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Visitor satisfaction with Ghana's tourist attractions

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Abstract

Attractions play an important role in determining a destination's allure, and for this reason many destinations seek to boost patronage of their products by marketing their attractions. Thus, tourist satisfaction with attractions is intrinsically linked to a destination's fortunes. Yet, not many studies have focused on attraction satisfaction, much so within the Sub Saharan African milieu which presents a context that is rather different from the conventional settings within which tourism has been studied.   This paper therefore set out to explore visitor satisfaction with Ghana's attractions.

It employed a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods and interviewed 412 visitors to Ghana over a 3 month period. While the overall satisfaction was fairly high, attribute-specific satisfaction was found to be much lower. Overall Satisfaction was also found to have significant statistical associations with certain socio-demographic variables as well as repeat intentions. More importantly, it was observed that their intrinsic qualities notwithstanding, Ghanaian attractions generally lack the other elements of the 'servicescape', i.e. supporting facilities that make the attraction experience satisfying. The implications of these findings are discussed and suggestions for enhancing satisfaction at the attractions are proffered.

Introduction

Tourism destinations are mainly known or remembered for their iconic attractions. The Pyramids of Egypt, Safaris of Eastern Africa, France's Eiffel Tower and Disneyland in the United States of America have been used as strong promotional images of their respective countries. Attractions are the raison d'etre of tourism for three reasons.

First, attractions constitute the initial impetus for tourism development in any destination (Gunn, 1972; Getz, 1994; Akyeampong,

2008; Jurowski, 2009, Butler, 2011). Second, they power the tourism industry by setting the agenda for tourist activities at a destination (Travis, 1989; Fridgen, 1991).

Thirdly, it may be argued that the best memories of a destination are largely generated from attraction experiences hence they play a dominant role in creating pre-trip expectations, actual trip experiences and post-trip memories. The following words from Sharpley (2009: 145) captures the point clearly:

"as an integral element of the tourism product and experience, visitor attractions are the focus of tourism activity, not only as reasons for tourists to travel and stay in destinations but also as generators of income, employment and wider destinational or regional development"

The growing dependence on tourism by almost all countries (Mitchell and Ashley, 2007; Pleumarom, 2012; UNWTO, 2013) implies keener competition for the tourist dollar. Competitiveness is therefore a must-for countries that seek to profit from the tourist trade (Kozak and Rimmington 2000).

For countries to be competitive, destinations must provide satisfaction.Various studies (Opperman, 2000; Korzay and Alvarez, 2005; Campo and Garau, 2008; Vetitnez,

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Romanova, Matuschenko and Kvetenadze, 2013 Eusébio and Vieira, 2013; Coban, 2012; Tang, 2013) have found a strong link between tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness.

It is widely agreed by commentators (e.g. Akama and Kieti, 2007; Hsu, 2008; Okello and Yerian, 2009) that satisfaction with attractions can heavily influence the prospect of repeat visitation to a destination. Destinations have many attributes (e.g attractions, service, infrastructure) but among the lot, attractions (and the experience they provide) are major contributors to overall satisfaction (Boakye and Boohene, 2010; Leask, 2010).

Consequently, tourism development inherently involves the creation of attractions and enhancing the visitor experience. Attractions are thus the core of tourism (Gunn, 1988) not only in terms of formulating the tourism product but, more importantly, as a gauge of the performance of the entire destination.

However, in spite of their pivotal role in determining the incidence, shape and scale of tourism in a particular destination, attractions have tended to receive less than commensurate attention in scientific enquiry (Richards, 2002; Xiao and Smith, 2006) and even fewer studies focus on satisfaction gained at attraction sites.

This is particularly true of Ghana where tourism related studies have rarely focused on attractions, much less an evaluation of satisfaction from them. Although there are some few studies on tourism attractions in Ghana (Asiedu, 1997, Boamah and Koeberl, 2007, Waleka, 2012), their focus were not on the satisfaction of the attraction sites. Even on a broader, thematic level, satisfaction

studies have been undertaken in a wide variety of settings but have found relatively limited application within the context of tourism attractions.

This paper, therefore, sets out as an exploratory study to understand patrons' satisfaction with attractions in Ghana. Specifically the study seeks to find answers for the following questions: are tourists generally satisfied with their experience at Ghana's attractions? And, what aspects of the attractions are they satisfied with most?

The study has both theoretical and practical relevance. From the theoretical perspective, its findings will contribute towards addressing the knowledge void created by the underrepresentation of the enjoyment dimension of attraction studies. Within the practical domain, information gathered from the study will be useful for destination management as Ghana seeks to position itself as the leading West African destination (Republic of Ghana, 2009).

Satisfied patrons are more likely not only to be loyal but, also, to recommend the destination to others (Hsu, 2008). Destinations which ignore the importance of understanding the role of attractions in the tourist experience therefore stand a grave risk of becoming uncompetitive. The threat of loss is even more palpable when considering the fact that in spite of continuous increases in global tourist arrivals, (1 billion mark in 2012), the percentage share accruing to Sub Saharan African countries remains relatively insignificantly small (UNWTO, 2015).

Emerging destinations like Ghana therefore face keen competition and must make it an imperative to be competitive (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). A study of this nature which seeks to explore the satisfaction (and by extension) the competitive edge of a destination is therefore welcome. Destinations which seek to remain competitive and sustainable must therefore pay attention to the quality of their attractions and the satisfaction they offer.

Literature review
The importance and nature of attractions

Pearce (1991) defines a tourist attraction as a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention. For Lew (1987), the frontiers of the definition must be expanded to include all those elements of a "non home" place that draw discretionary travelers away from their homes.

Leask (2010) proposes the use of the phrase 'Visitor Attractions' (p 155) to cater for the non-overnight tourist market. However, regardless of the terminology, the presence of a drawing factor is undeniable. Beyond the definitions, the practical importance of attractions is well-recognized in the literature.

Attractions play a major role not only in attracting visitors to a space (Swarbrooke, 1995, Weaver, 2006) but, more importantly, for the destination, their patronage provides the framework for encouraging visitor spending (Mathieson and Wall, 2006; Gee, Mackens and Choy, 1997).

Aside the economic benefits, attractions (or the interest in them) have been found to rekindle interest by indigenes in their culture and create awareness about the need to protect the environment (Gee, Mackens and Choy, 1989; Fridgen 1991). Attractions are, by nature, varied, fluid and oftentimes, subjectively

defined (Lew, 1987; Fridgen, 1991, Leask, 2010).

Their fluidity stems from the fact that their designation can be ephemeral, sometimes lasting for only a period that some phenomenon is in vogue or that external conditions such as security would permit (Akyeampong, 2008). At the extreme, McCannel (1976), for example, suggests that tourists can themselves be sometimes considered as attractions.

Attractions are also complex and multilayered phenomena (Lew, 1987) and often times; the distinguishing line becomes fuzzy and blurred. Perhaps this accounts for the many useful attempts (e.g Peters, 1969; Lew 1987; Gunn,1988; Inskeep, 1991; Prentice, 1993; and Swarbrooke, 1995) at classifying them. However, at the centre of all these classifications are two broad genres: attractions that are naturally occurring and those that are outcomes of cultural manipulations (Pearce, 1991).

An attraction's drawing power is defined by its quality, authenticity and uniqueness (Fridgen, 1991). But it is also unanimously agreed (eg. Lew, 1987; Gunn, 1988; Buhalis, 2000) that attractions are composite in nature and consist of more than what may be thought of as the 'pull' or draw element. Consequently, in addition to itself, the attraction is theoretically expected to have all the five other attributes as outlined in Buhalis (2000) six A's typology, namely, amenities, available packages, activities, access, and ancillary services.

To that end, Bitner (1992) conceptualizes the 'service scape' environment as comprising both the physical and social element of the attraction site. For Clarke and Schmidt (1995) this service environment consists of four elements: the physical facility, the location, ambience and interpersonal conditions.

Support services and the environment at attraction sites are, therefore, equally important contributors to the tourist experience and this is why Pearce (2005) suggests that it is important to assess and measure the satisfaction from each attribute separately to provide useful information for managerial analysis and action.

To all extents and purposes, an attraction can be conceptualized as a microcosm of the wider destination Therefore, a study which seeks to understand satisfaction gained from attraction sites should first recognize the various constituent elements and seek to understand how they provide satisfaction, both individually and collectively to create to overall satisfaction.

However, while many of the available studies have successfully disaggregated destinations along their constituent attributes and subsequently studied satisfaction from the perspective of these individual elements, the same cannot be found for attractions, particularly from the African continent. Except for work by Akama and Kieti (2003) and Okello and Jeiran (2009) scholarly attention on assessing the disaggregated tourist satisfaction experience, particularly at attraction sites in developing countries is limited.

Conceptualizing the tourist satisfaction experience

Satisfaction can be loosely defined as a felt emotion of contentment with a phenomenon. One salient feature emerging from all the definitions is that satisfaction is multi-dimensional and emanates from various aspects of a phenomenon. Hence, there could

be satisfaction with price, environment, performance of staff, quality of product, and the absence of either of these may not necessarily imply dissatisfaction.

Likewise, the tourist satisfaction experience can be deconstructed into two parts. It is generally agreed (Urry, 2002; McCabe, 2002; Quan and Wang, 2004) that the tourist experience emanates from two intersecting dimensions: an encounter with the core attraction itself; and, the services whose consumption arises from patronage of the attraction.

In a sense these two fit into Urry's (2002) categorization of "landscapes" (the physical attractions themselves) and "sensescapes" which involves various senses as an important component of the tourist experience. Gilmore and Pine (2002) have expanded these perspectives to capture four realms, namely education, esthetics, escapism and entertainment.

Thus, though overall satisfaction may be described as a unitary whole, it may also be disaggregated along these two lines. The contribution of these individual attributes to overall destination satisfaction is also shaped by different market segments and customer groups (Kozak, 2003). Thus, a breathtaking attraction may be paired with a not-so- commensurate quality of service and vice-versa.

It therefore becomes imperative to measure each construct separately (Pearce, 2005). Stated differently, both the physical attraction and the setting in which it is delivered/consumed are critical to the satisfaction of the consumer (Baker et al. 1992; Clarke and Schmidt 1995).

Accordingly, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) ,highlight the importance of including all elements when assessing attraction

satisfaction. The expectation of a pleasurable and memorable experience is what motivates consumers to purchase products and services (Tsaur, Chiu, and Wang, 2006). Tourist satisfaction at attractions has been found to be shaped by three main attributes, socio demographic characteristics of tourists; physical and service-related attributes of the attractions, these are briefly one after the other in the succeeding paragraphs.

As regards the socio-demographic patterns, the literature highlights some interesting findings. Satisfaction has been found to vary by sex, age (Sparks, 2000) as well by nationality. Campo and Garau (2008) observed significant variations in satisfaction across the different nationalities of visitors to the Balearic Islands in Spain.

Residential status is also instrumental in determining satisfaction levels. In that regard, the traditional view (Pearce and Moscardo, 1998; Ozturk and Hancer, 2009) has been that locals have tended to be more appreciative and satisfied than non locals but has been challenged by a more recent finding from Russia in which Vetitnev et al. (2013) found greater discontent among domestic patrons.

Gender appears to have some influencing effect on overall satisfaction (Huh and Usyal, 2003; MacKay and Fesenmaier, 1997) with males tending to be the likelier of the sexes to be satisfied (Qu and Li, 1997; Ozturk and Hancer, 2009). Consumer behavior (as represented in the propensity for a repeat visit) has also been found to have some bearing on satisfaction.

Generally, repeat visitors are more likely to be satisfied than first time patrons (Pearce and Moscardo, 1998). More recent studies

(e.g. Correia, Kozak and Ferradeira, 2013; Tang 2013) have identified travel motivations as major determinants of visitor satisfaction.

Site-specific attributes have been suggested by the literature as shaping overall satisfaction among tourists. To that end, it has been suggested (e.g. Baker and Crompton, 2000; Neal and Gursoy (2008) Fuller and Matzler, 2008 Hasegawa (2010) that some attributes of a place tend to affect the entire satisfaction. Heung and Cheng (2000) found Japanese tourists' satisfaction with Hong Kong to be greatly influenced by their pleasure with accommodation, food, people, price and culture.

To this end, satisfaction has often been conceptualized through certain key attributes of a place or attraction. Regardless of the theoretical orientation , the traditional set of attributes which measure destination satisfaction have included the accommodation experience, services, customer care, hygiene, cleanliness, safety, events, accessibility and food and beverage (Kozak ,2001, 2003; Wang and Qu , 2006; Chi and Qu 2008; Vetinev et al (2013).service related attributes, frontline staff have also been identified (Choi and Chu, 2001; Boakye and Boohene, 2010; Eusebio and Vieira (2011), Coban (2012) as playing a major role towards visitor satisfaction at the attraction sites.

While there is an undisputed link between service quality and satisfaction (Grzinic, 2007, Siddiqui, 2011), the direction of the link is the subject of an interminable debate in the literature. While some authors see quality as an antecedent of satisfaction (eg. Parasuraman et al, 1988; Cronin and Taylor, 1992, Saravanana and Rao, 2007) the other school of thought (e.g. Bitner, 1992, Sovero,

Gonzalez, Lopez, Kirkby, 2012) has found otherwise.

The outcomes of customer satisfaction are clearly defined in the literature. Satisfaction is directly related to profitability (Matzler, Hinterhuber, Daxer and Huber, 2005) and has long term implications for shareholder value (Martinez-tur et al, 2011). Customer satisfaction has other long-term benefits, one of these being loyalty.

In the view of Hallowell (1996), customer loyalty is a predisposition to purchase a product or service offered by a company a second time. The direct causal link between satisfaction and loyalty has been variously demonstrated (Pritchard and Howard, 1997; Cronin and Taylor (1992) Oliver, 1997) in diverse situations.

Two common measures of loyalty are the tendency of patrons to say positive things about the product and encouraging people to patronize them (Johnson et al, 2001; Kandampully and Suhartunto (2003), Chen and Tsai, 2007; Hsu, 2008). Within the construct, loyalty is measured from two dimensions: willingness to return to Ghana as a destination and willingness to recommend the patronized attractions (Hsu 2008) to others.

In summary, the literature points to the composite nature of attractions, the importance of measuring satisfaction both at the overall level and from the perspective of individual constituent attributes, and the role of certain factors in shaping tourist satisfaction.

Measuring tourist satisfaction: theoretical and operational issues

Satisfaction arises out of a post-consumption experience (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). But such an otherwise simple concept has been difficult to measure (Yi, 1991) and

has engaged the scientific community's attention for many decades without a clear standardized method of measurement (Yi, 1990; Guiese and Cote, 2000).

The most contentious issue relates to how to measure the construct. Though there is arguably no standard operational definition of satisfaction, the literature is replete with various attempts to capture the phenomenon especially in the tourism/ hospitality domain. The common approach in tourism/ hospitality studies has been to develop an attribute-based construct and measure it using one sector of the industry.

To that end, Chi and Qu (2008) as well as Master and Prideaux (2000) have focused their study on the entire destination while Mazanec (1995) Vetitnev et al (2013) and Yuksel and Yuksel (2002) have studied specific hotels, attractions and restaurants respectively.

Two popular satisfaction theories that have often been employed are the expectancy-disconfirmation and the performance-only theories. The expectancy-disconfirmation theory holds that consumers first form expectations of products' or services' (the cultural/heritage destination attributes in this study) performance prior to purchase or use.

Its main proponent, (Oliver, 1980), argues that satisfaction is the outcome of the comparison of two independent sub-processes, namely, the formation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expectations through performance comparisons. The theory identifies two distinct stages: the first in which potential customers form their expectations of products.

This is particularly typical of attractions which by nature can only be consumed insitu

and cannot be accessed/tasted or tried before purchase. According to the theory, the second stage occurs with purchase (or in the case of attractions, patronage) which forms the basis for consumer beliefs about the actual or perceived performance of the product or service.

The consumer then compares the perceived performance to prior expectations. Consumer satisfaction is seen as the outcome of this comparison (Clemons and Woodruff, 1992) and can be either confirmed if performance exceeds expectations or disconfirmed when the reverse happens (Oliver and Beardon, 1985; Patterson, 1993).

The cognitive-affective model developed by Bosque and Martin (2008) is a popular variant of the disconfirmation theory. This thinking incorporates expectation-related affective dimensions (such as promotional information, word of mouth from family and friends) into measuring satisfaction. Performance only models on the other hand question the relevance of measuring expectation and juxtaposing them against performance.

The key argument here is that prior expectations play no meaningful role in satisfaction (Tse and Wilton, 1988; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Crompton and Love, 1995; Kozak, 2001; Yuksel and Yuksel, 2001b). There is a huge debate as to which of the two approaches better allows for adequately capturing satisfaction. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. While the cognitive-affective measures are challenged with validating the authenticity of prior expectations, the performance only models are also limited because they do not provide a comprehensive context for comparison and analysis.

This study employs the cognitive-affect

philosophy because of the uniqueness of the study area and the space it allows for juxtaposing experiences against expectations in the search for understanding satisfaction. Ghana is an emerging destination from a continent which faces daunting image problems in its bid to present itself as a choice destination (Ankomah and Crompton, 1990). Moreover, its core market comes from the same advanced countries to whom negative images are often projected (ROG, 2009). Hence, it is imperative to understand the tourist's (particularly inbound) experiential views of satisfaction from the perspective of their already existing knowledge and how such information shapes their expectations and by extension their satisfaction levels. Besides, cognitions are key contributors to the formation of emotions, which in turn influence tourism satisfaction during the stay (Bosque and Martin, 2008).

In summary, the literature highlights three key propositions that are useful for shaping the thought in this paper. First satisfaction is shaped by various socio-demographic characteristics; second, that loyalty is an outcome of satisfaction and, thirdly, that there is a difference between overall satisfaction and attribute-specific satisfaction.

Tourism in Ghana

Ghana's tourism has experienced impressive growth over the past three decades (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2012). This is shown in the number of visitors, receipts and contribution to GDP. According to the Ghana Tourism Authority, the country earned US $2.1 billion and employed almost 350000 persons in 2014. Since 2012, inbound arrivals have averaged one million per annum. The Ebola scare of 2013 took a toll on the country as visitor figures dipped by some 10-15%.

It is worth mentioning however, that since 2014; arrivals have increased again, currently reaching 1093000 according to the Ghana Tourism Authority. Ghana has a wide array of attractions- many of them yet to be developed- with the few existing ones still in their raw state (National Tourism Development Plan- 2013-2027).

These have been categorized under five main genres warm tropical climate, pristine beaches, ecological heritage, cultural heritage and historical heritage. The few established ones which have become iconic of the country are the Kakum National Park, and the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles which are World Heritage Sites. Ghana's attractions are patronized by four broad categories of visitors (Boakye and Mintah, 2008) as follows:

- Institutionalized domestic visitors (group-organized locally resident patrons such as school, church and work-based organizations)

- Institutionalized (group organized)international visitors (packed group tours largely from Europe and America)

- Non-institutionalized international visitors (volunteers, backpackers who arrive at the attraction in small groups and are not permanently resident in Ghana.

- Non- institutionalized domestic visitors (this group consists of Ghanaians and resident expatriates who visit the attractions either as individuals or family units and usually do not use tour buses).

Among these is a mixture of motives for visiting these attractions. The temporal dimensions are striking. It is mostly the case

that the visits by domestic patrons are largely associated with the presence of public holidays and weekends (Boakye and Mintah, 2008). The international/inbound tourists, however, outline a more evenly-distributed temporal curve. Of the four it is the institutionalized domestic visitors who are the most dominant at attraction sites (Boakye, Annim and Dasmani, 2013).

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Currently the tourist flows are concentrated in what may be described as the country's 'tourism triangle (Boakye, 2012: 330), located in the southern half of the country especially between towns such as Accra, Cape Coast-Elmina Area; Western Region, Kumasi and Ho. According to the latest figures from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) released in 2005, the three most visited attractions by tourists are the Kakum National Park, Kumasi Zoo and the Cape Coast Castle, all located in this zone.

Other well-visited tourist attractions in the country include the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, the Aburi Botanical gardens, The Shai Hills forest reserve, and on a lesser frequency the Dubois Memorial Centre and the recently-constructed shopping malls, the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, the Manhyia Palace Museum, the British Fort, and the Kumasi Cultural Centre.

Other popular attractions in its outskirts include the Yaa Asantewaa Shrine the ever-popular Bonwire craft village and Lake Bosomtwe-an inland water lake whose origins are subject to varied interpretations. Over the last two years, the beaches have become popular for holiday makers and a strong demand for leisure is emerging among the middle class.

Perhaps, owing to their general state of underdevelopment and disrepair, Ghana's attractions are generally under researched, much less within the framework of satisfaction. Save work by Akyeampong (2008) and Bank of Ghana (2007) attractions hardly gain any attention. Even when they do, the focus is not on the satisfaction they generate.

Methods
Design

The study adopted the exploratory design and relied on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Nineteen (19) tourist attraction sites were purposively selected from all the ten (10) regions in the country. These attraction sites were chosen based mainly on their popularity in terms of patronage (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2012) and, to a lesser extent, the degree of accessibility.

The accidental sampling method was used to choose the study's respondents. This is mainly because the target population is not covered by a sampling frame (Sarantakos, 2007) and also because tourist flow to attraction sites varies based on time, season and state of the tourist attraction.

There is no fixed number of tourists for a particular attraction site and for that matter, visits to attraction sites are not covered by a sampling frame. The data was collected through the use of questionnaires and an arbitrary daily quota of 20 instruments was

established. The instrument contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The open ended questions allowed respondents to express their view on ethical issues in the hotels and how ethical decisions are taken in the industry. Most of the closed-ended questions employed the semantic differential technique in which respondents were required to indicate their satisfaction or otherwise with an attribute.

The data collection period covered three months- December, 2012 through to February, 2013. Prior to the fieldwork, permission was sought from the managers of the selected attractions sites. This helped ensured a good rapport with the workers at the attraction sites for easy accessibility to the site as well as the tourists.

Field assistants were trained on the questionnaire administration and they were educated on the ethical issues surrounding the study. Tourists' satisfaction was disaggregated in terms of their contentment with the environment, culture, quality of supporting infrastructure, accessibility and availability of complementary services.

Pre-test of the instrument was carried out in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. Three different attractions that were of similar type and qualities as the major attractions in the country were used for the pre-test. The pre-test helped the researchers to restructure the instrument for easy understanding and interpretation of the questions.

The Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire yielded a value of 0.737 and 0.942. Questionnaires were then administered at all the 19 attractions in the country. A total of 434 questionnaires were collected from the field and 412 questionnaires were usable for the analysis of this paper. Completed questionnaires were cleaned, coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics software version 19 for analysis.

Some of the variables analyzed included respondents socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, educational level, age and marital status. Other variables examined included overall satisfaction and satisfaction with specificattributes such as product attractiveness and staff performance.

Descriptive statistical analyses such as percentage and frequency distribution and standard deviation were performed to describe the basic features of the data in the study. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed to investigate the association between certain key variables and satisfaction with various aspects of the attraction sites as per the trends identified in the literature.

Sample Characteristics

Though the sample was acquired using the accidental/convenience method, its profile is consistent with the dynamics of the data provided yearly by the Ghana Tourism Authority. Ghana is generally regarded as a low-income destination and this is shown by the dominance of young low-budget tourists who fit into Plug's (1972) allocentric typology. Other studies (e.g Boakye and Boohene, 2010; Dayour, 2013; Agyeiwaah, 2013) have posted similar profiles.

There was little differentiation by sex but there were marked differences in categories age, occupation and place of permanent stay (Table 1). The age dynamics confirmedGhana as appealing to the young market. The youth (aged19-35) constituted

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents

Background Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	209	50.7
Female	203	49.3
Total	412	100.0
Age		
Less than 18	34	8.3
19-35	306	74.3
36-49	51	12.4
50 and above	21	5.1
Total	412	100.0
Marital status		
Single	311	75.5
Married	101	24.5
Total	412	100.0
Educational level		
None	9	2.2
Basic education	13	3.2
Senior High School education	126	30.6
Tertiary education	201	48.8
Postgraduate education	63	15.3
Total	412	100.0
Occupation		
Formal	105	25.5
Informal/self employed	85	20.6
Student	222	53.6
Total	412	100.0
Place of permanent stay		
Within Ghana	296	71.8
Outside Ghana	116	28.2
Total	412	100.0

in excess of 70% of the sample. Most (about two-thirds) respondents visited Ghana in small groups (numbering less than 20).

The figures, again, highlight the importance of the domestic visitor within the tourism space. More than 70% of the patrons were visiting from within Ghana. Word of mouth (60%) was generally the most dominant source of information about attractions and the country. The Ashanti, Central and Greater AccraRegions were the most visited, collectively accounting for half (51%) of all visitations.

At the other end, the Western, Northern and Volta Regions were the least visited in the country. Leisure and recreation (37.6%) education' (27.6%) and 'nature' (25.6%) were the three most mentioned motivations for visiting Ghana. Educational background was the only socio-demographic variable that was significantly associated with the motivation for visiting Ghana ($\chi 2$, df, 6, = 30.95; p<0.05). Respondents with higher educational background tended more to be motivated by nature while for those with pre-tertiary education, the greater preference was for leisure and recreation.

Results
Overall satisfaction

On the whole, a high proportion of respondents were satisfied with the entire destination as well as the attractions. Most(75%) satisfied with their respondents were overall tourism experience in Ghana as well as their experience at the various attractions. A large majority 80% said their expectations of the attractions had been met on the trip and an even larger percentage (82%) indicated that they would

Table 2: Satisfaction with services and products on site

Attribute	Satisfied	Unsatisfied
Product attractiveness		
Attractiveness of product	70.1	29.9
beauty of scenery	63.2	36.8
Quality of the attraction	72	28
Uniqueness	74.2	23.8
Satisfaction with the product	72	28
Safety along route to sites	49	51
Ease of access to site	47.1	52.9
Staff performance		
Friendliness of staff	64.5	35.5

Communication skills of staff	60.1	39.9
Knowledge of staff about product	53	47
Performance of tourguide	62.3	31.7
Sanitation		
Availability of bathroom and washroom facilities	34.6	65.4
Cleanliness of bathrooms	35.3	64.7
Cleanliness of environment	51.6	49.4
Supporting infrastructure/ services		
Seating	48	52
Disability friendliness	23	77
Presence of food and beverage facilities	36.8	63.2
Quality of food	34.3	65.7
Variety of food	30	70
Price of food	27.8	72.2
Safety	46.6	53.4

recommend the attractions to their friends.

Attribute-related satisfaction

An assessment of satisfaction with the individual attributes painted a less complimentary picture. It is noted that attribute satisfaction was generally lower than overall satisfaction (Table 2). On the whole, the greatest levels of dissatisfaction were found in the attribute-related areas of staff performance, sanitation, and supporting infrastructure.

All the attributes under these variables recorded the highest forms of dissatisfaction.

Staff performance was averagely satisfactory. Staff friendliness and communication skills scored 64% and 60% satisfaction respectively but their technical abilities (staff knowledge and performance of tour guide) scored even lower.

In fact, staff knowledge about the product returned the highest level of performance-related dissatisfaction (47%). The sanitation conditions at these attractions were found to be unsatisfactory by the majority of the respondents. Another majority of respondents were

not satisfied with the availability of bath-rooms and washroom facilities (65.4%); cleanliness of the few ones available (64.7%) and the cleanliness of the environment surrounding the attraction (50%).

Of the three attribute genres, it was in the area of supporting services that respondents were most dissatisfied. Evidence of this dismal performance can be found from Table 2 where the dissatisfaction outweighed the satisfaction scores on all indicators in the category. The biggest level of dissatisfaction was in the area of provision of disability-friend-ly infrastructure (77%). Also ranked low in terms of satisfaction were the availability of food/beverage, variety of food and price of food (Table 3).

A probe for patterns using the Chi-Square Test of Independence showed some note-worthy statistical associations between some socio-demographic variables and satisfaction with certain attributes. Three variables that stand out in this regard are residential status, age and occupation.

Residential status was found to be statistically associated with both overall satisfaction and satisfaction with various attributes such as beauty of scenery (p=0.001); cleanliness of bathrooms (p=0.002); staff friendliness (p=.033); ease of access to attraction (p=0.000); safety at attractions (p=.017); availability of food and beverage outlets (p=0.04); quality of food at the attraction (p=0.017); price of food (p=0.002); and quality of service provided by staff (p=0.000).

It is worth noting that in all these instances the local residents (domestic tourists) tended to be more satisfied than their inbound counterparts.Age was found to have a statistically significant association with respondents'

satisfaction with communication skills (p=0.005). The most satisfied with this attribute were those in the young adult category (aged 19-35) while the least satisfied were the elderly (aged 50 years and above).

Again, Age had a statistically significant association with both ease of access to attraction sites (p= 0.016) and safety (p=0.007). In all these instances, younger patrons tended to be more satisfied. Occupation also returned some significant association with a few attraction attributes. For example, satisfaction with staff communication skills (p=0.014); ease of access to attractions (p= 0.000); safety (p=0.018); availability of food and beverage outlets (p=. 004) and food quality (p=0.022). In most instances, students were found to be the occupational group with the highest satisfaction.

Comments from attractions

A mixture of comments were gleaned from the open-ended section of the instrument in relation to respondents' comments on their experiences at the attraction sites. Some positive comments included "unique adventure attractions" and "nice friendly staff". On the negative side, comments included " high cost of entry fees", "too much heat", "poor crowd control measures" " poor supporting facilities" "dirty and unsanitary conditions "poor access to attractions".

Discussion

On the whole, the findings have reflected the propositions posited by the literature. The first assertion that satisfaction is shaped by various socio-demographic characteristics has been confirmed in the results of the present study. The assertion was particularly true

of the variables residential status, occupation and age.

The finding that residential status has a significant relationship with overall satisfaction is consistent with those from earlier studies (e.g Pearce and Moscardo, 1998; Ozturk and Hancer, 2009). Specifically it emerged that domestic patrons were more likely to be satisfied with the attractions and their related services.

When combined with the other two variables, a sketchy profile of the typical satisfied patron can be drawn. Typically, the most satisfied respondents were young (aged between 19 and 35) local students. These persons are typically school or church-based groups who hardly ever travel for touristic purposes (Boakye, Annim and Dasmani, 2013; Sebu, 2012).

This finding is not very surprising given the fact that such persons are known (e.g Dayour, 2013) to be more accepting of local standards and thus more tolerant of poor standards. . As per the tenets of the disconfirmation theory their limited exposure, translates into low standards of comparison and (by extension) expectations. Thus, because their expectations are hardly uninformed (hence low) it takes very little effort to surpass them to yield satisfaction.

The converse may be true of the most dissatisfied patrons, i.e. the   in-bound elderly (aged 50 years and above). Such persons are likely to have had a much wider travelling experience and would have been exposed to many experiences (even within other African destinations) to help them form expectations.

It is not surprising that attractions with the highest satisfaction scores included the Kakum National Park, the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, and the Manhyia Palace Museum in Kumasi. A visit to these four would show that they are relatively more developed (in terms of creating a visitor product and having well-structured patronage guidelines) than the others in the country.

In Ghana, attractions are commonly in a raw state and these four mentioned appear to be atypical of the general situation. The first three (Cape Coast, Castle, Elmina Castle and Kakum National Park) are the country's iconic attractions which were created in the early 1990s as part of a major drive to enhance the country's tourism appeal.

The Kakum National Park, in particular, has been the recipient of many international tourism awards, particularly the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award received in the year 2000. Since then, however, no new attractions of a similar scale have been developed anywhere else.

The results also suggest that the link established in the literature between satisfaction and loyalty may be upheld. The strong (82%) willingness to recommend (which is itself a variant of loyalty), may be linked to the generally high overall satisfaction high satisfaction (75%) found of the destination. Similar findings have been made by Hsu (2008). In this specific case however, the loyalty was expressed not in revisit intentions but in a strong willingness to recommend the destination to others.

The findings also support the assertion in the literature (e.g Pearce, 2005) that a difference exists between overall satisfaction and attribute-specific satisfaction. As shown in Table 2, the percentage of respondents who were overall satisfied (75%) was higher thanthat for any of the individual attributes.

The results also give expression to Bitner's (1992) distinction between the two elements of the servicescape- the actual product and the support services and corroborate the generally known truism that Ghana's attractions exist in their raw state. Many of these attractions lack the supporting facilities needed to complement the tourist experience.

Even when these are present, they fall far below acceptable standards. As is noted from Table 2, beyond their intrinsic and naturally occurring inherent qualities, the attractions do not offer much satisfaction. Interestingly, the variables under the construct titled product attractiveness (attractiveness of the product-70.1%; beautyof scenery-63.5%; quality of the attraction (72%); and uniqueness-74.2%) recorded higher percentages of satisfied patrons than the other categories.

Indeed, the lowest satisfaction results were witnessed in the area of supporting services such as availability of food and beverage (36%); and cleanliness of bathrooms (35%) only go to strengthen the point that there is not much by way of support services to attraction patronage. Of particular mention in this regard is the very low (23%) score for disability friendliness of the attractions.

Save for some limited provision at the Kakum National Park almost all the existing attractions do not have facilities for the physically challenged. Besides not having the commensurate support facilities, most of the attractions are largely unkempt and face major sanitation challenges.

It is not surprising, therefore, that almost half the respondents (49.6%) were dissatisfied with cleanliness of the environment (Table 2). Ghana as a destination has been noted (e.g Teye et al. 2002; Akyeampong, 2008) to face major sanitation challenges.

The dominance of patronage by young domestic tourists is consistent with known patterns (e.g GTA, 2012, Dayour, 2013, Otoo and Amuquandoh, 2014 etc) on Ghana and has demand, supply and policy implications. From the demand side, it signals the presence of a clear market segment that must be understood and nurtured.

Other studies (e.g Sebu, 2012; Boakye et al, 2013) have commented on the growing travel culture among the youth and the presence of a vibrant market segment which presents business opportunities for tour operators. The focus of these entrepreneurs is often the inbound market but the domestic tourism market in Ghana is virtually untapped and offers better opportunities, at least, for guaranteeing a more consistent market.

The inbound market, though relatively more profitable, has proven time without number to be volatile and unreliable. The most recent instance was witnessed with the Ebola crisis of 2013-14 where the Tour Operation business suffered greatly with cancelled booking and the attendant loss of revenue.

From the supply perspective, the dominance also signals the need for greater investments in the development of support facilities which meet such market segments. Presently, Ghana's accommodation stock is mainly dominated by hotels whose prices fall out of the range of the low income traveler (Akyeampong, 2007; Agyeiwaah, 2013; Dayour, 2013).

From the policy perspective, the higher satisfaction that was found among this group is also a positive sign for the country's tourism effort given the traditionally held view (e.g. Archer, 1978) that domestic tourism is more

beneficial to developing countries like Ghana. The key argument here is that domestic tourists are more accepting of local goods and standards and this places less anxiety on service providers to incur unnecessary costs to standardize their products. In the process, tourism-related businesses can benefit more from tourism demand and generate other important spin-offs such as the creation of of employment and the accrual of higher tax revenue to government.

The issues raised point to the strong need for planning. It has been found (e.g Benckendorff and Pearce , 2003) that well-planned and structured attractions have higher levels of perceived performance and face the future with better growth prospects and business confidence.

Attractions should be developed with both their intrinsic appeal and the supporting services in mind Clearly, Ghana's tourism attractions have not been planned both in terms of structure and support services. It is gratifying to note that the Ghana Tourism Authority is in the process of regulating tourism attractions.

It would be important for the government to outline or develop prototypes of tourism attractions. These will become the standard for attraction development anywhere in the country. Addressing these challenges, therefore, requires a well-coordinated effort particularly from both the public and private sectors.

From the public sector, the state and its agencies would have to create the relevant environment and undertake an aggressive drive to identify and create new attractions. Fortunately, the tourism law (Tourism Act 817 of 2011) specifically stipulates the decentralization of tourism development by empowering the Local Authorities to develop their tourism potential. The private sector must be induced to invest in tourism. In addition to the opportunities mentioned earlier, the provision of superstructure and services as well as the management of the attractions on a contract basis can provide lucrative business opportunities for the private sector. In conclusion, it may be said that Ghana's attractions have drawing power but lack the retention abilities. Though their unique appeal makes them attractive, the attractions need to be upgraded through enhancing the product and creating strong support services. For further research, it would be instructive to explore the degree to which tourist type shapes satisfaction. This is an area that is rarely discussed but highly important given the well-defined different market segments that exist.

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