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LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF YOUNG VOLUNTEER TOURISTS IN GHANA

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Abstract

Leisure activities are an integral part of volunteer tourism. However, information on this subject is scanty. This study examined the leisure activities of young international volunteers in Ghana. Questionnaire was employed in data collection from a stratified sample of 320 respondents. The results showed that volunteer tourists engaged in sixteen main activities in varied combinations, with the popular ones being resting on beaches, visiting towns and villages, visiting forts and castles, enjoying sunny weather, crossing over the canopy walkway and visiting night clubs. Except for the level of education, no significant variation was observed in volunteers' leisure activities in relation to place of origin, sex, age, marital status, and religion. The study, therefore, concludes that leisure activities of young volunteers are diverse, but the types of activities undertaken are largely similar.

Keywords

Ghana, Leisure activities, Young people, Volunteers

Introduction

Volunteer tourism is a form of alternative tourism which offers individuals the opportunity to combine work and leisure. As the name suggests, it is a travel package which makes room for both work and leisure for people outside their places of origin (Clove & Perkin, 1998; Crouch & Desforges, 2003). Crouch and Desforges (2003) describe volunteer tourism as tourism that is based more on being, doing, touching and seeing rather than just seeing. In the words of Carr (2002),

“work and leisure can be located in the same silo”.

The obligated component of this form of tourism is often geared towards aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some group in society or restoring certain environments of the destination while free time is used in pursuing leisure. Thus, leisure forms an essential

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component in volunteer tourism at a destination.

Like all forms of tourism, leisure is central to volunteers' well-being and satisfaction. This clearly shows that the pursuit of leisure and recreation among volunteers, particularly the youth, cannot be ignored. In this regard, the current study focused on the leisure behaviour of young volunteers at the destination level.

The specific objectives were to: (1) identify the leisure activities that young volunteers participate in during their stay in Ghana and (2) explore the variation in leisure activities across the various social groupings. The motivations for focusing on the youth include the fact that young people are a particularly interesting demographic group for leisure research.

This is because some previous studies have shown that they are more likely to accept novel activities and they need more leisure avenues to channel their excess energy (Zychowicz & Jezewska, 2009). Clark and Cassar (2013) describe leisure time as an important part of young people's lives. According to these researchers, leisure time, when well spent, helps young people discover new aspects of their personality and develop their talents. It also helps to foster confidence in the transition from childhood to adulthood.

In Singapore, the Youth Expedition Project (2007) detected that the international experience offered to Singaporean youth gave them an opportunity to learn to work together as a team, and to engage people from different cultures. Besides, it helped them to develop a strong conviction about their roles and obligations towards their communities and society at large. Efforts to offer young people international exposure can be traced

to the European Grand Tour in the eighteenth century (Hampton, 2003; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014).

The Grand Tour refers to package tour within Europe designed mainly for upper-class European young men to crown their education in the seventh and the eighteenth centuries. These young men often spent two or four years travelling around the major cities such as Paris, Rome and Amsterdam in Europe in an effort to broaden their horizon and also learn other languages, architecture, geography and cultures.

Although, Ghana has emerged as one of the popular volunteering destinations among the youth (people between the ages of 16 and 31 years) (Novelli, 2005; Tomazos & Butler, 2009; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014), little is known about their leisure activities and preferences. Research efforts on volunteer tourism in Ghana have focused primarily on issues relating to their motivation (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014), constraint of volunteering in Ghana (Otoo, 2014), and accommodation preferences (Agyeiwaah, Akyeampong, Amenumey & Boakye, 2014). Thus, there has been comparatively little research on their leisure activities in Ghana. What volunteers actually do and how they spend their free time in Ghana are questions which have largely been left unanswered.

This study subsequently addressed in part the dearth of information on volunteers' leisure activities in Ghana. Mercer (1970) drew attention to the lack of interest in the growing importance of leisure and the responsibility of geographers and other researchers to be aware of and to control the increasing space-consuming effects of such a development. It is envisaged that the study would

provide the needed data for monitoring the changes in leisure behaviour of volunteer tourists in Ghana.

Understanding how volunteer tourists spend their free time and their leisure activities is important for effective planning to meet their needs with minimum negative impacts (Debbage, 1991; Thornton, 1995; Erwin, 2008). As Erwin (2008) indicated, it is important to understand which leisure activities adolescents actually engage in, in order for leisure providers to design programs that would regularly encourage and attract youth to participate in.

Again, organizations and agencies engaged in volunteering marketing may find the outcome of this study appropriate to segment volunteers on the basis of the leisure activities. In the words of Smith, Pitts and Litvin (2012), the outcome of this kind of research has significant implications for recreation providers in tourism destinations as they craft their marketing messages.

Context of the study

Volunteer Attributes

Callanan and Thomas (2005) classified volunteer tourists as “shallow,” “intermediate,” or “deep” based on the duration of the volunteer trip, the skills or qualifications required of participants, the degree of involvement (passive or active) of volunteer tourists, their level of contribution to local communities, and the focus of the experience (altruistic or self-interested).

In contrast, Brown and Morrison (2003) found two types of volunteer tourists: volunteer-minded tourists who are willing to spend most or all of their vacation volunteering

and vacation-minded volunteer tourists who devote only some of their vacation time to volunteer work.

Commonly, research on volunteers from North America, Europe and Africa including Ghana finds that international volunteers tend to be young, educated, affluent and white (ECOTEC, 2000; McBride & Lough, 2007; Powell & Bratovic, 2007; Powell et al., 2007). Pearce and Coghlan, (2009) describe them as internet-savvy, better educated, more aware of global problems and sustainability issues and more affluent as they are supported by their parents for a longer period of time.

In terms of education, the majority are students who take volunteer tours during their spring breaks or summer vacations (Brown & Lehto, 2005; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Rogers, 2007). Some of these students choose to take a gap year from education and participate in overseas volunteer projects (Söderman & Snead, 2008).

Factors that influence leisure participation

Studies, including the ecological model, suggest a number of interconnected variables influence individuals' participation in leisure activities (Gershuny, 2000; Torkilsen, 2005; Sallis et al., 2006; Dridea & Sztruten, 2010). Among these are intrapersonal, interpersonal/ cultural, organizational, physical, and policy variables.

Intrapersonal factors are biological or psychological characteristics such as gender, age, knowledge, behaviour, self-concept, and skills. Interpersonal/cultural factors consist of support from family and friends, religious affiliation, marital status. Organizational variables include the availability of or

advertisement for leagues or programs offered in the community.

Physical and environmental factors are comprised of facilities, programs, and safety. Policy includes laws, rules, regulations, and codes related to physical activity (Sallis et al., 2006). In combination, these variables influence the leisure practices of an individual (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988).

In the field of volunteer tourism, demographic and socio-economic profiles of international volunteers have been found to make a difference in the likelihood of volunteering, volunteer effectiveness and leisure activities (Allum, 2007). Thus, leisure practices are impacted by age, gender, educational attainment, race and stage in the life cycle and religion.

In general, researchers have found that age relates to the type of sport participation. According to Mota and Esculcas (2002), older youth tend to be members of organized sports, while younger adolescents report more participation in unstructured physical activities or sports. Apart from this, numerous investigations suggest that physical activity declines drastically throughout the period of adolescence (Bradley, McMurray, Harrell, & Deng, 2000; Caspersen, Pereira & Curran, 2000). For example, research suggests that between the ages of 12 to 21, the most consistent drop-offs in habitual, high-intensity activity patterns occur (Caspersen et al., 2000).

The finding relating the link between gender and leisure has been mixed. While literature has identified many differences between men and women with respect to how they view and experience their leisure, investigations on personality have resulted in mixed

findings. Some studies have detected male-female differences (e.g., Barnett, 2006; Barnett & Klitzing, 2006) while others have not found any (e.g., Melamed & Meir, 1991; Melamed et al., 1995).

For example, some suggest that males are more likely to participate in and prefer team sports that are of moderate to vigorous intensity, while females choose more individual activities of lower intensity levels (Fuchs et al., 1988; Leslie, Owen & Sallis, 1999). Specifically, males seem to prefer baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and weight lifting (Fuchs et al., 1988; Wall, Zhang, Pearson, Martin & Meyers, 1999) while females favour aerobics, cheerleading, gymnastics, jogging/walking, skating, swimming, tennis, and volleyball (Fuchs et al., 1988; Grieser et al., 2003; Wall et al., 1999).

Another important socio-demographic variable that has been found to influence leisure participation is race/ethnicity. These studies have largely determined consistent differences as a function of race/ethnicity in the ways individuals participate in, allocate time to, assign and derive meaning from, experience benefits from, and feel constrained within their leisure (Gómez, 2002; Gramann & Allison, 1999).

For example, side by side white students, black students differed in the extent to which they became bored or sought challenges in their leisure (Barnett, 2006; Barnett & Klitzing, 2006) in their preferences for urban developed locations compared to natural outdoor areas (Virden & Walker, 1999) and in the benefits they derived from leisure participation related to self-expression, social interaction, relaxation, and self-esteem (Philipp, 1997).

Also important is the stage in the life cycle, for instance, a single person has more free time for leisure activities than a married individual with children. Level of education has also been noted to influence the participation in some particular leisure activity such as arts and hobbies that require special knowledge skills (Dridea & Sztruten, 2010). Again, income has been found as a major factor for selection of leisure activities. Since income correlates with social class and educational level, a higher income group has a greater participation in leisure activities than their other counterparts.

Conceptions of leisure

Among the popular conception of the term are leisure as a residual time, leisure as activities, leisure as functional and leisure as freedom (Haywood et al., 1995). Under leisure as residual perspective, leisure is viewed as unobligated time. It is understood as discretionary time to use in relatively freely chosen ways when the requirements of work and subsistence have been met (Haywood et al., 1995). With reference to a volunteer tourist, it relates to waking hours when a young volunteer is not at work and all other chores have ended.

With respect to the interpretation of leisure in terms of activities, leisure is seen as a range of activities in which people choose to participate in during their free time. With this conception, the emphasis shifts from the person to the nature of the activities undertaken namely sports, television, arts, dancing, hobbies, holidays, gambling, drinking. An important feature of this conception is its relationship to work (Haywood et al. 1995).

Closely related to the model of leisure as a range of activities is the conception of leisure in functional terms. This viewpoint recognises leisure activity as performing valuable functions for individuals, and, more particularly, for the society. Specifically, leisure is seen as an avenue for improving individuals' health and fitness, skills and knowledge, social cohesion through the sharing of common interests and with community development through collective action and sociability (Haywood et al., 1995)

For the definition of leisure as freedom, leisure is seen as an end in itself requiring no instrumental justification. That is, one is at leisure when one is free from trammels which circumscribe other spheres of life. Thus, leisure is concerned with autonomy, the capacity to be and develop oneself independently.

After assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the various conceptions of leisure, the conception on leisure as an activity was employed to guide the study. That is, leisure was considered as constituting of activities which people choose to participate in. Here, leisure occurs during waking hours, that is when a volunteer is not at work.

Like most volunteer destinations, young volunteers in Ghana support formal education by providing literacy, basic computer instruction, interactive communication, problem solving courses and civil right courses for primary and high school students. Young volunteers are also involved in providing training in basic health, first aid and traffic awareness and road safety.

Usually, it is after performing a day's task and also during the weekends that a young volunteer pursues leisure to recreate him/herself. With this understanding of leisure, the

study explores young volunteers' leisure practices in Ghana.

Methodology

The study area

Ghana is one of the West African countries that now encourages tourism as a route to economic development. Given its central location in the sub-region, the country's tourism and overall economic vision is to serve as the 'gateway' to West Africa. It is blessed with many tourism resources which include the following: pristine beaches, rain forests, festivals, and local culture.

Ghana also has historical resources such as castles and forts at her coasts. Two of these castles, (Cape Coast and Elmina castles) have been designated as world heritage monuments by UNESCO (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014). Ghana is gradually becoming a popular destination for volunteer tourists.

According to Forsythe (2011), the country is a destination heavily favoured among western organizations and volunteers due to its peaceful, stable and safe reputation. Evidence suggests that there are over 103 different organizations that offer placement in Ghana with most of them located in cities but operate in rural areas. About 57 of the organizations are located in Accra while the rest are distributed as follows: Kumasi (24), Cape Coast (16) and Tamale (13). In terms of the duration of placements, the typical volunteer involvement in Ghana is less than 2 months (Forsythe, 2011).

The target population for this study consisted of all young international volunteers, aged between 15 and 30 who volunteered in Ghana between August and December, 2014.

A gross sample of 320 individuals was selected by means of a stratified random strategy. This sample was drawn out of the volunteer registers maintained by thirty volunteer organizations who granted permission for their clients to take part in the study. Eighty percent of the volunteers from each of the organizations were randomly selected for the study.

The use of eighty percent in the sampling process was due to scarcity of volunteers during the study period which happened to coincide with the outbreak of the Ebola virus in some parts of West Africa. For individuals who were not readily available, the questionnaires were given to their co-ordinators for distribution and subsequent collection. This approach helped to reach the respondents regardless of their location in the country.

Data was collected by means of a questionnaire which consisted of three sections: leisure activities of volunteer tourists, constraints to leisure participation and volunteers' socio-demographic characteristics. The first section measured the leisure activities undertaken by volunteers during their stay in Ghana.

In an open format volunteers were asked to list the leisure activities they pursue during their stay in Ghana. The second section focused on the constraints that limited their participation in leisure activities in Ghana. In an open format volunteers were asked to list four major constraints that restricted their full participation in leisure activities in Ghana.

The section that dealt with socio-demographic characteristics of the volunteers sought information about the place of origin, age, sex, educational attainment, marital status and religion. Out of the lots of individual

selected for the survey, 320 provided useable data that yielded a net effective response rate of 80 per cent.

Two separate analyses were conducted. First, data were analyzed to provide frequency counts and trends of leisure participation among young volunteers in Ghana. Second, the chi-square (χ^2) test was performed to test the null hypothesis of no association between the socio-demographic variables and leisure activities. The socio-demographic variables explored in the analysis were place of origin, age, sex, marital status, educational attainment and religion. All data were analyzed using SPSS version 22.0 for windows.

The Study Results

Profile of Respondents

A detailed description of the profile of the respondents was crucial for the interpretation and understanding of the diversity of their leisure activities. The socio-demographic characteristics considered in the work were place of origin, sex, age, marital status, educational attainment and religion (Table 1).

As an emerging volunteer destination in Africa, Ghana has been noticed to draw young volunteers from diverse places in the world including Europe (75%), North America (15.6%), Scandinavia (5.0%), Asia (3.1), and Oceania (1.3%). The majority of the volunteers were single (95.0%), female (72.5%) and late adolescents (68.1%) who had either completed their higher (58.8%) or college education (30.9%) and reside in Europe (75.0%) (Table 1).

This finding is consistent with those observed by ECOTEC (2000), McBride and Lough (2007) Powell and Bratovic' (2007) and Powell et al. (2007). Generally, studies on volunteers in North America, Europe and Africa including Ghana indicate that international volunteers tend to be young, educated, affluent and white.

The high involvement of students may be explained by the fact that most volunteer organizations target secondary and undergraduate students (Lo & Lee, 2011). With respect to religious affiliation, over half of the volunteers described themselves as non-religious. This finding reinforced the assertion made

Table 1 Profile of respondents

Volunteer Characteristic	Frequency	Percent (%)
Place of Origin		
Europe	240	75.0
North America	50	15.6
Scandinavia	16	5.0
Asia	10	3.1

Oceania	4	1.3
Sex		
Male	88	27.5
Female	232	72.5
Age		
Under 20	218	68.1
20 - 24	48	15.0
25 +	54	16.9
Marital status		
Single	304	95.0
Married	16	5.0
Education Level		
High school	188	58.8
College	99	30.9
University	15	4.7
Postgraduate	18	5.6
Religion		
Christian	124	38.7
Non-religious	178	55.6
Jewish	14	4.4
Hindu	4	1.3
Total	320	100.0

by Yeoman (2008) that religion is playing an increasingly less important role in people's lives in the advanced world, especially in the case of the younger generation.

Types of leisure activities

As pointed out by Clark and Cassar (2013), identifying young people's leisure practices is

Table 2. Common leisure activities of young volunteers in Ghana

Leisure activities	Frequency	Percent (%)
Resting on beaches	147	93.6
Visiting towns and villages	142	90.4
Visiting forts and castles	130	82.8
Enjoying sunny weather	118	75.2
Going over canopy walk way	104	66.2
Visiting national parks	80	51.0
Learning to cook Ghanaian dishes	78	49.7
Visiting museums	40	25.5
Visiting chiefs; palaces	25	15.9
Attending festivals	22	14.0
Learning drumming and dancing	8	5.1
Visiting clubs	4	2.5
Purchasing art and crafts	4	2.5
Attending weddings	3	1.9
Washing with host family	1	0.6
Shopping at the local markets	1	0.6

an important task in all cultures and societies. The young volunteers in Ghana were noted to participate in 16 main leisure activities in varied combinations (Table 2).

From Table 2, the five popular reported leisure activities among young volunteers in Ghana were resting on beaches (93.6%), visiting towns and villages (90.4%), enjoying sunny

weather (75.2%), and going over the Kakum Canopy Walkway (66.2%). Among the least patronized activities were washing with host family and shopping at the local markets

A typology of leisure activities

Following Haywood et al's (1995) typology of leisure, the sixteenth identified leisure

Table 3. Categories of leisure pursuits by young volunteers in Ghana

Leisure activity type	Specific items	Number	Percent (%)
Tourism and holidays		914	50.2
	Visiting towns and villages	286	31.2
	Visiting forts and castles		
Recreation	Enjoying sunny weather	262	28.7
	Visiting Museums	236	25.8
	Visiting chiefs' Palaces	80	8.8
		50	5.5
		669	36.7
	Lying on beaches	294	44.0
Hobbies, craft, education	Going over the canopy walkway	209	31.2
	Visiting national parks	166	24.8
		158	8.7
	Learning to cook Ghanaian dishes	156	98.7
Entertainment	Wash with the host family	2	1.3
		74	4.2
	Attending festivals	44	59.5
	Drumming and dancing	17	22.9
	Visiting night clubs	7	9.5
	Attending wedding	6	8.1
Shopping		9	0.4
	Purchasing of art and crafts	7	77.8
	Shopping at the local markets	2	22.2

activities were regrouped into these five main leisure types: tourism and holiday (50.2),

The tourism and holiday components emerged as the leading leisure domain. Here, participants were identified to be more involved in the consumption or production of experiences outside the home. The specific activities observed among the participants were visiting towns and villages, enjoying the weather, visiting the forts and castles, visiting museums, and visiting chiefs' palaces (Table 3).

This finding is an indication that agencies such as the Ghana Tourism Authority, Ghana Forestry and wildlife Commission and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board have to plan and develop strategies that aim to prevent decrease in the current demand for this type of leisure in Ghana.

For the recreation domain which happened to be the second most important dimension individuals were seen to be actively involved in the production of the experience. The popular leisure activities identified under this domain were lying on the beach, visiting national parks to view flora and fauna, and going over the Kakum Canopy Walkway (Table 3).

The high patronage of recreational activities, specifically park-related-leisure activities may be linked to the availability and proximity of parks in most parts of the country. This evidence suggests that the development of well-designed programmes by the park managers in Ghana has the potential of positively influencing encounters and satisfaction levels of clients.

Pertaining to the hobbies, craft, and education sphere which refers to activities that emphasise skills and knowledge and can occur at home or outside home, the main activities

that were identified to be engaged in by the young tourists were washing with the host family and learning how to cook Ghanaian dishes (Table 3).

The fourth popular leisure domain identified among the young volunteers in Ghana was entertainment. Participants were either involved in active consumption or production of experiences outside their homes. Among the leisure activities mentioned were attending festivals, attending weddings and participating in drumming and dancing (Table 3).

The final area was shopping and marketing. Like most travellers and tourists, the young volunteers were involved in the purchasing of arts and crafts. This is an indication that this group forms a potential market that the art and craft industry has to cultivate.

Leisure activities by socio-demographic characteristics

It is an established fact that an individual's preference for items, systems, governance and leisure activities is influenced by socio-demographic and economic factors. Characteristics of respondents explored in this analysis were place of origin, age, sex, marital status, educational attainment and religion. The chi-square (χ^2) statistic was employed to determine whether significant relationships existed between respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and leisure participation at significant level of 0.05.

As evident from Table 4, with the exception of educational attainment ($p = 0.040$), no significant relationship was established between leisure activity preference and the rest of the socio-demographic variables. The observed limited differences in leisure practices

Table 4 Leisure activities of volunteers by socio-demographic characteristics

Individuals' Profile	Number	Recreations	Hobbies/ Education	Tourism/ Holidays	Entertainment	Shopping	χ^2 (P-value)
Place of Origin							
North America	301	38.5	10.6	45.8	4.3	0.7	11.778
Europe	1353	36.1	8.6	51.0	3.8	0.5	(0.759)
Asia	52	46.2	3.8	42.3	7.7	0.0	
Scandinavia	112	33.9	7.1	53.6	5.4	0.0	4.136
Oceania	6	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0	0.0	(0.388)
Sex							
Male	186	37.7	6.9	50.2	3.9	0.8	9.564
Female	482	36.3	9.3	49.9	4.1	0.4	(0.297)
Age							
Under 20	1172	37.8	9.2	48.6	3.8	0.5	2.520
20-24	330	32.7	9.1	52.1	5.8	0.3	(0.641)
25 +	322	36.6	6.2	53.4	3.1	0.6	
Marital status							
Single	631	36.7	8.7	49.8	4.2	0.5	(0.040)
Married	38	35.8	7.5	54.7	1.9	0.0	
Educational Level							
High school	1012	37.5	8.9	48.6	4.4	0.6	(0.411)
College	604	35.6	8.4	52.5	3.5	0.0	
University	100	39.0	5.0	49.0	4.0	3.0	
Post graduate	108	33.3	11.1	51.9	3.7	0.0	
Religion							
Christian	745	36.0	9.4	50.7	3.4	0.5	
Atheist	991	37.2	8.3	49.6	4.3	0.5	
Hindu	8	25.0	0.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	
Jewish	80	37.5	7.5	50.0	5.0	0.0	

among the respondents can be linked to the high participation in both tourism/holidays and recreational-related-leisure activities across the social groupings. Despite the limited significant differences in leisure practices, some interesting patterns were observed.

Traditionally, education has been identified among the key variables that influence people's leisure practices (Clark & Cassar, 2013). As shown in Table 4, the extent of individuals' participation in tourism and vocational activities as well as recreational related leisure activities was high across the educational levels, but specifically, higher among college levers with regard to tourism and vacation (52.5%) and among university degree holders in as regards recreational-related activities (39.0%).

On the contrary,, participation in hobbies and educational activities (high school lever 8.9%, college 8.4%, and university, 5.0%) and shopping (high school 0.6, college 0.0%, and university 0.3% and post graduate 0.0%) were noted to decrease with higher education.

Unlike education, no significant relationship was established between age and leisure activities of young volunteers in Ghana. Members of the various age groups were attracted to the tourism and recreational related leisure activities. However, participation in hobbies and education was noted to be high among the late adolescent (9.2%) and the youth (9.1%) while the act of shopping was popular with the emerging adults (0.6%) (Table 4).

Like age, no significant relationship was observed between sex and leisure participation. Both males and females displayed high preference for tourism and holiday (males: 50.2%; females: 49.9%) and recreational

related leisure activities (males: 37.7%; females: 36.3%). On the whole, more females than males were noted to participate in hobbies, craft and educational leisure activities like washing with the host family (9.3%) and learning how to cook Ghanaian dishes (6.9%). On the other hand, more males (0.8%) than females (0.4%) were engaged in shopping as a leisure activity.

The pattern exhibited for participation in tourism and recreation-related activities was equally high among marital groups (Table 4). On the whole, individuals who reported to be single (0.5%) were noted to participate more in hobbies, entertainment and shopping activities more than their married counterparts (0.0%).

Another variable found to influence leisure (gambling) is religion. Although no significant relationship was established between the two sets of variables, it was detected that about half (50%) of the volunteers from all religious affiliations participated in tourism and vacation-related activities in Ghana (Table 4). This finding was expected as most religions encouraged their members to learn from nature and also to be good stewards of the environment.

Discussions

The observation that young volunteers in Ghana identified themselves with twelve different leisure activities was not surprising as researchers including Haywood et al. (1995) and Horner (1993) have found that the leisure activities engaged in by people are numerous and diverse. As pointed out by Horner (1993), tourists travel abroad for a variety of reasons and leisure activities. This

reinforced the popular notion that availability of leisure facilities and space is crucial for all young people irrespective of where they find themselves.

The citing of lying on the beach as the leading leisure activity may be attributed to three factors. First, the beach provides opportunity for a number of informal activities such as relaxation, sun bathing, swimming, watching others' activities and interacting with others. Thus, the multiplicity leisure function of the beach makes it an attractive leisure place.

Secondly, human beings are known to be water loving creatures and are therefore attracted to water-related facilities and areas. Traditionally, the sea and its accompanied beaches have been the major pull factor to many popular destinations including Spain, Greece and the Gambia in Africa.

Thirdly, the large number of young volunteers drawn to the beaches may be linked to the excessive heat experienced in Africa which is due in part to the climatic change and its associated global warming. Perhaps, the excessive heat forces them to patronise beaches to enjoy sea breeze. Researchers, including Amuquandoh, Boakye and Mensah (2014), have reported excessive heat as one of the complaints of visitors to the Owabi Butterfly Sanctuary in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

The second most important leisure activity mentioned by the young volunteers was visitation to towns and villages. To this group, travelling outside their countries and also within the destinations allows them to experience novel and exotic things, and at the same time, have fun. Researchers, including Broad (2003) and Sin (2009), unearthed in their studies the desire to travel as one of the motives of many

volunteer tourists. In the words of Anholt (2006), "culture and heritage constitute one of the six components of a nation's brand, a key measurement of tourism that influences people desire to travel to a destination".

Reports by many young volunteers that they spend a lot of their free time enjoying the sunny climate were expected. As a common phenomenon, people travel from the cold regions especially during winter, to take advantage of the warmth in the tropical areas. Geographically, Ghana falls within the tropics-an area that enjoys high temperatures throughout the year.

Thus, climate may be one of the major factors that influenced young people's choice of Ghana as a volunteer destination. That enjoying the sun forms a major leisure activity among the young volunteers reinforces the emergence of the sea and the sand as major leisure resources for young volunteers.

That the young volunteers consider the crossing the Kakum Canopy Walkway as an important leisure activity collaborates the popular notion that young people are naturally interested in adventurous and challenging ventures. Besides, volunteers tend to see themselves as highly adventurous, and, therefore, may be motivated to prove themselves by going over the canopy walkway once or many times.

Like the traditional tourists, the young volunteers in Ghana displayed some interest in shopping, specifically, the purchasing of arts and crafts. This mirrored the activities during the Grand Tour of the 17th and the 18th Centuries where young men undertook a tour through the cities of Italy and other countries and purchased paintings, antiquities and bronze replicas of classical sculptures.

This supports the popular notion that the genesis of volunteer tourism can be traced to the Grand Tours of the 17th century.

Conclusions

Based on the main findings, seven main conclusions were drawn. First, the leisure practices of young volunteers in Ghana are diverse. This is supported by the fact that individuals engaged in a variety of leisure activities during their stay in the country. On the average, they were observed to combine three leisure activities. This observation connects with the assertion made by Horner (1993) that tourists travel abroad for a variety of reasons including leisure satisfaction.

Second, the leisure activities of young volunteers are tied to Ghana's primary attractions: the forts and castles which are the legacies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the national parks, the beaches, and the festivals. This supports the assertion made by Swarbrooke (1999) that attractions are the most important components in the tourism system.

Swarbrooke (1999) defines primary attractions as those where visitors spend most of their time either because the site is a vital resource for a preferred activity, or it is necessary to spend several hours at least on the site to enjoy all its elements and to obtain value for money.

Third, the leisure pursuits of young volunteers in Ghana, can be described as a wave action as they demand or engage in similar leisure activities. Irrespective of the place of origin, gender, age, marital status, and religion, no significant differences were noticed in their leisure preferences. The majority of them were oriented to both tourism/holidays and recreational leisure activities.

In addition, it can be concluded from the leisure pursuits of volunteer tourists in Ghana that climate played a major role in their decision to volunteer in Ghana. This is good weather. In other words, the all-year sunshine acts as a key drawer of young volunteers to Ghana.

Also, the large number of volunteers who spend their free time in national parks and other natural areas in Ghana reflects the popular desire of many young peoples to travel to remote areas to experience pristine natural environments. It also suggests that volunteer organizations in Ghana need to understand the relationship that young volunteers have with the environment and accordingly design packages that meet these needs. Studies conducted in Europe and North America have earlier described this group as pro-environmental that is a group that wants to get close to nature whenever they get the chance.

Furthermore, the study confirmed that the love for the sun, the sea and the sand is still popular among the youth in tropical destinations. The sun and beaches constituted important resources for the leisure activities of most of the volunteers. This finding debunked Mintel (2005) that the content of holidays is changing.

Finally, the result provides a baseline data for future longitudinal and comparative analyses of young volunteers' leisure practices and preferences in Ghana. Evidences suggest that leisure participation and preferences are not static but change with time and age. Among the axioms of symbolic interactionists, 'objects including leisure have no fixed status', and they can undergo changes over time, hence, the need to monitor changes in tourists' leisure practices.

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