

Agrotourism, entrepreneurship and skills: a case of poultry farms in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana

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Abstract

Despite efforts to revitalise the poultry sector in Ghana, there is lack of attention to alternative economic strategies within the sector that can contribute to its sustainability. Against this backdrop, this research selected purposively 5 leading poultry farms in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana to explore their agrotourism potential. Interviews were carried out with the 5 farm managers as well as 2 officials from the Ghana Tourism Authority and an official from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. In addition, 50 poultry farm workers were purposively selected from the 5 farms and 50 semi-structured questionnaires were administered on face-to-face basis. The data collected were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 16, employing largely descriptive statistics. The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that there is the need for capacity building to enhance the skills of the farm managers and workers for successful agrotourism enterprise. There is also the need for government support towards developing the poultry sector and agrotourism.

Keywords: Agrotourism, Poultry Farm, Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurial Skills, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing diversification in agriculture, and rural landscapes offer great opportunities for tourism businesses, especially in developing countries where economic options are often limited (Phelan & Sharpley, 2011; Rogerson, 2012; Tew & Barbieri, 2013; Eshun & Tettey, 2014; Hall & Campos, 2014; Marais, 2014). However, despite agriculture been the mainstay of African countries, research from especially Western Africa shows a glaring lacuna on the nexus between agrotourism and entrepreneurship (Asiedu & Gbedema, 2012; Eshun & Tettey, 2014).

Agriculture accounts for 41% of Gross National Product and provides 60% of Ghana's labour force (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, [MoFA] 2002). The poultry sector is an important component of

Ghana's agriculture, however the country's competitive advantage in the sector is fast eroding due to untrammled importation of frozen chicken products and lack of government support (Oppong-Apene, 2013). Currently, imported poultry products tend to be 30-40% cheaper than chicken produced in Ghana (Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 2014). Despite attempts to develop a vibrant poultry sector in Ghana, there is lack of research on diversification in the sector. Also, the corpus literature on entrepreneurship in tourism, shows sparse studies that contest the role of entrepreneurship within the dynamics of agrotourism business (Pyysiäinen et al. 2006). This paper thus teases out the willingness of poultry farmers to diversify their existing poultry operations to include agrotourism within the milieu of the macro-business environment in Ghana. There

are about 25 million free-roaming village poultry in Ghana. Poultry production in the Ashanti Region with Kumasi as its capital, accounted for 28.07% of the total poultry production in Ghana in 2009, only second to Brong Ahafo Region which registered 29.62% (FAO, 2014). Large-scale poultry production is above 10,000 birds, medium-scale (5,000-10,000) and small-scale (50-5,000) producing mainly eggs (FAO, 2006). However, the Ashanti Region has most of the leading poultry farms in Ghana, and was therefore purposively selected for this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism has over the years depended on entrepreneurs identifying opportunities and turning them into viable businesses (Hall & Compos, 2014). Increasingly, farmers are engaging in other activities not directly related to agriculture which has led to the term *agripreneur* (Tew & Barbieri, 2013). Eshun and Tettey (2014), have introduced the term *agritourpreneur* to refer specifically to *agripreneurs* engaged in tourism. *Agrotourpreneurs* may engage in tourism at the primary, complementary or supplementary level. In a primary agrotourism, the tourism is the main economic activity. For example, a farmer may set up demonstration farms solely for visitors to learn about newly improved breeds.

Under complementary agrotourism, the tourism activity share equal footing with the agro-activity. For example, on a coffee farm, there can be coffee shops, where visitors can take coffee drinks. Lastly, in a supplementary agrotourism, the tourism activity is not the main focus of the *agritourpreneur*. For example, school excursions to farms. Furthermore, three main range of agrotourism products are noted in literature viz: fixed attractions (e.g. living farms; arboretums; food processing facilities and craft markets), events (e.g. fairs and agricultural shows)

and services (farm tours and agro-processing).

Entrepreneurship is often referred to as the creation of an innovative business with the aim to create and maximise wealth under conditions of risk (Daft & Marcic, 2007). However, issues of entrepreneurship are underpinned by the 'yes-school' or Kirznerian School (which posits entrepreneurship is teachable) and the 'no-school' or Schumpeterian school (which posits entrepreneurship is non-teachable). Also entrepreneurship has been analysed either at the micro-level (e.g. considering traits, skill levels, etc of entrepreneurs) or at the macro-level which involves considering factors such as the political, economic, social, technological climates of locations. Israel Kirzner, further opine that entrepreneurs seek for information and exploit as an opportunity. Josef Schumpeter, however, contrast this by averring that external factors such as technological advancement and economic conditions engender entrepreneurial opportunities. Baron and Shane (2005), argue that it is interecine to embrace either of the viewpoints, rather there is the need to unpack the import and nuances of both viewpoints concurrently in an entrepreneurial research.

Phelan and Sharpley (2007), categorised the skills that farmers require under business and management skills, and entrepreneurial and personal maturity skills. The business and management skills are more attuned to farmers carrying out the principal functions of management viz: planning, organising, leading and controlling.

The entrepreneurial and personal maturity skills supplement the former skills, whilst equipping farmers with abilities to seize opportunities in the business environment. **(See Table 1)**

Table 1 Skills for Farm Tourism Enterprise

Business and Management Skills
Customer Service: Handling service expectations and dealing with problems
Financial: Managing financial resources, accounting, budgeting
Marketing/Sales: Identifying and reaching customers/distribution channels
Organizational Skills: Day to day administration, managing yourself and your time
Small Business Regulations: i.e. Health, Safety, risk and assessments
Supervision: Manage/supervise employees and their needs
Entrepreneurial and Personal Maturity Skills
Accountability: Ability to take responsibility for solving a problem
Emotional Coping: Emotional ability to cope with a problem
Critical Evaluation: The ability to think critically
Networking: Co-operation with others, networking and utilizing contacts
Self-Awareness: Ability to reflect and be introspective
Environmental Scanning: Recognize market gap, exploit market opportunity
Business Concept: Business and strategic planning
Goal Setting: Ability to set personal goals, reach them and set new ones
Negotiation: Persuasive communication and negotiation skills

Source: Phelan & Sharpley (2010:12-15).

The Poultry Sector in Ghana

The poultry industry in Ghana was given a boost when the Ghana National Association of Poultry Farmers was formed in 1984, the Ghana Feed Millers Association in 1985 and hatcheries in 1990s. Ghana's poultry sector was pioneered by the establishment of commercial state poultry farms such as Pomadze Farms in the 1960's to address the shortfall of animal protein. However, the growth was slow because of unavailability of inputs and outbreak of poultry diseases. The 1970s saw the removal of import duties on poultry and this led to the setting up of private poultry farms. Also, the 'Operation Feed Yourself' programme rolled out in the period led to an increase in backyard poultry rearing. These interventions led to the country supplying 95% of its poultry needs in the 1980s and 1990s. However, since the year 2000, the sector has registered a decline in production and the country supplies only 10% of its poultry needs. In 2012, Ghana spent US\$200 million on importation of frozen chicken, which forms 4.98% of the country's GDP (Aning, 2006).

There is increasing acknowledgement that poultry meat is economical and has a number of desirable nutritional and

organoleptic properties. Also, the poultry sector is a very important source of livelihood for not just rural communities but also for peri/urban areas. Guèye (2008) avers that commercial poultry production has made substantial progress during the last sixty years in both Western and Central Africa. However, development of vibrant poultry sectors in these countries are dependent on costly imported inputs day-old chicks from high-performance hybrid stocks, balanced feeds, drugs and vaccines. For example, the 11 hatcheries in Ghana are operating at only 38% of their total production capacity (Aning, 2006). Also, most financial institutions (e.g. Pro Credit, Sinapi Aba Trust, Venture Capital Fund and Rural Banks) in Ghana are unwilling to finance poultry production. Indeed, most small-scale poultry farmers have not received credit from Agriculture Development Bank due to their inability to provide the needed collaterals. Similarly, Dessie and Olge (2010) aver that financial institutions in Ethiopia are reluctant to lend to poultry farmers due to the remoteness of clients, the lag between investment needs and revenues, inoperative collateral, and high risks due to weather, pests and diseases. In Ghana, gumboro and Newcastle diseases kill thousands of poultry birds annually. Also Afariwaa

Farms had to destroy about 60,000 day-old chicks due to fear of the Avian influenza outbreak, and the cost of containment of the disease in Ghana since 2006 was valued at US\$4.3 million (Aning, 2006; Akunzule et al., 2009). Furthermore, the two main national poultry farms— Pomadze and Afariwaa Farms have folded up due to cut-throat competition from importers of frozen chicken products and lack of government support (FAO, 2006; Oppong-Apene, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Kumasi Metropolis covers an approximate area of 254km² and it is located between latitudes 6°35' and 6°42'N and longitudes 1°30' and 1°35' E. Kumasi has population estimated at 1,517,000. The vegetation of the Kumasi Metropolis falls within the moist semi-deciduous section of the South-East Ecological Zone and is characterized by average temperatures ranging from 21.5°C to 30.7°C. Average annual rainfall is 625mm with peaks of 214.3mm (June) and 16.2mm (September). The study selected purposively five large scale farms in the Kumasi Metropolis, this was because, large scale poultry farms often receive a lot of visitors year round and thus present an interesting scenario to explore the potential for agrotourism development. The first of these farms is Akate farms, which was established in 1985 with the aim of producing and supplying quality poultry products. The company's hatchery produces 80,000 chicks per day, 5,000 day-old guinea fowls and a workforce of 500. The farm remains the largest poultry farm in Ghana. The second farm is Darko farms, which was established by Kwabena Darko in 1967. The company used to produce more than 50% of Ghana's day old chicks, its table eggs and dressed chicken. The company facilities stretched over 1200 acres on 8 different sites and consisted of a hatchery which used to produce over 5 million day-old-chicks, 30 million table eggs, 780,000 units of chicken and 30,000 tons of animal feed. Darko farms is currently in partnership with Tyson foods, USA. The third farm

was Kumah Farms which is into livestock rearing, fish farms and hatcheries. The fourth selected farm was Asamoah and Yamoah Farms. The company is into poultry and poultry housing, and remains a family business. The last farm selected was Topman Farms, the farm remains the only outfit which practices artificial insemination and has its own hatchery with Petersime multi-stage incubators.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study involved both primary and secondary data. The data collection took place between January and February, 2014. The study employed mixed-methodological approach using semi-structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and field observation. A total of 50 questionnaires were administered face-to-face to 50 purposively selected employees from 5 purposively selected farms. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants for their experience and perspectives relating to the investigation (Creswell, 2008). There were 2 main modules in the questionnaire. Module one focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second module focused on issues of agriculture, tourism, challenges and entrepreneurial skills. Also the 5 managers of the various farms were interviewed along with 3 officials; 2 from Ghana Tourism Authority and an official from MoFA. The interviews lasted between 1-2 hours and the responses were audiotaped with permission from the interviewees. The data were analysed using SPSS Version 16, employing largely descriptive statistics. After Dey (1993), the qualitative data were analysed through a three-step process namely, description, classification and interconnecting. The description involved transcribing data from the in-depth interviews into a mass of text.

The classification step involved relating the transcribed data into their major themes. Thirdly, the interconnecting step involved making sense of the themes in relation to the study objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Out of a total of 50 respondents, 40 were males (80%), while 10 were females (20%). On age, 38% of the respondents fall within the age range of 21-25 years, 26% for age range (26-30 years), 31-35 years (8%), ages 36-40 (22%) while 6% represented the ages between 40 and above. According to the respondents, the poultry business is laborious, risky and demands huge capital investment, thus the presence of higher number of males in the business than females. With the marital status, 27(54%) were single; 21(42%) were married and 2(4%) being divorcees. On education, 24(48%) had no formal education, 5(10%) had primary education, 2(4%) had junior high education, 5(10%) had senior high education and 13(26%) had tertiary education. Only one respondent gave other specification as Chartered Accountancy (ACCA) level two. Also, on the positions occupied by the respondents, 14(28%) work in the Hatchery Department, 4(8%) work in the Accounting Department, 6(12%) work in the Transport Department, 5(10%) work in Administration, 6(12%) work in Marketing Department and 9(18%) work as farm

hands. To most farm managers, the preoccupation with human resource requirement is centred on the farm hands, hence the less emphasis on higher education.

Farm Skills and Agrotourism Development

All the 5 interviewed managers indicated their willingness to engage in various forms of agrotourism, but this is not always the case. The manager of Darko Farms adds, "the poultry sector needs to introduce something new to regain its vibrancy". This finding contrasts the finding by Lepp (2008) in Bigodi in Uganda, where the locals presented initial opposition to tourism development. Specifically on skills, managers were asked to rate from (1) excellent to (5) poor on the skills they deemed most important to their roles. Business concept and small business regulations skills' were clearly identified by the respondents as being the most important attributes, both with a mean ranking of 2.50 and a standard deviation of 0.67 and 0.73 respectively. The mean for customer service and organisational skills were lowest, the former may be due to most of the farms not being directly involved in services (**See Table 2**).

Table 2 Farm Managers' Ratings of Skills

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Managerial Skills			
Customer service	50	2.1800	.48192
Financial	50	2.3400	.79821
Marketing and sales	50	2.2000	.67006
Organizational skills	50	2.1800	.66055
Small business regulations	50	2.5000	.73540
Supervision	50	2.3600	.63116
Entrepreneurial and Personal Maturity Skills			
Accountability	50	2.2400	.71600
Emotional coping	50	2.3600	.72168
Critical evaluation	50	2.3400	.82338
Networking	50	2.3600	.59796
Self-awareness	50	2.4600	.76158
Environmental scanning	50	2.4400	.67491
Business concept	50	2.5000	.67763
Goal setting	50	2.2800	.80913
Negotiation	50	2.2200	.64807

Source: Fieldwork (2014).

Poultry Farmers, sometimes receive training from both regional, national and international organisations. For example, in 2013, with respect to capacity building, training on Hazard Critical Control Point was organized for poultry farmers in Kumasi and Accra (FAO, 2014). Field observation also revealed that most of the workers lack customer service. To majority of the farm-hands, the presence of visitors on the farms distract their work schedule and sometimes, they find it difficult to communicate in English. This demands that a bottom-up approach to agrotourism is adopted to ensure that especially the front-line employees are well-versed in customer service towards a better moment-of-truth.

Perceptions on the Schumpeterian and Kirznerian Dichotomy

On the question of whether entrepreneurs are born or taught, two of the managers maintained that entrepreneurs are born. The manager of Asamoah and Yamoah Farms reiterates, “some people have never been to school but they can start a business and it flourishes better under them than the educated”. The remaining three managers however argued that with the right training one can gain the capacity to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The workers were asked the same question, and 33(66%) indicated entrepreneurs are born since qualities such as risk-taking are not gained from the classroom. This is in consonance with the Schumpeterian view that entrepreneurs have a strong sense of achievement. Contrary, 17(34%) said ‘no’, entrepreneurial skills are learnt, thus concurring with the Kirznerian viewpoint. The educated employees are mostly found in the offices and are mostly the heads of departments. From the study, 37(74%)

indicated that they were given training before they took up their jobs and 13(26%) maintain, further training are given when new trends emerge in the sector. The forms of training given to workers include technical skills such as ICT training, safety and health, hatchery and brooding techniques and vaccination. A respondent adds, “In the Accounting Department, we were introduced to the pro-vides software”. Also, the workers with years of experiences often are called on to offer in-house training to the newly recruited.

PEST Analysis on Poultry Sector and implications for Agrotourism

Using PEST analysis the study addressed macro-level business environment issues for the sustainability of the poultry sector and agrotourism. The political environment is composed of laws, pressure groups and government agencies, all of which exert some sort of influence on businesses (Daft & Marcic, 2007).

From the outset, it is worth to consider government support for agrotourism development in Ghana. A critical review of policy documents in Ghana shows that agrotourism is mentioned sparsely despite the country’s considerable agrobiodiversity potential. Indeed, in 2004, the then minister of MoFA, inaugurated a 14-member ‘National Committee on the Development of Agrotourism’. Nevertheless, the lack of collaboration with other key actors on tourism in Ghana has stifled any major implementation based on their report. Also the latest tourism plan, National Tourism Development Plan for the 2013-2027 only mentioned the prospects of agrotourism based on cocoa, oil palm and rubber plantations, with no mention made on animal-based farms (**See Table 3**).

Table 3 PEST Analysis and Implications on Agrotourism

Elements	Considerations	Implications for Agrotourism
Political	A Democratic Country. Relatively stable country. ECOWAS and Access to the European market.	Linkage between tourism and agriculture extremely weak, government support needed.
Economic	Adult literacy rates (both sexes) (51%), 38% of population <15 years, Lower middle Income country.	There is need for both private and public sector partnership towards agrotourism.
Social	GDP per Capita: US\$1,533. Multi-dimensional poverty index: 0.140. Ghana's human, cultural and natural resources ranked 117 th in 2013. Human Development Index: 130.	Ghana positions itself as a destination of culture, warmth and rhythm with unique agro-ecological resources. Youth empowerment paramount.
Technological	Presence of ESOKO. FIAB facility. E-Commerce still low. Issues of Phishing.	Rudimentary technologies dominate. Hybrid breeds and innovative approaches, hatcheries, feed-mills needed for vibrant poultry, agrotourism.

Source: Authors.

The present government has also earmarked an amount of US\$15 million to help initiate and expand poultry farming enterprises in the country (Ministry of Trade, 2014). This the Ministry of Trade hopes will help the poultry sector to compete with the unrestricted importation of poultry products. However, no mention at all was made of agrotourism in the Ministry's call for business proposals. Earlier in 2005, Government established the Poultry Development Board to advise it on modernization and sustainability of the poultry industry but has remained non-functional since 2009. Similarly, tourism in Ghana lacks the political will to increase its competitiveness. An official from GTA sums it up trenchantly, "The percentage of national budget for tourism is woefully inadequate compared to the other sectors, a minister of tourism was once teased as a 'minister of entertainment', apparently tourism seems peripheral to serious government economic investments".

The economic conditions in Ghana often enervates local entrepreneurship. At the core of this, is the difficulty in securing loans for especially Small Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs). A respondent from Kumah Farms surmised, "Securing loans from banks is very difficult and even when the banks are ready to grant the loans, they honour below amounts requested which slows down business". Also high interest rate and inflation present huge challenges to all industries in Ghana (Eshun & Tettey, 2014). Killebrew and Plotnick (2010) estimated that Ghanaians eat 1.2kg of meat and 12 eggs per person yearly as compared to the world average of 9.7kg of meat and 154 eggs per person yearly. A member of MoFA, stated, "A vibrant local poultry sector can help address the rural-urban drift phenomenon by providing employment opportunities and income especially to the youth".

The poultry sector also faces cut-throat competition from importations of frozen

poultry products from USA and Europe. Currently, the two leading feed producers in Ghana—Ghana Nuts and Kosher are not able to meet local demand. A respondent adds, 'strong competition, high exchange rate, and shortage of raw materials like soya are the challenges we face, and the feed for the birds are often hiked'. Maize-based feed constitutes 60-70% of the total cost of poultry production in Ghana (Oppong-Apene, 2013). Also, Ghanaians compete with poultry, especially over white maize, with humans consuming 70% of the total annual maize production and poultry consuming 30% (FAO, 2014). This swells the price for maize, and has engendered research for alternative sources of poultry feeds such as cassava and palm kernel-based feeds. Ghana is ranked 117th out of 140 countries in terms of the overall travel and tourism competitiveness, also in terms of business and infrastructure, the country is ranked 108th (The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2013).

Under social consideration, issues of youth in agriculture surfaced. Specifically on poultry, the youth see especially the jobs in hatching and production departments as 'dirty', which put them off from working in the sector (Eshun & Tettey, 2014). The national unemployment rate in Ghana is estimated at 21% and that of the youth range between 20-24%; therefore with the right private-public partnership, agrotourism may become the catalyst to rejuvenate interests among the youth towards agriculture in Africa. Similarly, Okech et al (2012) aver declining economic activity and out-migration of youth in Kenya, have led to the adoption tourism as an alternative strategy for the economic and social regeneration.

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Sankofa Foundation and Ghana Poultry Network have identified poultry development as an effective short-term means of improving livelihoods and improving rural protein intake. However, there has been lack of collaboration between tourism NGOs such as Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC) and the poultry-focused NGOs in exploring the potential of agrotourism in Ghana. Another interesting addition to issues under social consideration, is the socio-cultural ramifications of poultry and poultry rearing in Ghanaian societies, which can add to the overall experience of tourists to poultry farms. Guèye (2012:12) opine lucidly that in Africa, "poultry keeping has a symbolic importance within the context of many social and cultural activities (e.g. special banquets for distinguished guests, cocks as alarm clocks for the villages, or in religious ceremonies". These perceptions hold marketing appeal for agrotourism.

Eshun and Tettey (2014:87) posit, 'In Africa, there is apathy of the youth towards agriculture due to the labour intensiveness in the sector'. As a consequence, on the technological tenet, there are moves to develop and use cutting-edge technologies to reduce the drudgery and increase productivity in the agricultural sector (e.g. ESOKO platform provides advice on market prices, weather forecasts to farmers in Africa). Another major challenge facing poultry farmers is the unreliable electricity supply in Ghana, which stifles production. Some farms are seeking to generate their own electricity. For example, a manager at Asamoah and Yamoah Farms stated, 'The cost of power these days is very expensive, we seek to provide our own electricity, to help reduce the cost of

production". In Ghana, although a Farm-In-A-Barrel (FAIB) technology has been introduced to lessen the labour intensiveness in poultry farming, the cost still deters most rural poultry farmers.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to tease out the willingness of poultry farmers in Ghana to engage in agrotourism, their skill levels and the challenges confronting them within a macro-business environment analysis. The paper reveals that the poultry sector in the country, is besieged with inaccessibility to loan facilities, inadequate distribution channels, uncompetitive interest rate, lack of subsidy, influx of imported poultry products, high cost of feeds, inadequate local feed-mills, limited and under-performing hatcheries, poultry diseases, and limited formal education of employees.

Sustainable agriculture-based enterprises are hinged on vibrant smallholder farmers, and particularly so in Africa (Rogerson, 2012). Thus, the private and government agencies should seek partnerships that help leapfrog the poultry sector into vibrancy. The paper proposes three recommendations. First, this demands undertaking a critical analysis of the poultry production systems in Ghana, addressing both the exotic breed production and the traditional poultry keeping systems and their relevance in averting the fast declining poultry sector. Second, there is the need for proactive negotiations with financial institutions towards provision of soft and flexible loans to farmers for poultry business. Lastly, there is urgent need for further research on the linkages between agriculture and tourism that unearths the prospects and challenges

of such linkages towards sustainable development in Ghana.

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