be able to tell that some of them are friendly for unfriendly reasons" – R3 of FG1

Another respondent indicated that while his interactions with the locals have been generally pleasant and friendly, the attitude of service providers in Ghana was lacking. He stated that:

"...The only thing I was surprised about was the customer service aspect like when you go to order food or something; they're like [pauses]. They might not look at you, they might not be enthusiastic or they'll just mumble and stuff and you're like "are they upset?" That's what I was surprised about because everyone else in most settings is friendly." – R1 of FG1

Notably, there was a marked difference between reported male and female experiences concerning African visitors. While the male students reported largely positive experiences, their female counterparts intimated that their experiences with Ghanaians had not been entirely pleasant. Two of them made the following observations:

"R2: For Ghanaians, we are like rivals; which is wrong. We are all blacks and when you get out of Ghana, you'll not know the difference between a Ghanaian and a Nigerian and probably a Francophone. It's like they don't like us and they are like we are bad and we are proud.

"R4: When it comes to your rights, you realize that Ghanaians, they have this way of intimidating foreigners. Even when they are not right, they know they are not right. I've heard a lot of Nigerians staying under Ghanaians probably because the landlord or lady is a

Ghanaian and they try threatening them because they want you to do something for their own purposes.” – Excerpt from FG6

When questioned further, they indicated that they had encountered some friendly Ghanaians. They offered the following:

“Yes. When you meet the good people, you’ll enjoy them. They respect” – R1 of FG6

“Some of the men, the educated ones are fun to be with. Their mentality is okay. When you study with them they also encourage you to move forward in life” – R2 of FG6

All respondents intimated that they largely depended on the locals for tourist information. The question of access to tourist information resulted in the following exchange in one of the discussion groups:

“I: Do you have sufficient access to tourist information?”

R2: Not really. No

R3: I’d say no

R1: I would look it up online if there was internet access but that’s—

R4: [interjects] Very limited

R1: Yeah, it’s on and off. Very limited

R2: [adds] so, we’re really going by what we hear

R3: [adds] yeah, by what people are telling us” – Excerpt from FG2

Another group disclosed that while they had not really sought out information, the few times they had tried to find information online had not been successful.

“R2: I don’t think we’ve really sought out information

R3: No, because our trip’s been really planned that we haven’t needed to look for information

R2 [adds]: We [maybe] looked at beaches and stuff, but to be honest we didn’t really find much. Like what was the best beach to go to? So we wanted to find a beach that was a bit more quiet, but we couldn’t find much.” – Excerpt of FG5

Two other respondents recounted the following in response to the question:

“It was quite easy because I am the type that asks for directions to places when I am lost. So for example, a family friend called me to come around and the directions he gave me was somehow difficult for me to locate. Even the bus stop was also difficult to locate. Because I was the type that always asks questions I just asked a friend of mine who was going towards that direction also. So he showed me the bus stop.” – R of I3

“Most of the time like 2, 3 places I had to browse and I wasn’t finding anything. So mostly I had to ask people” – R3 of FG6

5.1.3 Affective Impressions of Ghana

The affective component of Ghana’s destination image was assessed with respect to respondents’ feelings of excitement/boredom, safety/danger and pleasantness/unpleasantness. The respondents generally agreed that their visit had been pleasant, but were more divided in terms of excitement. Western respondents mostly conveyed feelings of excitement. From their responses, it appears that these feelings are mainly the result of their experience of Ghanaian culture and way of life, which many of them admitted, is markedly different from what they

are used to. The following excerpt from one of the focus group discussions on excitement is a testament to this.

“R3: Yeah, every day. Yeah, it’s very exciting

R2: When we went to the market, it was demanding and it was quite exciting to be there

R4: They had like music blaring all over the place

R3: You do get a quite a bit of a buzz

R4: Yeah, it’s a good vibe” – Excerpt from FG2

Two other western respondents gave the following responses concerning excitement

“I think the most exciting thing is trying all the food. As I said it’s just so simple but so tasty. And it’s like we are trying to do all this fancy stuff with food like freezing and stuff like that, but essentially it’s just rice and chicken but it’s[really really really] tasty. I’ve also found that meeting people is very exciting. People in the same situation as us. At university. Just, things are so different, but you can talk to them and you still have things in common even though everyone’s so different. And I found that it’s really, really good. And anyone would talk to you so it wouldn’t be a problem. Even if you came on a normal holiday, you could talk to anyone.” – R1 of FG3

“Every day is an adventure , I’ve been able, just personally, I’ve been able to achieve so much growth my mental emotional spiritual by being here .it’s something about I don’t know whether its Africa or Ghana particularly that just, it allows you to embrace yourself , like embrace yourself cause everything is real...” – R of I1

Although, it is may not be definitive, the researcher posits that the excitement derived from the interaction with the locals and the Ghanaian way of life is because of the youthfulness of respondents. The researcher surmises that as younger people tend to be more adventurous, the prospect of being immersed in a completely different culture elicits feelings of excitement rather than anxiety.

On the other hand, respondents from African countries generally found their stay pleasant but not necessarily exciting. About the issue of excitement, Africans tended to focus on the available recreational activities. One of the students indicated that there was little variety in the country's attractions.

"I wouldn't say it's boring, but [pauses] I think it's still developing. It's not really exciting. I think most of the stuff here you guys have are more about your history and stuff" – **R of I2**

He added that:

"I think you can improve tourism by setting up more activities for people to do, more parks, more family friendly activities. I think it would attract more people. A wider range of activities for more people." – **R of I2**

On the other hand, some visitors found living in Ghana to be rather rousing. A Gabonese student shared this experience with when the question was posed;

"100%, enjoyment. Cause let's say, like two days ago at Limann (residential hall on the University of Ghana campus), there was blackout, people were bored since 6 p.m. around 9 pm, they just decided to start dancing and making noise in the hall and everybody was just clapping ... and I'm like who does that [laughs excited] you're supposed to be all upset that

you can't read but everybody was just enjoying it and like that's fine. When we watched the African cup of nations here too, we had a lot of fun on campus." – **R3 of FG7**

Furthermore, respondents generally felt safe, though some of them recognized that there is an element of danger in the Ghana. A number of them specified that they felt safe mostly within the environs of the University of Ghana and a few stated they that they make an effort to avoid situations of danger and risk such as going out in groups and walking in areas with sufficient lighting as intimated by the following exchanges from three of the discussion groups:

"R3: Yeah, I feel safe, but I live in a very safe part of the US though, so this place is not as safe as where I live, but these guys [points to R1 and R2] live in California it's probably less safe--. I don't know [laughs]. I live in a place where you don't have to lock your house [pauses and shrugs] theft does happen, but it's not something that you have to really think about

R1: Yeah, I feel safe here. I don't have any complaints. No one's stolen from me yet [all laugh]

R3: I was told to be careful at nighttime, especially in dark places, so I've been abiding by that, when I walk across campus at nighttime. I try to take an avenue where I already see and if I'm in a dark place by myself, I just try to walk in the middle of the street and just try to be aware of my surroundings" – **Excerpt from FG1**

"R1: I'd say around here--. The area--. I feel quite safe here

R4: But then again, we've been quite sheltered

[R1, R2 & R4 agree]

R2: We haven't been out late at night or really on our own. We've always been in group situations. I wouldn't go out by myself [others nod agreement]" – Excerpt from FG5

On the issue of safety, two of the female African respondents observed that while it was safer than their home country, Nigeria, the crime rate was on the rise.

"It's not as safe as it used to be. It's peaceful so that one makes Ghana and Nigeria different. But, the fact is that now it's not like before. Though it's still better off because we still have crisis in Nigeria but It's still..., ah even rituals too is on the rise. Can you imagine?? There is this billboard or poster I saw around and they have even written money ritual and they are not even scared or something."

"Now, you can't just walk anywhere. I was even told that where I am, I shouldn't come home late. I finish by nine and before you get a car to where I stay you have to [trek] (walk) for a while. I heard a couple of days ago that on that same route a Ghanaian lady was raped by a Ghanaian guy which is not nice."

While the male respondents did not exhibit much apprehension for their safety, one of them intimated that he did not particularly consider it safe for female visitors. He stated that:

"Well as a male, a black male particularly it's very safe. I wouldn't say the same for my female friends of any colour; I mean particularly the white females. But any of my female friends I don't encourage any of them to go out, like go out at night cause it's unsafe. It isn't safe" – R of I1

When probed further he indicated that Ghanaian men tended to be aggressive towards women. He observes that:

“... you know Americans like to party so that’s like one of the first things we did coming here and I remember just seeing with my own eyes the way the guys would grab them and this is not something that we do .like guys are aggressive in America but not that aggressive they’re not going to invade your personal space. There is no such thing as personal space in Ghana. So like they’ll grab their arm and pull them over like o hey, pretty girl come over and dance with me, like force them to dance and that’s really. That an extreme violation extreme.” – R of I1

In light of the above, the researcher postulates that there may be a relationship between gender and the affective component as well as the cognitive dimension of the destination image construct.

5.1.4 Conative Impressions of Ghana

When asked about their intention to return and to recommend Ghana to others, 86% (24 of 28) of respondents answered in the affirmative. However, the reasons provided were varied. A number of African respondents indicated that they would return either for fun or for business. This is illustrated in the subsequent responses:

“I want to enjoy Ghana because there are so many places I haven’t been. Like yeah, I will come back one day.” – R2 of FG7

“[Get some business here] because there is opportunity to make business here, but you have to have cash. To get cash as a student is very difficult, you have to make a choice, whether you choose to make your cash or you choose to go to school. So we saw business here and we

can come later. When we work and by the grace of God and come and try to make business here because [there's] a lot of opportunities to get business here.” – R1 of FG7

Conversely, the majority of the western respondents (17 out of 19) stated or agreed that their main reasons for wanting to return and recommend the country are the people and culture. As indicated the responses below:

“And anyway, I would say what makes Ghana the gateway to Africa is like the people, the people, the culture, the environment, the vibes like the intangible things you can't put your fingers on. But I, I could not live here, right now, not at this point of my life, but if I could, I want to bring my friends here, my friends, my parents and my family. They need to see, like this is what Africa is, not what they see on TV. This is Africa, you know, or at least Ghana.” –

R of I1

“I would say to students who want to study abroad that if you want the most different experience possible then [come] to Ghana. It's a different place” – R1 of FG1

“I think I wouldn't recommend it to someone who wanted a really relaxed holiday or to get away because here you come to be sociable and talk to people and to experience the culture. And I think most people are looking for that, but maybe not everyone. Well, not boring people [laughs]” – R1 of FG4

The last two responses indicate that the benefits sought or motivations influence the likely behavioural intentions of tourists, as the recommendations are qualified by the potential benefits a tourist will obtain from a visit to Ghana. The respondents who answered negatively with respect to intentions to return and recommend Ghana further strengthen this observation. All the four (4) respondents (14% of the total sample) who answered in the negative were female, two of these students were Britons and the other two were Nigerians. The main reason

the British students offered for their reluctance to return was the limited variety of recreational activities. Below are responses to this effect. One of the visitors, who had previously visited South Africa, stated that:

“I personally prefer South Africa. It’s not as hot. Or it wasn’t at the time of year. I stayed in Cape Town, which is more “touristy”. I just feel there’s more to do in Cape Town. So, that’ll probably draw people in.” – R2 of FG5

One Nigerian visitor indicated that she did not intend to return, but allowed that she would recommend the country for its educational standards. She stated that:

“I’ll tell the person to come because of the educational standards of Ghana. It’s not that Nigeria is not good, but here they explain better. They teach and you will understand what they are teaching. That’s one good thing about Ghana, otherwise I wouldn’t advise anyone to come here” – R4 of FG7

The other Nigerian respondent indicated she would not recommend Ghana. Yet, she stated that she was willing to return for short visits of recreation. Thus, it appears that though a tourist may harbor negative impressions or feelings of a destination, he or she may still be willing to visit the destination in question or recommend it based on a specific attribute or quality. Overall, it seems tourists’ experiences in Ghana were mostly positive thus making them more disposed return and recommend the country.

5.1.5 Overall Impressions of Ghana

The issue of overall impressions or image was addressed by asking respondents about how they would describe Ghana to someone who has not visited the country before. Additionally, respondents were asked how they viewed Ghana with respect to other African countries they

had visited. When asked to describe the country, the descriptions that came most readily to visitors were related to the weather, culture, people and food. Some of the descriptions offered are presented below:

“Colourful, friendly and tasty” – R2 of FG3

“R2: Hot [all laugh]

R4: Hot, friendly

R1: And exciting. Good food

R3: Vibrant. Its culture”

R2: [nods] it’s really vibrant. The fact that the flag is everywhere

R1: it’s very nice to see

R2: It just seems like everyone is friendlier

R3: It’s like there’s some kind of unity” – Excerpt from FG4

“R3: I’d say you have to go there [all laugh]. Because it’s really hard to do

R2: I’d say it’s really different

I: If you had to describe it in three words?

R1: slow-paced [pauses], friendly and [pauses] good food

R3: delicious and I don’t know [shrugs and laughs]

R2: I would say –

R3: Christian [R2 agrees] it's way more Christian here [others agree]

R2: I would say exotic, different and [pauses] enjoyable” – Excerpt from FG1

However, one student observed that some of the infrastructure needed improvement. He opined that:

“One thing I would improve about Ghana is the electricity situation and also the water. It's annoying going to bed all sticky and sweaty” – R1 of FG1

Unlike their western counterparts, the male and female African respondents described Ghana differently. The male students (5 out of 9) offered responses that are more positive even though they identified some challenges such as the current energy crisis. Some of their responses are as follows”

“R2: Ghana firstly, good educational system, infrastructure and, I don't know, what can I say, Ghana is a good country except for traffic jam, except for light off. But I think Ghana is a good country.

“R1: What I'd tell someone is that they should come and look by themselves, you will know. You know, life is not pink, so you have to come and see. But, here in Ghana, for somebody who would like to have fun and to meet new people, the person would be safe.

“R3: Ghana is, very nice, except the “dumsor” (popular term referring to the current power crisis). I hope they figure that out soon.” – Excerpt from FG7

On the other hand, their female counterparts provided unfavourable descriptions. In addition, they articulated their dissatisfaction with the locals' attitude towards them as well as the climate. An excerpt from their discussion is provided below:

“The sun is too much, dust is too much, Ghanaians are not nice, Ghana is not as it used to be...” – **R3 of FG6**

Another added that:

“I don't know whether it is because of the crisis that Ghana is facing now that makes it worse. First of all, the mindset is not nice. When you meet a foreigner, you should embrace the person. Though I understand the fact that they are scared probably due to the fact that the people may not be nice, but once you see they are nice what's wrong to stop and talk.” – **R1 of FG6**

When asked about travel experience in Africa, only thirteen (12) visitors (constituting approximately, 43% of the total sample) reported that they had previously visited other African countries. Of this number, four (4) were British, five (5) were Nigerian and three (3) were Gabonese. Eleven (11) of these visitors reported that they had visited multiple African countries. This information is presented in Table 3.

Table 5.3: Countries Visited by Respondents

| Country visited (More than one choice possible)/ Grouping | South Africa | Cape Verde | Egypt | Tunisia | Rwanda | Cameroun | Togo | Benin |
|--|-----------------|---------------|-------|---------|--------|----------|------|-------|
| African | 1 | | | | | 3 | 7 | 7 |
| Western | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | | | |
| Total | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 7 |

When respondents were asked to compare to these countries, the following were some of the responses offered:

“Well, there’s constant light in South Africa, it’s more organized, there’s more effective transportation and more activities, you can do more stuff like climbing mountains and there are amusement parks. I haven’t been to an amusement park here” – R of I2

“It’s completely different to Tunisia and Egypt because they’re so touristy. It’s kind of similar to Cape Verde in the sense that like when we went to the markets the other day. That was quite similar but it’s (Cape Verde) more developed. Like Cape Verde’s going to same way as Tunisia and Egypt so it’s kind of nice that this isn’t so touristy because you get a real sense of the country” – R1 of FG3

“Rwanda is similar in some ways. I didn’t stay in the city I stayed in a rural area so it was a lot more run down. A lot more underdeveloped, so it’s nice to come to Africa and stay somewhere in the city, rather, but I think all countries in Africa are the same. It’s just not very different like with the community and the family life, but I didn’t get to see much else.” – R3 of FG2

“For me, Cameroun... Cameroun is different, very different than Ghana. It’s not the same part of Africa. First, they are talking French and English over there, and here we are talking only English and most of the people talk Twi. And for the food, in Cameroun the food is not expensive; you can enjoy yourself with [few] money. Here in Ghana, it’s different because the money is not the same as we are using in our country which is CFA franc and here we are using Ghana cedis. For the second country Benin, I was young, but it’s the same culture like Ghana, they’re all West Africa. Togo too, is the same culture, but [Ghana is most], in development its better than Togo and Benin.” – R1 of FG7

From the above observations, with respect to development and tourist activities, Ghana as a destination seems to be situated in-between Tunisia, Egypt, Cape Verde and South Africa (on the more advanced side of the spectrum) and Togo, Benin and Rwanda (on the less advanced side of the spectrum). The popularity of South Africa as an ultimate African destination is further reinforced as nearly 60% (16 out of the 28) of visitors indicated that they would like to visit this country and nearly 25% (7 out of 28) indicated that they would like to visit Egypt, Tanzania and Kenya. The remaining visitors indicated other countries, including Gambia, Ethiopia, Uganda and Madagascar.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Cognitive Impressions of Ghana (Research Objective/Question 1)

Pertaining to this objective, the study asked questions related to pre-visit knowledge, tourism resources, supporting factors and the travel environment. Findings indicate that respondents' pre-visit knowledge was largely derived from word-of-mouth, news, education and popular culture, indicating that respondents preferred to use autonomous and organic sources rather than induced source. These findings are aligned with the work of Beerli & Martín, (2004a) who found that autonomous and organic sources exerted a greater influence on destination image. Even though all respondents reported the use of similar sources of information, the impressions and beliefs of Ghana's destination attributes were significantly different between respondents from Africa and those from the West. This confirms the proposition in the destination image literature (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004a, b; Bonn et al, 2005; San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008) that a visitors' cultural or social values influence the image they form of a destination.

About tourism resources, respondents generally showed a preference for Ghana's cultural heritage, historical heritage and natural attractions. These findings are similar to those of Braimah et al., (2012), which indicated the customs, people and historical sites were among the key tourist attractions that drew tourists to Ghana.

Respondents' general dissatisfaction with the quality of the country's supporting services corroborates Owusu-Frimpong et al's (2013) observation that the service quality is a principle factor in tourists evaluation of the experiences of a destination.

On the issue of the travel environment, respondents largely agreed that Ghana was not very clean and this negatively influenced the impressions visitors had of Ghana. This is allied with Wang & Hsu's (2010) proposition that sanitation is an important part of a destination's allure.

Furthermore, in contrast to findings of Chen & Kerstetter (1999) and Beerli & Martín (2004a) which indicate that females tend to offer more positive evaluations of destinations, the more critical evaluations of Ghana were conveyed by female respondents. Thus, it appears, the influence of gender on tourist evaluations is moderated by the context (destination) in question since Chen & Kerstetter and Beerli & Martin (2004a) where focused on more advanced destinations and this study was focused on an emerging destination.

5.2.2 Affective Impressions of Ghana (Research Objective/ Question 2)

Respondents expressed feelings of pleasantness, safety and excitement. A majority of the visitors interviewed intimated that their experiences had been pleasant, but those from the West were especially excited by their interactions with the culture and people. This excitement appeared to be because of how different the Ghanaian culture was to them.

African respondents were not very excited by Ghana's tourist offerings, but a little over half of them indicated that their experiences had been mostly pleasant.

Overall, respondents indicated that they felt safe in the country, even though a notable number conveyed a growing awareness of danger. This is an indication that feelings of safety maybe declining since one of Braimah et al's (2012) findings was that, personal safety was one of the highest rated attributes that attracted tourists to Ghana.

The data collected did not confirm or contradict the popular position in the literature that tourists affective impressions of a destination are influenced by the motivations or the benefits they seek. However, the data confirmed that the cognitive dimension influences the affective dimension (see Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, b; Beerli & Martin, 2004a, b) as it was evident that tourists feelings were influenced by the knowledge they had acquired through their experiences in Ghana and the subsequent evaluations of these experiences.

5.2.3 Conative Impression of Ghana (Research Objective/ Question 3)

All respondents, with the exception of four indicated that they were willing to return and recommend Ghana as a destination. This is in line with the proposition that the more favourable the cognitive and affective components, the more likely a tourist is to make a positive decision with regards to the destination in question (Pike & Ryan, 2004; San Martín & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2008; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Lee et al., 2013). Interestingly, some visitors who indicated that they would not return were willing to recommend Ghana to others depending on the people in question's motivation. Furthermore, some of those who reported that they were willing to return indicated that they would not recommend the country depending on the motivation for the

trip. Thus, indicating that motivation or benefits sought could exert stronger influence on the conative component of image than the cognitive and the affective.

5.2.4 Overall Impressions (Image) of Ghana

A review of tourists' impressions and evaluations of their experiences in Ghana indicated that respondents viewed Ghana as a moderately developed and largely safe destination with a vibrant culture, friendly people, good food and beautiful natural attractions. Thus, unlike popular African destinations like South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Egypt, Ghana's image is based on more common functional and psychological attributes (see Echtner & Ritchie, 1993, 2003). While, the findings indicate that Ghana enjoys a mainly positive image from tourists who have actually visited the country, they also show the country is still relatively unknown in the global tourism market. Moreover, in spite of the level prominence the country has gained in the past few years with respect to democracy and stability, it is not really considered an ultimate tourist destination.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction and Summary of the Study

This chapter presents a summary of research and its findings as well as the conclusions resulting from the findings. Additionally, recommendations based on the conclusions as well as suggestions for future research are presented. This study aimed at assessing Ghana's image as a tourist destination. It evaluated Ghana's image using the third dimensions of image: the cognitive dimension, the affective dimension and the conative dimension. In light of this, literature was reviewed regarding the concept of destination brand image, its definition, its components or dimensions, its formation and the factors that influence its formation. Furthermore, a brief discussion of the tourism industry and its marketing activities was presented.

The study adopted a qualitative design and collected data from international students studying at the University of Ghana campus through focus group discussions and interviews. Discussions and interviews were recorded and transcribed and the data were subsequently analysed thematically. The findings were then presented and discussed in relation to the extant literature.

6.1 Summary of findings

6.1.1 Cognitive impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 1)

This objective was assessed using respondents' knowledge and beliefs about Ghana's tourist resources, supporting factors, and the travel environment. Concerning the country's tourism resources, respondents showed a preference for Ghana's cultural heritage, people, historical heritage and the natural attractions. While, visitors generally found the quality of supporting services to be manageable, they indicated that they did not find these services to be particularly efficient or reliable. On the issue of the travel environment, participants showed an overall appreciation for the local cuisine. Visitors also indicated that Ghanaians were largely friendly and polite people. However, respondents were unimpressed with the standard of Ghana's sanitation.

6.1.2 Affective impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 2)

This objective was assessed regarding tourists' feelings of pleasantness or unpleasantness, excitement or boredom, and safety or danger. The majority of respondents conveyed pleasant experiences in the country and feelings of excitement were more prevalent in western respondents regarding their interactions with local and their overall experiences. On the issue of safety, visitors generally felt safe, but some conveyed an awareness of danger especially for the female visitors.

6.1.3 Conative impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 3)

This objective was assessed using respondents' intentions to return to the country and recommend Ghana to other visitors. The majority of respondents indicated their intentions to

return to the country and recommend Ghana as a tourist destination. However, with respect to recommending Ghana, a number of respondents emphasised that their recommendation would be dependent on the benefits the potential visitors hoped to receive from their visit.

6.1.4 Overall impressions about Ghana (Research Objective/Question 4)

This objective was assessed using the descriptions offered about Ghana and comparisons made with other tourist destinations in Ghana. Findings for this objective were also derived from the visitors' reported cognitive, affective and conative impressions. The data indicated that Ghana's image as a tourist destination was generally positive, the country still remains widely unknown as a destination and thus potential tourists would not necessarily include Ghana in shortlisted African destinations to visit.

6.1.5 Other notable findings

Other notable findings were related to pre-visit knowledge and the influence country (or region) of origin, gender and motivation on visitor evaluations, feelings and behavioural intentions.

Visitors reported pre-knowledge of Ghana was mostly general knowledge about Ghana and visitors largely relied on autonomous or non-commercial sources of information and word-of-mouth. The data indicated that respondents' evaluations of the destination attributes and to an extent, their feelings were influenced by the cultural and social orientations of their home countries. Additionally, the gender of respondents exerted some influence on their feelings about Ghana, particularly in terms of safety. While the data could not confirm the influence of

motivation on respondents' feelings, they did indicate that motivation does influence visitors' behavioural intentions.

6.2 Conclusions

The study drew the following conclusions based on the findings.

Visitors' pre-trip knowledge about Ghana is mainly influenced by non-commercial and word-of-mouth sources of information particularly from online sources.

- Awareness of Ghana as a destination is quite low, especially outside the African continent.
- Visitors' preferred Ghanaian attractions are the country's cultural and historical heritage, friendliness of locals, the local cuisine and natural attractions.
- The sanitation and the reliability and efficiency of supporting factors present challenges to the visitor experience of Ghana.
- Visitors' cultural or social orientations and gender influence their evaluations of destination attributes and their resultant feelings.
- Motivation (benefits sought) influence tourist behaviour

6.3 Recommendations (restructured)

On the basis of the above conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations for destination marketing organisations (DMO) and policy makers.

The study noted that awareness of Ghana as a tourist destination is low, thus, DMOs should increase marketing activities generate more interest in Ghana and these campaigns should

largely include online media as potential tourist appear to acquire the bulk of their information from online sources.

Additionally, DMOs should include testimonials from visitors to Ghana and also provide avenues where potential tourists can interact with previous visitors since visitors appear to prefer word-of-mouth information over the traditional commercial information.

Furthermore, DMOs should include country of origin and motivation as bases of segmentation as this would help refine their offering in order to ensure maximum satisfaction. Moreover, they must emphasise Ghana's culture, history and natural resources in their marketing activities as these appear to be tourists' preferred attractions.

Finally, policy makers should ensure that related governmental institutions as well as various stakeholders work together to improve sanitation, security and service quality of supporting factors of tourism in order to increase tourist satisfaction and boost the tourism sector.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could focus on ranking Ghana's destination attributes in order to identify which Ghana's strongest tourism assets. This information could help identify the sectors within the industry that need greater attention.

Future research should employ larger and more varied samples of respondents in order to confirm the current study's findings and determine how factors like marital status, income level, and educational level influence image formation.

Subsequent research could adopt a longitudinal strategy in order to study the changeable nature of destination brand image as the tourist goes through the entire travel process. Information from such a study would aid in designing better marketing strategies for tourists at various stages of the travel process.

Future studies could also compare Ghana's image from the perspectives of foreign and domestic tourists to determine the consistency of Ghana's image and help improve marketing activities and their outcomes.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. Collection of socio-demographic data (age, nationality, duration of stay- semester or academic year)
2. How long have you been here?
3. How did you first learn about Ghana?
4. What did you know about Ghana before visiting the country and where did you get this information?
5. How does the prior information compare with what you've learned about the country since you've been here?
6. Have you visited any tourist attractions? How many? What do you think about them?
7. Did you use any travel and tour agencies or did you arrange the trip yourself?
8. What do you think about the customs, culture and cuisine?
9. What you think about the cost of living here?
10. Do you have sufficient access to tourist information?
11. How would you rate the transportation system?
12. How would rate the internet and telecommunications services?
13. How would you rate the people and natural environment (scenery)?
14. How would you rate Ghana in terms of cleanliness?
15. How do you feel about Ghana in terms of safety?
16. How do you rate your stay in terms of excitement?
17. Overall, have you had pleasant experiences?
18. What was your perception about Ghana before you visited the country?
19. What is your perception of Ghana now?
20. How would you describe Ghana to someone who has never been here?
21. Have you visited any other African countries? / Are there any other African countries you would like to visit?
22. How does Ghana compare with them?
23. Would you visit Ghana again?
24. Would you recommend visiting Ghana to others?
25. Any other thoughts, comments or experiences to share?