Chapter 9

Residents’ Perceptions of and Participation in Rural Tourism Development: Acumens From Karimenga Community in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism development in contemporary times is viewed with a participatory approach lens thus allowing local residents to benefit. This study assessed tourism development in Karimenga, a community in the West Mamprusi District with a facility dubbed the “Greenhouse Tourism Project”. It also assessed the perception of residents on their participation in tourism and equally explored the impact of tourism development in the community. Employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, data were sourced from a sample of 112 residents through questionnaire administration and In-depth Interview (IDI) schedules. The study revealed that the majority of the residents (67%) were involved in tourism decision making. It is recommended that benefits from tourism be made to ‘spiral’ the community to reach most households through loans granted by the assembly for handicraft work to enhance souvenir trade.
INTRODUCTION

The significant changes that rural communities around the globe have witnessed in the past decade has brought about economic difficulties as many of the primary local industries which served as means of livelihood for rural residents have declined substantially (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Subsistence agriculture, which is the ‘hallmark’ of many rural communities has together with other rural livelihood activities such as herding and artisanal work, experienced certain shocks and stresses (Chambers & Conway, 1991) which contributed to their decline. To enable rural communities obtain alternative livelihood sources and help eradicate poverty while utilizing their resources, many countries, especially developing nations resort to rural tourism development (Látková & Vogt, 2012).

Countries around the world have accepted and employed rural tourism as a means of economic diversification and sustainable development of their rural areas. Indeed, local community involvement, particularly in emerging, remote and oftentimes rural tourism destinations, is justified to accomplish sustainable tourism development efforts (Kala & Bagri, 2018). In countries like Spain (Yague-Perales, 2002), USA (Gartner, 2004), Malaysia (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013) and China (Tian, 2017) for instance, rural tourism has long been promoted for purposes of rural development and has brought substantial economic progress to rural communities. In the developing world, particularly countries of Africa such as The Gambia, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and Ghana, rural tourism development has also been employed as a strategy for poverty alleviation and protection of natural resources (Ezeuduji, 2017).

Irshad (2010) cited in Ghadanb et. al., (2017), have thus defined rural tourism as the country experience involving various forms of attractions and activities taking place in the rural setting or agricultural areas. Rural tourism has become an important component of the tourism industry and is widely practiced in many countries in different forms and contexts (Ertuna & Kirbas, 2012). It is considered a potentially good product for promoting community involvement in the travel industry and an efficient way to enhancing the living conditions of rural communities by providing them with sustainable livelihood sources (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013; Ahmad et. al., 2015).

GEOTOURISM VIS-À-VIS RURAL TOURISM

In tourism development literature, the emergence of geotourism employs similar tenets which is akin to rural tourism. Geotourism is a phenomenon that offers a more sustainable tourism which is more holistic (Dowling and Newsome, 2017). It enhances the distinctive geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents (National Geographic, 2019). Features of geotourism serving as “pull factors” to the geotraveller are: Integrity of a place, community involvement, community benefit, tourist satisfaction, conservation of resources, planning, land use and market diversity. Geotourism is therefore not a niche in the tourism market but an emerging phenomenon that helps local businesses develop approaches to tourism drawing on the area’s nature, history and culture, including food and drink, artisanship, performance and arts (National Geographic, 2019). Indeed, Jaaffar, et. al., (2015) and Marfo (2014) noted in the literature that tourism often created new business opportunities in rural destinations thus offering employment to rural folks. It is a kind of travel that makes visitors aware of and to gain some understanding of the geological features that surround them. In geotourism, residents discover their own heritage by learning that things they take for granted may be interesting to outsiders and as local people develop pride and skills in showing their locale, tourists get

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