



## **A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF HOTELS IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT USING HOTELS IN CAPE COAST AND ELMINA, GHANA.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*According to research, the importance of hotels as central in the development of tourism cannot be underscored - because they constitute the home base of tourists and also contribute to about 30% of the budget of all tourists. This study is a position paper that examines the role of hotels in tourism development in Ghana. The paper reviews different literature on the subject and conceptually postulates among others that hotels in the Central Region of Ghana, especially the non-star graded ones lack adequate facilities and have serious challenges with accessibility as most of them are found in poor communities – with unkempt surroundings. These among a host of other debilitating factors that are highlighted in the paper go a long way to kill tourists appeal towards the hotels. Against this backdrop, the study recommends among a host of others that the hotels in the Central region and Ghana as a whole are to be encouraged to periodically, clean their environs and carry out renovations and improve the quality of their products and services to help appeal to tourists.*

**Keywords:** *Hotels, Tourism development, Hospitality Accessibility , Ghana*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hotels constitute the single most important component of the tourism industry. This has been proven by a number of authors including Lundgren (1973) and Fridgen (1996). It has been established that aside attractions, tourism in any area cannot thrive without the development of appropriate lodges and hotels. Hotels are indeed considered as the ‘home base’ of tourists as they (the tourists) engage themselves in other pursuits within their new destination (Cooper et al, 2008; Fridgen, 1996). In other words, hotels constitute places where the tourists lodge or stay in order to carry out the rest of their tourism activities. This means in effect that every tourist irrespective of his/her purpose of trip or tour that is whether for leisure, education, business, health-related activity, visiting friends and relatives etc, needs a place to stay and operate from. Among the accommodation facilities, hotels constitute the most significant or dominant (Fridgen, 1996).

It is generally held that accommodation absorbs a significant proportion (about one-third) of the tourists’ budget (Lundgren, 1973; Pearce, 1987). Therefore, destinations that tend to develop the appropriate and enough lodges stand the chance of reaping the maximum benefits from the industry (Cooper et al., 2008; Fridgen, 1996). The converse is also regarded as true. According to



Fridgen (1996), there can be no tourism development without the development of the appropriate accommodation facilities.

## **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

For developing countries, especially in Africa, tourism development has been identified as a very necessary tool for the enhancement of their economic development. This is because there is abundance of attractive natural areas in Africa. Africa as a sequel therefore, attracts large numbers of tourists from the developed world, who like to travel to the continent to view its wildlife, which is not only unique about the destination, but as well spectacular. Africa is the only place on earth according to Kiss (1990), where vast herds of wild animals still roam the open rangelands. It is also reported by Kiss (1990) that the continent harbours 18 of the 32 well known World Heritage Sites and 31 Biosphere Reserves proposed by national governments and adopted by the International Community through the auspices of The United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO). This has encouraged the creation of protected areas in sub-Saharan Africa, where wildlife viewing in addition to proceeds from mass tourism, continues to provide the countries involved with the much needed foreign currency.

### **Tourism in Ghana**

Ghana, like many African countries abounds in significant numbers of natural, cultural and heritage sites of importance, which have either been developed already, or are ear-marked as having the potential for development. These include forest reserves, national parks, resource reserves, and wildlife sanctuaries. Other natural attractions include the topography, such as the numerous mountains, and waterfalls, water bodies such as lakes, both artificial and natural rivers, villages on water, (stilt communities), lagoons, ponds, sport fishing, beaches (with caves and capes etc), all of which constitute pull factors for attracting tourists to the various destinations or communities where they are found. However, different parts of the country- regions and districts are endowed with different tourism attractions that have been either developed or constitute great potentials for development to help boost the local economy for that matter.

Tourism in Ghana existed only in name till somewhere in 1972. The situation persisted till 1985 when the industry for the first time became recognized as an important sector of the economy (Akyeampong, 1996). This recognition followed the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP), which formed part of the conditionality of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for granting loans to Ghana during that period. The SAP was an economic package prescribed by the World Bank and the IMF in the mid-1980s for adoption by Ghana to help address the structural imbalance in the economy with the view of eliminating the country's perennial balance of payments problems. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2007), Ghana ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the top destinations in Africa in 1985, and by 1986 had risen to the 13<sup>th</sup> position, making Ghana, the leading destination in West Africa (Armoo, 2000). By 1992, the tourism industry in the country had become the fourth largest foreign exchange earner after cocoa, gold, timber and had become the fastest growing sector experiencing a growth rate of between 12% and 16% (WTO, 2007; [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/status\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/status_e.htm))



### **Tourism Development in the Central Region**

The Central Region of Ghana is considered as the lead region in the development of tourism in the country following the realization, adoption and implementation of policies by the region led by The Central Regional Development Commission (CEDECOM) in the 1990s. This was done to pursue tourism development rigorously as an economic agenda to help address the economic challenges and imbalance of the region (Central Regional Tourism Development Plan-1995-2020, 1995). Coincidentally, all the four (4) heritage sites in Ghana out of the 32 worldwide designated as World Heritage Monuments by The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) including the first of its kind canopy walkway in West Africa are all found in the region. These attractions therefore serve as pull factors for attracting tourists generally into the country, and the Central Region in particular (Akyeampong, 1996). The region has thus been regarded to be in the lead in the development of tourism in the country. As a sequel, the region has been referred to as ‘the heartbeat of tourism development in the country’.

### **Importance of Hotels in the Development of Tourism**

It is, however, documented by Fridgen (1996), Cooper et al (2008) among other works, that, tourism anywhere cannot thrive without the provision and development of certain basic facilities such as accommodation, most especially hotels. It is documented by Akyeampong (1996) confirming Lundgren’s assertion that accommodation alone constitutes at least 30% of the tourist’s budget. This consequently suggests that destinations with appropriate accommodation facilities will tend to attract more tourists and will thus obtain more receipt from tourism as a result the receipt of additional revenue from the lodging of these tourists. The importance of hotels in the development of tourism can therefore never be underscored.

Akyeampong (1996), however, documented that most of the tourists who visit the attractions most especially, Kakum National park, the castles of Cape Coast and Elmina and Fort St. Jago do not use the hotels in the region. It is ironical to learn that the four attractions in the region mainly constitute the major pull factors for attracting tourists into the country, the region for that matter. Revenue outlay from these lodges (hotels) in the region is considered rather low as a result of poor patronage. Hotels in the region tend to lose their guests to those hotels in nearby towns. The visitors rather tend to use lodges in destinations such as Sekondi, Takoradi and Accra. The question that one is likely to ask is “Why does the Central Region lose out on tourists to other destinations? How different is the service culture in the hotels in the region different from others outside? i.e. in Accra and Takoradi which tend to attract most of the guests who tend to visit the Central Region. How can hotels in the region position themselves in order to attract large numbers of guests in order to ensure high utilization rates and, therefore, ensure increased revenue outlay?”

### **Characteristics of the Tourism Industry**

To be able to address this effectively, hotel marketers like other service marketers must be concerned and should understand the characteristics of the industry which constitute inherent problems for development of the industry and situate them (the inherent problems) in the context of the destination, and in this matter, the Central Region with the view of examining how they (these characteristics) influence hotel choice or patronage.



These characteristics are the intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability of the hotel products and services. The rest are the simultaneous production and consumption, and finally consumption in situ of the hospitality product. Unlike physical products, hotel services cannot be seen, tasted, felt or smelled before they are purchased. Prior to boarding on airplane, airline passengers have nothing but an airline ticket and the promise of safe delivery to their destinations. Members of a hotel sales-force cannot take a hotel with them on sales call. In fact they do not sell a room but the right to use a room for a specific period of time. When the guests leave, they have nothing to show for the purchase but receipts. They have memories which relate to their appraisal of the quality of services received that can be shared with others. The memories may be positive when indeed guests are satisfied with the quality of services derived or alternatively, negative if the reverse situation is the case. This presumptively suggests that the hotels in the region have not yet come up with the appropriate strategies to manage the internal characteristics associated with hospitality facilities and for that matter, hotels in the region in a manner that would ensure the further attraction of tourists in their desired numbers. The questions that need to be asked include, “What accounts for the current state of affairs with hotels in the region?” “What management strategies need to be put in place to help address those challenges associated with hotels in the region in order to help attract more tourists and guests?”

### **Defining the Problem**

It is documented by Akyeampong (1996) and corroborated by UCC-CEDECOM-UMES (1999), Armoo (2000) and Anaman (2004) that although improvements have been noticed with hotels in the Central Region of Ghana by virtue of their numbers and quality, all in the attempt to help attract the increasing number of tourists into the region, patronage of hotels was still low. Guests would, however, like to lodge in hotels in Accra or Takoradi instead. The fundamental question is “Why do guests prefer lodging in hotels in Accra and Takoradi and not in Cape Coast and Elmina, even though these destinations harbour three of the four World designated heritage sites which serve as pull factors for attracting large numbers of tourists into the country in general, and the region in particular?”

This thus brings into focus the examination of the issue of the characteristics of the industry - namely: the intangibility, inseparability, variability, perishability of the hospitality products. Others are the simultaneous production and consumption, finally linked to the issue of consumption of products in situ, and how they impact on the service delivery, service culture practices, and consequentially on patronage of hotels in the region. This article, therefore, makes a synthesis of the various inherent characteristics of the industry and analyzes how these characteristics influence the choice or patronage of hotels in the Central Region of Ghana.

### **The Influence of Consumption of Hospitality Product in Situ or Location or Accessibility of Hotel Product**

In the first place, tourism products (and hotel services for that matter), according to Cooper et al (2008) among other workers, are consumed in situ – i.e. the product cannot be carried from the place of production to any other place for use except the same place of production. Alternatively, hospitality products are produced and consumed in specific localities. The location of a



hospitality product influences the quality of service delivered. Linked to the issue of consumption in situ is location, which can be considered from the view point of proximity or accessibility to or from a tourism destination or facility and which therefore impact positively or negatively on its patronage. The implications of the concept of consumption in situ in relation to the level of patronage of a destination or facility is that, the closer the proximity or, the easier the access to a facility or destination, the greater the level of patronage all things being equal.

Accessibility of a hotel may be concerned with how far or near a facility may be or regarded as mobility, speed, and relative ease to reach a facility like a hotel (Philips, 1978; Middleton, 1998). It is also considered by Lundberg et al., (1995) as one of the most important considerations in the choice of a facility like a hotel. In their view, hotels sited in good locations, tend to enjoy high patronage from guests. Conversely, poor accessibility does not encourage prospective guests to use the facilities in those areas. Mathieson and Wall (1982) have consequently noted that the Town Bridge Hotel which is very strategically located in the U.S. in relation to some major town centres, the Potomac River, and also the Pentagon for example, makes the hotel (Town Bridge) very easily accessible. As a result, the hotel attracts a lot of guests. Better location and easier accessibility according to Smith (1997), Lundberg et al (1995) help ensure greater profitability and continued survival of hotels and vice versa.

According to Akyeampong (1996) confirmed by Armoo (2000) and corroborated by Anaman (2004), hotels in the region, most especially, the lower grade ones are found in good locations as they are located either in the heart of the town or at places not too far away from the centre of towns where located, and along common routes where vehicles ply regularly. This situation is not different from hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina. Ironically, these lower graded hotels in good locations tend to experience poor patronage. However, the higher-graded hotels which are located in communities further away from town centres are recognized to experience higher levels of patronage. What reasons may account for this state of affairs? However, linked to the issue of location and of importance as far as choice of facilities is concerned, is the issue of the image or reputation of the facility which according to Medlik (1994) is in turn influenced by factors, such as the attractiveness of the facility, ambience surrounding those facilities or the state of the environment in which those facilities (including hotels) are found and the quality of service delivered.

It is generally documented by Akyeampong (1996) that most hotels in the Central Region especially the lower graded ones, did not only look physically unattractive, but were as well found in poorer ambience or environmental conditions which were unattractive to guests or visitors. This assertion was confirmed by UCC-CEDECOM-UMES (1999), in the study of hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina area that most of the hotels were generally in poor locations- with poor roads, some with unsanitary compounds, and constructed in noisy areas, among others. Anaman (2004) in his research on 'Utilization of hotels in the Central Region: The case of hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina' also corroborated that the majority of the hotels in the study area especially the lower-graded ones were located in either densely-populated areas, or were found in unkempt environments which looked sordid in nature, with many of them located in apparently unplanned areas or sprawl communities. In that study, majority of the guests (about





70%) indicated that most hotels were located in very poor or poor communities or locations. However, the situation was worse for the lower graded hotels.

For example most of the guests rated the noise level in the hotels, especially the lower graded ones as poor. This is considered as noise pollution and therefore pollution of the environment, and is considered undesirable because hotels, as indicated by Fridgen (1996) are generally considered to be substitutes for homes, and thus expected to be cool and calm places where people take refuge among others to have some solitude and quietness. It came to light also that the majority of the guests were not satisfied with the location of the hotels in the study area (more particularly), and in the region as a whole.

### **Influence of Simultaneous Production and Consumption**

The implication of this situation of consumption in situ, simultaneous production and consumption, thus suggests that once established, hospitality facilities and products by their nature, cannot be transferred from one locality to another, but consumed in situ. That is to say that they are utilized wherever they are delivered; meaning that location is of utmost importance in citing any hospitality facility, especially a hotel. Hence, due diligence needs to be exercised in the development of a hospitality venture in one locality or the other, as it has serious implications as far as patronage and the sustainability of the enterprise among others, are concerned. According to Smith (1997) and Lundberg et al (1995) location of tourism facilities, once established, cannot easily be changed, and thus considered as one of the single most important factors in the choice of facilities by guests or visitors. Better location and easier accessibility according to Smith (1997), help in ensuring greater profitability and continued survival of hotels and vice versa. In the view of Archer (1978) as well as Mathieson and Wall (1982) the issue of seasonality which the cause of ruin in the tourism and hospitality industry could be minimized when a hospitality facility such as hotel is properly sited to attract different clientele at all times. The importance of location in the development of tourism and hospitality facilities therefore cannot be under-estimated as Knowles (1994) also indicates that good location is even more important than the price (or rate).

The exterior of the hotel or the restaurant is the first thing that an arriving guest sees. The condition of the ground and the overall cleanliness of the environment provide clues as to how the place is run. The image or reputation of the facility which according to Medlik (1994) is in turn influenced by factors such as the attractiveness of the facility, ambience surrounding those facilities or the state of the environment in which those facilities (including hotels) are found and the quality of service delivered. The image of a hotel's elegance and professionalism give the worth of hotel and thus the type of services which according to Smith (1997) gives an idea as to the type of services delivered, that could be enhanced or otherwise depending on the state of her uniformed and non-uniformed employees. The first impression they say is very important. It is asserted by Crosby (1980) and others that if the right thing done the first time reworks, it becomes more attractive to a lot more people which consequentially helps in bringing about an increase in the level of patronage.



According to Middleton (1998) goods and products are produced through an exchange transaction conferring ownership of a physical item that may be used or consumed at the owner's choice of time and place. Services on the other hand, are defined by Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) as products purchased through an exchange transaction that does not confer ownership but permits access to and use of a service. Unlike physical products which can be seen, felt, tasted, heard or smelt, services are intangibles that cannot, and therefore cannot be sampled in advance of a purchase. In relation to this assertion, Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) have indicated that buyers or customers look for tangible pieces of evidence that provide information and confidence about the nature of the services delivered all in an attempt to reduce the level of uncertainty that is caused by service intangibility. To reduce uncertainty stemming from the intangible nature of the industry and the simultaneous production and consumption of hospitality products, thus warranting consumption in situ, customers or guests look for tangible evidence that will provide information and boost their confidence about the quality of services delivered.

In this regard, the method of spread of information on or promotion of the hotel facilities comes to into focus. The mode of spread of information or promotion is one way of dealing with tangibility problems associated hospitality facilities, establishments or organizations. Anaman (2004) observed that the spread of information on hotels by word of mouth was the most favoured source used by most hotels, whilst the use of print and electronic medium is the least sought after or used. This is considered consistent with the findings of marketing literature (Murray, 1991; Rao et al, 1992) and is also confirmed by Amuquandoh and Ofori-Bah Junior (2000). The use of word-of-mouth though considered most reliable and least costly, is considered most inadequate in achieving the spread that is desired, On the other hand, sources such as the internet, use of print and electronic media though are more efficient in ensuring spread, are used by only a select group of hotels because of the high expense involved in their use.

### **Inseparability of Hospitality Products**

Secondly, in most hospitality services, both the service provider and the customer must be present for the transaction to occur (Kotler et al, 2010). This evidently means that services cannot be separated from the customer like physical products. Customer-employee contact according to Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) is part of the product. Consequently, no transaction occurs without interaction between the service provider and the customer (internal or external, referred to as employee or guest). In most hospitality services, both the service provider and the customer must be present for the transaction to occur. The food in a restaurant may be outstanding but if the service person has a poor attitude that provides in attentive service, customers will down rate their overall restaurant experience and will never be satisfied. Untrained and non-motivated hotel staff may tend to repel a number of guests as such staff members are likely bound to be either unable or unwilling to work or deliver good quality services.

The simultaneous production and consumption of hospitality products, leaves hospitality service providers with no opportunity in terms of time frame or lines to effect any correction in the product delivered, should any defect or deficiency be detected. Hospitality service providers



therefore try to deliver good quality services All that Hospitality concerns or establishments try to do is to deliver good quality services, and on a consistent basis. According to Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) and Peake (1998) hospitality enterprises which tend to offer good quality services on a consistent basis, tend to attract a lot of customers or guests. The converse is also true. The quality of service delivered by a hospitality establishment is dependent among others, on the type of service culture practiced within that establishment, which is in turn dictated essentially by the caliber of human resource, and how well or otherwise they, (the personnel), are motivated to work, as well as the hospitality of staff encountered.

It is recognized by Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) that all things being equal, higher caliber staff or employees, better-motivated and more friendly or hospitable staff usually tend to deliver better quality services, and vice versa. It is also recognized that hospitality industries which employ higher caliber human resource (who have the ability to work) usually tend to pay their staff or employees well. These employees (i.e. well-paid staff) are thus well motivated and appear more hospitable in nature (i.e. have the willingness) to deliver high quality services. Alternatively put, lowly paid staff usually appear to be ill-motivated, look less friendly, and thus deliver poor quality services.

The fact that hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina metropolis and municipality, respectively lose their guests as reported by Akyeampong (1996) to competitor hotels in Accra and Takoradi, thus more probably, suggests that, hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina experience worse human resource challenges (namely lower or no skill, poorer motivation and lower friendliness) than their competitors, all of which consequently reflect in poor service delivery and therefore lower patronage experienced by hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina . The situation is amplified by the fact that about half (50%) of the hotel guests interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the hospitality of hotel staff within the study area as reported by Anaman (2004).

The inhospitable nature of hotel staff could most probably be attributable to a situation of low morale or low motivation on the part of hotel staff., which may in turn be linked to poor service conditions (including poor remuneration – salaries, allowances, incentives etc). This suggests that hotels in the study area have a lot more to do (i.e. employ qualified and well-trained personnel (who are able and willing) to deliver quality service and as well improve upon staff hospitality to help facilitate the attraction of more guests and as a consequence boost patronage. It is a fact that organizations which are not customer-friendly tend to lose their potential local customers and their competitive advantage. It is also notable that friendly staff, hospitable and courteous staff are some of the important factors or attributes that influence guests positively in the choice of these facilities, and hence help improve the level of patronage. It could thus be inferred that by ensuring the delivery of better consumer satisfaction through service as suggested by Olsen (1996), hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina area may ensure or stimulate higher retention and patronage levels of guests.

On the score as to whether or not hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina meet the expectations of guests, the findings of Anaman (2004), arrived at are in consonance with the model of Parasuraman et al (1990) on service quality in the industry (which measures the experiences of





guests vis-à-vis their expectations and ultimately the level of satisfaction of guests), recognized that the situation was far from so. The findings indicated among others, that the hotels did not meet the expectations of the majority of guests (about 70% of guests). In other words, the hotels were noted to have performed poorer than expected or alternatively put, experiences encountered by guests fell short of their expectations. By way of emphasis, it could also be explained that the hotels in the study area under performed against the expectations of guests or that there was a gap between the types of facilities or services demanded by guests and those supplied by hoteliers. This state of affairs may be one of the contributory factors to the poor patronage experienced by most hotels in the study area, and most probably partly explains why patronage of hotels in the study area (Cape Coast and Elmina) was considered low or poor.

According to Kotler , Bowens and Makens (2010), Witt et al (1995), guests continually assess the hotel products through the evaluation of the level of satisfaction derived, i.e. guests' experiences vis-à-vis their expectations. In the view of these authorities, guests minimize the use or stop using hospitality facilities entirely if their experiences fall short of their expectations, but get more attracted to the use of the facilities the more if fell satisfied i.e. if their experiences outweigh their expectations. It is therefore believed that ensuring improvement in the quality of service delivery by the hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina could help bridge the gap between the experiences and expectations of guests and thus help bring about significant improvement in the level of patronage of these hotels.

### **The Effect of Variability in Product Delivered**

It is also important to recognize the high level of variability identified with service delivery and the quality of service within the hospitality industry (Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2010). Hospitality services are produced and consumed simultaneously so this limits quality of control. Fluctuating demand makes it difficult to deliver consistent products during periods of peak demand. In addition, the high degree of contact between service provider and the guest means that product consistency depends on the service provider's skills and performance at the time of the exchange. The quality of service delivered, therefore depends on the skills of service providers. A guest can receive excellent service, one day, mediocre service from the same person the next day. In the case of mediocre or sub-standard service, the service person may not have felt well or may have perhaps experienced an emotional problem. Variability or lack of consistency in the product is a major cause of customer disappointment. Various ways to prevent or minimize variability is to work with well trained professional staff who understand the industry and able and willing to offer quality services Most hotels unfortunately tend to work with untrained, unskilled, less motivated staff who tend to offer poor services. The picture about the human resource position or capacity of the hotels in the Central Region is no different from the above-given scenario, as most of workers encountered were unskilled or unqualified (or in the case of the low class hotels run as family businesses) were just family relations the hotel owners.

Recruiting the right caliber of employees and providing them with excellent training as documented by Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) are crucial regardless of whether employees are highly skilled professionals or low skilled workers. Better trained personnel are known to be



competent in nature, are courteous, credible or trustworthy, reliable as they perform tasks consistently and accurately. They are also noted to be responsive as they quickly respond to the customers' requests and problems. The right calibre of staff are finally regarded good in communication, as they make the effort to understand the customer and try to communicate clearly. Good hospitality companies therefore spend a great deal of time and effort in recruiting the right employees and as well invest in them through on-going trainings.

It is reported by Anaman (2004) as a confirmation of the assertion of Akyeampong (1996) that apart from recruiting unqualified staff, hotels in the Central Region also do not invest in the training of their staff as they (the hotels) ironically considered this (training) as a waste of time. It is not surprising to learn that hotel in the study face the challenge of low patronage as according to Akyeampong (1996) hotels in the region lose guests to competing hotels in neighbouring Takoradi and Accra. It is thus believed that hotels in the region can do better by way of patronage if they take their human resource capacity issues seriously by first recruiting the right caliber of personnel who are qualified or have the ability and willingness to work through competitive interviewing. Steps should also be taken by these hotels to really invest in their human resource and improve upon their capacity through training and re-training which according to Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) will help equip them appropriately with right and or new skills needed to deliver the right type of service so as to meet the demands or the expectations of our customers.

It is also suggested that the service performance processes should be standardized throughout the organization by way of developing a well-documented blue print. This will spell out various definite ways, processes, steps and procedures for executing specific functions and activities in an attempt to ensure consistency and uniformity in service delivery by these hospitality organizations. The challenges associated with variability in service delivery by hospitality firms could also be addressed by hospitality organizations (hotels in the region) taking the steps to monitor customer satisfaction through the use of suggestion and complaints system, customer surveys, and comparison shopping. Hospitality companies have the advantage of knowing their customers by their e-mail address website address (for those who purchase through such means) making it possible to easily get feedbacks from customers after use of facility, to enable hospitality entities make amends where necessary or appropriate.

### **The Effects of Perishability of products on Patronage**

Finally, another issue which is of importance to the industry as it affects patronage is the issue of the perishable nature of the products of industry. It is universally known that hotel services cannot be stored. A 40-room hotel that sells 20 rooms today cannot sell 60 the next day. Revenue lost by not selling the remaining 20 rooms is gone forever. As a result of the perishable nature of, the industry's products, some hotels charge guests guaranteed reservations even when they fail to check into the hotel. If the hotels are to maximize revenue, they must manage capacity and demand since they cannot carry forward unsold inventory. Seasonality in tourism promotes perishability which occurs during the lean periods.



Promoting off-season tourism is also considered as a means of addressing the perishability problem. Promoting off-season tourism means shifting emphasis from international to domestic tourism promotion as a stop gap measure. In the light of this, the pertinent question that comes to mind is “What should hotels in the Central Region do to help boost domestic tourism? The following came to light in the study by Anaman (2004) that domestic guests sparingly use the hotels for purposes other than itinerant official duties-for seminars, conferences, workshops etc. Domestic tourism is considered to be at the infantile stage of development. Several reasons have been assigned by various authorities with regards to the state of domestic tourism in the country generally. According to Adejuwon (1986) and Peake (1988), Ghanaians are not leisure-minded. People need therefore to be educated to take leisure and appreciate the fact that taking some leisure kills boredom and refreshes the individual and help bring about increased productivity. In the view of Smith (1997) financial constraint also limit the use of hotels by the local or indigenous people. Hotel rates especially those of the higher graded hotels are generally considered very high by most people.

The local or indigenous Ghanaian cannot afford the hotel rates or tariffs and therefore use the hotels only sparingly. Akyeampong (1996) indicates that even those high ranking public officials who use the hotels did so for no other purpose aside their itinerant, public duties as a result of the high cost of the hotels. There is therefore the suggestion that hotels, especially the higher graded ones adopt strategies such as adaptation of the differential pricing policy which allows the indigenous people to pay less for hotel goods and services which would have attracted for higher rates from international tourists. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and Hoteliers Association are in this regard expected to help hotels fix such reasonable and attractive rates to entice the local people to visit for various reasons – funerals, cultural festivals, football matches, VRFs and other activities to use hotel facilities more readily. Other organizations and clubs such as church group can also team up with hotels to achieve this objective. The local people need to be encouraged to save gradually on their own despite the harsh economic realities to invest in tourism activities. People should be encouraged to take their leave periods off to travel on tour as foreigners do. Tour packages for local people should be attractive. Hoteliers, social clubs and tour agencies could collaborate to organize such programmes for various purposes – education, leisure, business etc.

Promotion and advertisement are also indeed considered very important in helping to popularize hospitality facilities to ensure improved rate of utilization. Hotels especially the lower graded also are encouraged to use other more progressive means of promotion and advertisement, i.e. using electronic and print media which is normally used by the higher graded hotels because of its high cost. This should be done over and above the traditional means of ‘word of mouth’ which is regarded rather ineffective in ensuring the spread of information within the industry. Lower graded hotels could collaborate with one another, pull resources together to put up joint advertisement to minimize cost whilst at the same time ensuring efficiency. Hotels also need to have some special relationships with tour agencies and operators which can link them (hotels) to tour groups and therefore prospective guests.



According to Teye (1988), there is low patronage of the hotels also because there is the general notion amongst the people that hotels are places where people hide to engage in promiscuous activities. There is therefore the need for hoteliers and their stakeholders to disabuse the minds of the people on this issue by educating the populace that hotels are substitutes for homes and not places where promiscuity is encouraged. Hotels could help address this problem by helping to break the industry-people divide through the organization of community-based programmes in their premises to interact and thus help remove these misconceptions people have about hotels.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A synthesis of available bodies of literature and references made in this review has revealed that, the hotels in the study area are confronted by serious internal characteristics and management challenges. These have manifested in some debilitating conditions in the hotels such as poor facilities, poor location or environmental conditions, poor qualified staff, and poor service delivery, among others. A number of these hotels (especially the lower graded ones) lack enough facilities, or where the facilities exist, are in poor or deplorable conditions. Such hotels are known to deliver poor or sub-standard services and therefore do not meet the expectations of guests. Hotels in this region (especially the lower graded ones) therefore need to take the necessary remedial steps to address the pertinent problems or challenges posed by the improper management of the internal characteristics of the industry through the adoption of the appropriate internal management skills all in the attempt at ultimately ensuring the delivery of quality services to their guests.

Furthermore, hotels need to create the right picture in their promotional efforts by creating the right impressions about issues generally related to their service to their guests. There is no need to understate or over represent issues to guests, otherwise potential guests to the hotels may be repelled even at the time of decision making or afterwards. This will affect their repeat visits, thereby endangering sustainability of hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina.

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