



A study of events organised by hospitality industries in Accra, Ghana

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Abstract

The literature on events tourism is replete with data on the importance of mega events and their socio-economic impacts on destinations, with little information on the role of the hospitality industry in the organisation of these events. This paper examines the role played by the hospitality industry in the organisation of events, for their clients. Using mixed research method, this study involved a sample of 76 respondents made up of 6 managers, 32 employees and 38 clients of two hotels in Accra, Ghana. The managers were selected purposively, while the employees and clients were selected using systematic random and convenience sampling methods, respectively. The study revealed that whilst religious and socialization activities dominated events organised by the hotels, only a few of the events organized covered corporate conferences, meetings and workshops. Most of the clients expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the events they attended, intimating that the events organised at the hotels were found to be very convenient. However, some managers of the hotels were found to have received no special training in events planning and management. This study, therefore advances the need for Management of hospitality industries in the country to receive in-service training and exhibit more professionalism in organizing events for their clients.

Keywords: Event management, hospitality industry, planning outcomes, event planning, Ghana



Pool sides at the African Regent and Mensvic Grand Hotels, Accra, Ghana.
Source: http://.hotels.com/The_African_Regent_Mensvic_Grand_Hotels

Introduction

The major roles of the hospitality industry include reception of guests for refreshment accommodation and entertainment. However, the organisation of meetings, conferences, banquets, conventions and provision of transportation, have recently become important functions

of the hospitality industry (Yankholmes, Akyeampong & Dei, 2009). Over the years, some managers of the hospitality industry such as hotels have created and developed events for their clients and other businesses or groups. According to Goldblatt (2002), these individuals rely on their background and experience to produce these events, which attract many tourists to the destination of the event. As these events bring people from various backgrounds together to share experience and produce memorable outcomes, their organisation and execution should be undertaken with much professionalism (Getz, 2007).

The Merriam Webster Dictionary Offline defines an event as “*something that happens, or a planned occasion or activity such as a social gathering*”. An event is also described by Getz (2008:6) as “An opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices, beyond everyday experience. Getz further classified events into three groups: In the first group are events such as cultural celebrations, political events and art and entertainment events. The second group consists of commercial, educational and scientific events, while in the third group are sports, recreational activities and special events (Getz, N 2008:403). According to Goldblatt (2005:6), an event is “A unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and rituals to satisfy specific needs”. He goes on to explain that there are four purposes for hosting events: These are for “The celebration of human life, for education, for marketing and awareness creation and for reuniting people” (Goldblatt, 2005:8). Events are thus, an important part of the lives and activities of people.

According to Allen (2009), event planning and coordination is a comprehensive process. He noted that event professionals use a sequential process to plan and produce events. First, they determine guests’ expectations by answering the basic information: “*who, what, when, where, and why?*” Secondly, they put together an overall picture of the final event, to be able to incorporate the necessary elements, logistics, operations and praxis into the plan. Next, they envision the experience from beginning to end; from the guests’ point of view. Finally, the event is choreographed by arranging the elements and layers in detail that will provide a memorable occasion (Silvers, 2004). Event professionals lead and guide the planning process that includes the ceremony and ritual aspects along with key factors defined by Goldblatt (2005:6) as “The design, planning, management and coordination of the event”. Some of these events organised are attended by both domestic and international tourists.

The Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) in 1999 stated that international tourist arrivals in Ghana increased steadily from nearly 114,000 in 1988 to about 348,000 in 1998; an average annual growth rate of about 20% (Teye, 2000). Most of these tourists were those attending special events such as conferences, conventions and festivals. This growth in event tourism has also enhanced expansion of the country’s hospitality industry (Sirakaya, Teye & Sönmez, 2002). According to the GTB, the growth in tourism can also be seen in the expansion of activities that are held in the hotel sector, where the number of hotels they approved and licensed, increased from 273 in 1989 to 730 in 1998 (Teye, 2000). Similarly, the hospitality industry contributed GH¢20,196,000 (about US \$8,078,000) in 2009 to Ghana’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), increasing to GH¢30,877,000 (about US\$12,350,800) in 2013 (GSS, 2014).

Significance and purpose of the study

The increase in the number of international tourists visiting Ghana, coupled with the corresponding increase in the number of hotels, restaurants and other hospitality facilities has engendered the need for professionalism and innovation in the organisation of events, in which the hospitality industry plays a major role. However, it has been observed that some managers of such facilities in organizing events such as conferences and conventions rely on their previous experience only. In developing countries in Africa including Ghana, events are seen as very important occasions either in the life of individuals or the nation. Modernization and education have made it possible for people to be trained as event planners and organisers for the hospitality industry. Acquisition of knowledge and techniques in event management helps to project a positive image of not only the hospitality sector but the country at large. It also enhances

profitability and growth in the customer base of these hospitality facilities hosting the events.

Furthermore, the emerging field of event management and its professionals, continue to define industry standards to guide better event planning. Special attention has been given to the event description, marketing and management planning with timelines, financial planning and measurement of impacts of the events (Hernández-Mogollón, Folgado-Fernandez, & Duarte, 2014), with limited attention given to application of better event management techniques by event organisers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of the hospitality industry in the organisation of events, by identifying events organised by the hospitality industries, assessing the application of event management techniques by the event managers; and examining the expectations and satisfaction levels of the clients of the selected hospitality facilities, who had attended such events. The paper is structured as follows: after the introduction is a review of relevant literature, then the methodology and results. The discussions follow, and then the paper ends with the conclusions, recommendations, limitations and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Events are important motivators for travel and tourism, hence they figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most tourism destinations (Çelic & Çetinkaya, 2013). Events and festivals have become strong demand generators, playing a significant role and making considerable contribution to the tourism, travel, leisure and hospitality industries. The extant literature is replete with information about events and festivals as they play a multiplicity of roles in enhancing the image of a community and as generators of economic activity (Getz, 2005; Small, 2007). Primary activities in events are generally related to the provision of entertainment for socio-commercial gains. These events can be classified variously and described by the following names: mega-events; major events; special events and hallmark events. Starting with a term that has broad application, Getz (2005) argues that a mega-event should be judged not only on its volume of visitors, cost or psychology, but also its ability to generate exposure through media coverage. He contends that some events might never attract large numbers, but they still generate enormous exposure through media coverage. It would certainly be appropriate when defining a mega-event to include factors that go beyond size (Getz, 2005). The Olympic Games is a mega-event, which has a strong impact on a nation and generates global media interest. A major event differs only in scope from a mega-event, as its impact is on a smaller scale.

Special events are a feature of modern society, but as the following definitions suggest, writers are not always in agreement as to what constitutes a special event. While Goldblatt (1997) suggests that a special event is a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs, Getz (2005) counters this definition that it is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside the normal program or activities of the organizing body. Hallmark events such as some local festivals are usually modest in nature (Quinn, 2009). Bonnemaïson (1990) had stated that what the literature terms as 'hallmark event' functions like a monument, supporting and reinforcing the image of an established realm, whether religious or secular. Hallmark events, are usually held in large cities and have been labeled as new image-builders (Burns, Hatch & Mules, 1986). They went on to explain that a whole new discourse, including a new set of definitions and terminology, has been developed to examine the phenomenon of hallmark events.

Events are very important for tourism development. A lot of people travel annually to attend events, an example being the World Cup that takes place quadrennially. Events also bring people together to share experiences and produce memorable outcomes. Allen, Harris, Jago & Veal (2000) noted that the design and coordination of an event is a comprehensive process. These authors went on to explain that event professionals use a sequential process to consistently produce events that deliver the intended experiences. First, they determine clients' expectations by seeking answers to the questions of: *who, what, when, where, and why*. Second, they put together an overall picture of the final event, to be able to incorporate the necessary elements, logistics, operations and practices into the plan. Next, they envision the experience from

beginning to end from the guests' point of view. Finally, the event is choreographed by arranging the elements and layers in detail that will provide memorable experiences (Silvers, 2004).

Cunningham (2007:4) addressed the fundamentals that breed successful events, from extant literature noting: "Whatever the size of an event, the same principles may apply. There must be meticulous planning and careful management". Silvers (2004) characterized the successful process that managers use to develop and deliver the desired event experience regardless of its scope. The first factor is to conduct the necessary research to determine expectations and create a customer profile of the event attendees. The next point is to conceptualize the event and assess the scope required to meet expectations. The next is to determine which event elements and components will provide the features of the desired experience; visualize how all these event components will fit together; design the strategy for implementation and finally, monitor the delivery of the experience.

Every event is distinctive and has its own necessities. Nevertheless, most events have timeline and production schedules. Timelines "serve as important tools in every step in the event planning process" (Kilkenny, 2006:26). Event managers outline every step of the event, from the months prior to the actual event to its implementation and evaluation. The timeline serves as the flowchart illustrating not only the series of events, but also how the elements will interact (Silvers, 2004). According to (Goldblatt, 2005:204), an event production schedule is defined as "a detailed list of tasks with specific start and stop times from setup through load-out of an event". Collectively these form what Goldblatt describes as a time-line production with definite time schedules. Getz (2007) had noted that in planning an event, environmental forces, as well as unintended outcomes and externalities, must all be considered. The place of events in specific communities and management of stakeholder networks, all become critical management concerns (Getz Andersson & Carlsen, 2010). According to the authors, measures of demand have to be complemented by knowledge of personal, social and cultural influences on the meanings and desirability of attending festivals. The effective utilization of these events planning elements identified by Getz (2007) in any event planning and execution activity, is likely to yield positive results in successful organisation of events.

Events that last for more than a day require hospitality facilities to host the attendees. Hospitality facilities such as hotels or guesthouses are needed to accommodate such people who have travelled from far and near to attend the event. This reason necessitates the organization of some events and conferences in hotels with adequate facilities. Using econometric models, Brannas and Nordstrom (2006) found out that the cities of Stockholm and Gothenburg in Sweden benefit immensely from festivals or special events organised there annually, as they have very good hotels. These benefits include increased income for Management of these hotels. Asiedu (1997) reported that in order to accommodate the numerous international and domestic visitors participating in the celebration of Ghana's independence in Accra in March 1957, the government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah constructed the first class Ambassador Hotel. This memorable event was successful largely because the hotel could host most of the important dignitaries, who had come from the United Kingdom and the Diaspora to grace that important occasion. Some countries such as the USA and UK have convention centres, where events such as conferences and conventions are held. However, even in such countries, some events are held in hotels. Commenting on advantages of hosting events in hotels, Allen (2009:93) noted that "Holding your event at a hotel will mean that your guests will be able to walk easily to the meeting rooms, eliminating costs for additional transportation if they were staying at a hotel and attending meetings at the convention center that is not within walking distance". This makes hotels more convenient for hosting events.

The above review of literature has shown that events are of different types and are also an important aspect of the tourism industry, as they are the reason for most domestic and international travels. It is also clear from the review that the hospitality industry plays a crucial role in the organisation of events, as some events are hosted by the hospitality industry. Due to these reasons, the specific roles of event organisers in the hospitality industry in event organisation must be understood. However, as event organisation is not a very simple process,

the question to be asked is: "Do managers and supervisors of hospitality industries such as hotels have the necessary knowledge and skills for effective and successful event organisation?" This is a major concern of this study.

Methodology

The research for the study was conducted from the 1st to the 30th of November 2016, using mixed research methods that combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The use of both methods helps to provide insight, as well as explore the depth and complexity inherent in a phenomenon (Smith & Firth, 2011). This research method ensured that the issues of concern were not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allowed for multiple facets of the phenomena to be understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It was also a case study. With the case study design the data were collected in natural settings sensitive to the people and places under study and the data analysis was inductive in nature. The study examined the thoughts and opinions of clients and event organisers, who were employees of two hotels in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The hotels were selected due to their location and available event facilities.

These two hotels used for the study, were the African Regent and Mensvic Grand Hotels, located in Accra. The African Regent Hotel is one of Accra's most prestigious hotels, with 109 exclusive rooms. This is a 4-star hotel, with a boardroom (16 persons), a meeting room (24 persons) and a conference room (100 persons) (GTA, 2015). Located at Airport West in Accra's most prestigious neighbourhood, this hotel is situated 2.3 km from the Kotoka International Airport, 1.9 km from the popular Accra Shopping Mall, Silverbird Cinemas and the Tetteh Quarshie Interchange. The Mensvic Grand Hotel is also one of Greater Accra's newest and finest hotels, located in East Legon. It is a 3-star hotel with 110 rooms in traditional African design. It has seven conference rooms with capacities ranging from 20 to 600 persons. It is located a few kilometers from the University of Ghana, the airport and approximately 20 km from Central Accra. This hotel has a perfect blend of comfort, elegance, leisure and business facilities (GOG, 2016).

Both hotels had a total of 35 employees in the departments responsible for organizing events, so 32 of them were selected using systematic random sampling, as one sample for the study (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). In addition, 38 clients who visited the hotels during the time of the research were selected for the study, using convenience sampling (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Questionnaires administered to the respondents had 30 items, which were either closed or open-ended. The questionnaires were explained to the respondents as to how they were to be answered. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with an issue. Socio-demographic data collected from the employees included their age, sex distribution, educational level and length of work at the hotel. Among other variables, the questionnaires elicited responses on the respondents' activities as event organisers in the hotels and how their clients assessed their services. The instruments were pilot tested to establish their validity and suitability for the study. This was done by administering the questionnaires to some employees and guests in a hotel outside the study. This led to minor changes in the questionnaires. A trained research assistant helped in the administration of the questionnaires, which were all retrieved and used for the study.

For the qualitative aspect of the study, personal in-depth interviews were conducted with six of the two hotels' management, who were either departmental managers (n=2) or sectional supervisors (n=4), responsible for in-house and external clients, conference and banqueting, and the food and beverage department. The interviews lasted between 25 and 30 minutes each. These people controlled a large number of the staff and had spent considerable number of years (5-10 years), with the hotels. They also had the necessary academic and professional qualifications, such as either vocational or university degrees. They were, therefore, competent enough to provide the needed data for the study. The interviewees were further asked about training they had received in event planning and management. With regard to event management essential elements, they were asked, among other things, to express their opinions on their

awareness and usage. Finally, they were also asked about how their clients evaluated their service to them.

Results and discussion

Descriptive statistical tools such as graphs, frequency tables and percentages were used to illustrate the results of the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires administered. In addition, data collected using the interview guide, were recorded, transcribed and responses reported verbatim. Themes were identified from the transcribed data and used for the analysis. To achieve the first two objectives, the views of the event organizers were sought. Out of the 32 respondents, 12 were female and 20 were male.

With regard to the duration of service, it was revealed that 10 event organisers had worked in the industry for less than a year; 10 more had worked between a year and two years. Eight of them had worked within the industry between three and four years, whereas the remaining 4 had worked with the hotels for over five years. With regard to their age ranges, the study revealed that, 8 of them were between the ages of 20-30 years; 10 were between the ages of 31-40 years whilst the remaining 14 were between the ages of 41-50 years. This indicates that most of the respondents were mature enough. From their background, it was evident that the respondents selected for the study had the necessary information relevant to the study as they had spent a considerable length of time with the hotels.

Events planned and executed by the hotels

The first purpose of this study sought to identify types of events which were organised by the hospitality industry in Ghana, with specific emphasis on the two hotels. The findings indicated that both the African Regent and Mensvic Grand Hotels usually organised various types of events. Table 1 shows the types of events organized by the hotels in 2015. From Table 1, it can be noted that events organised by the two hotels included church activities such as conventions and fellowship meetings, which topped the events (32%).

Table 1: Events organised by the hotels

Type of Event	Frequency	Percentage
Conferences and Corporate Meetings	16	12.9
Wedding Receptions	20	16.1
Socialization (birthday parties, pool parties, etc.)	30	24.2
Seminars, Workshops and training	18	14.5
Conventions and Fellowship meetings	40	32.3
Total	124	100

This is followed by birthday and pool parties captured under socialization (24%), while conferences and corporate meetings had the lowest, recording 12.9%. This shows that religious, entertainment and socialization activities were prominent in the events organised in the hotels. This corroborates findings by Small (2007), whose work in Australia identified entertainment and socialization opportunities as important social factors of events and community festivals organised. From the interviews conducted on 28 November 2016, one of the supervisors from the African Regent Hotel indicated that:

“When a school, church or even a company wants to organize a training programme, seminar or a workshop, they will approach us to find out whether we have the facility to host such event. Because we do not allow people to bring in their own food, drinks and equipment such as projectors we organize the programme for them and provide them all things needed for a successful programme, which is always affordable”.

During the interview on 28 November 2016, another supervisor from the Mensvic Grand Hotel also had this to say:

“The youth of today really like entertainment, they like to organize their birthday parties among others, here. Sometimes we host contestants of beauty pageants and while they are here, we do organize socialization activities for them. We always make sure that on occasions such as weddings, parties and conferences, we are responsible for providing refreshment for the guests and ensure that they leave satisfied”.

Following the discussion on the type of events organized by the hotels, the respondents were asked to identify the various individuals or departments that were involved in planning and organizing their events. The respondents indicated that they had the in-house and external clients, conference and banqueting department and the food and beverage department. These were the major stakeholders who were responsible for planning events. For instance, the in-house and external client departments were responsible for ensuring that their clients had everything they needed to make their event successful. They also ensured that the environment was serene and properly kept. The conference and banqueting department had oversight responsibility for the venue of the events. The staff within that department were tasked to ensure that all the facilities within the venue for the programme were in good order. For example, in case of a workshop or training programme, the staff from this department ensured that the projectors, lighting and sound systems were all functioning. They also saw to the provision of all materials such as stationery needed for the programme.

The final department; the food and beverage department, ensured that the clients were provided with nutritious and healthy meals as well as desserts. These three departments always worked together to ensure the success of any event organized by the hotel. Judging from the successful role undertaken by these three departments, most of the managers or supervisors noted that their clients were always satisfied each time they had events organised for them. This confirms Allen’s (2002) assertion that the responsibility of an event manager was to create the conditions in which these events occurred under the client’s event budget guidelines. According to Wolf and Wolf (2005:3), a high probability of success in event management could be attributed to “meticulous preparation, pursuit of flawless execution, and the ability to respond as a cohesive team, when the unexpected inevitability surfaces”

The above assertions by Allen (2002) and Wolf and Wolf (2005) were what management of Mensvic Grand and African Regent Hotels sought to achieve by bringing the three departments together in executing their events. It was, therefore, necessary to assess the satisfaction levels of their customers. Findings from the study revealed that management of these hotels measured customer satisfaction in two ways: First, through feedback and comments of the clients and secondly, through the number of referrals they got from their previously satisfied customers. The Conference and Event Executive at African Regent Hotel during the interview on the 29th of November 2016 remarked that:

“Most of our customers are satisfied with our services. I am saying this because sometimes we have people coming to us based on the recommendations made by their friends or business partners who had already undertaken an event at our hotel and were very satisfied. I believe they will not have referred anyone to us if they were not satisfied with the services we provided them”.

The respondent further identified some stakeholders who had patronized their services, such as individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parliamentarians, politicians, banks and other private and governmental organizations.

Knowledge and awareness of essential elements of event management

Event management research works have covered the essential elements of establishing *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* from the journalism perspective. Event management considers these working fundamentals as essential event elements (Silvers, 2004; Turner, 2006; Wolf & Wolf, 2005). Wolf and Wolf further stated that the “5 ‘w’s” and the *how* must be considered from the point of conceptualization, throughout the event, to its conclusion. Though as much as twenty of the event organisers identified event management as very important and critical towards the planning and execution of a successful event, it was unfortunate that only a few of them had some idea of the essential events management elements needed.

However, some of the departmental managers were quick to add that in planning an event within their various hotels they took into account the number of people attending the event; the name of the organization and areas of expertise; the date of the event; the materials and other things needed for the event; the time of the event and the type of guests attending the event. The time, type, the number of people attending the event as well as the type of guests determined the arrangement to be put in place, for instance the type of drinks, food and even decorations to be used. These elements identified by the respondents were not different from the nine events management elements identified by Kilkenny (2006), who identified the vision for the event as the main reason and focus for having an event. The second element identified was the goal and objectives, which all events must have in order to be successful. Larger and long-lasting events might have multiple goals and objectives, which all needed to be discussed, defined, set and confirmed. The third was site selection, as location is an essential element of an event's success whether it ranges from an intimate venue to an arena.

The fourth element is promotion: The message about the event must be well disseminated long in advance. It could be as simple as an invitation or as complicated as the material required for a week-long convention with numerous workshops, special events, outside excursions, banquets and required registration information. The fifth element in event planning is the information about participants or attendees: Without them, there would be no event. They may be invited guests, paying participants or individuals required to attend the event. The sixth element is the agenda for the event: A detailed outline with times of all activities is required. It logs what is happening from hours before the participants' arrival to the follow-up when the event is complete. There are two types of agenda: one for the participants and one for the people who work behind the scenes of the event. The seventh element is food and beverages to be consumed. Essential for every event's success is the appropriateness and quality of the food and beverages whether it is water and mints for a short seminar or a sit-down dinner for a number of guests. The eighth important element is transportation. The requirements can range from transporting 800 people to and from 10 hotels to the meeting site, or simply getting the planner to the event. It may involve travel needs for entertainment, speakers, and VIPs along with airfare and rental cars. Finally, each event has its own requirements for staffing; from volunteers, caterers, musicians, florist, clean-up crew, valets, ticket takers, MCs, speakers, or a balloon clown.

The respondents also added that in their quest to provide a successful programme they sometimes faced some challenges. First, they sometimes received poor communication from their clients with regard to the timing, types and number of guests, time of arrival and departure and the menu. This sometimes made it quite difficult for them to undertake effective planning. Secondly, there were issues of poor internet connectivity in this part of the world, which greatly affected the satisfaction levels especially of international clients, who sometimes needed Wi-Fi facilities, which were at times non-existent.

Expectations of the clients from the event organisers

The final objective for this study was to examine the expectations of the clients from the event organisers in the selected hotels. To answer this objective, responses from 38 clients of the hotels, who have had the opportunity to attend an event or have requested events to be organised by the hospitality facilities for them, were used for the study. The 38 clients of the hotels in the study were made up of twenty three male (60%) and fifteen female (40%) as shown in Figure 1. It can be noted that the male respondents dominated, as they patronized the hotels more than the female respondents.

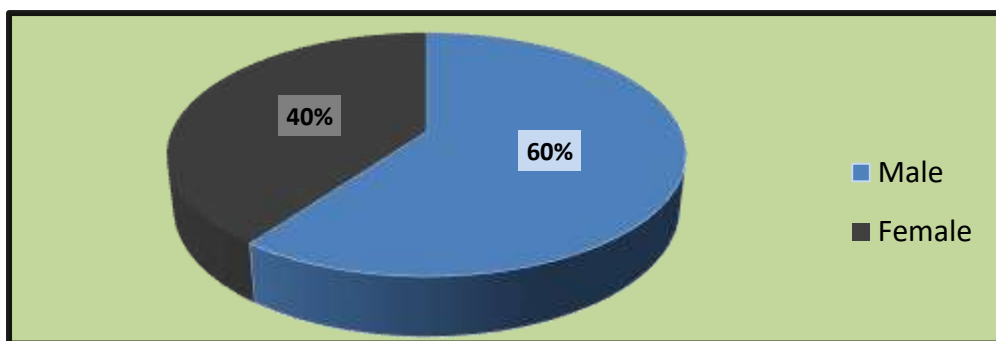


Figure 1: Gender distribution of the clients

It was noted that most of the respondents were professional in various fields. Based on their educational backgrounds, it was concluded that they possessed considerable knowledge of the topic under investigation; hence they were in the position to make informed decisions. To examine the expectations of the clients about the events organised by the hotels, the respondents were asked about the types of events they had attended at the hotels under investigation. The results presented in Figure 2 indicate that all the respondents stated that they had attended some events organized by the hotels before.

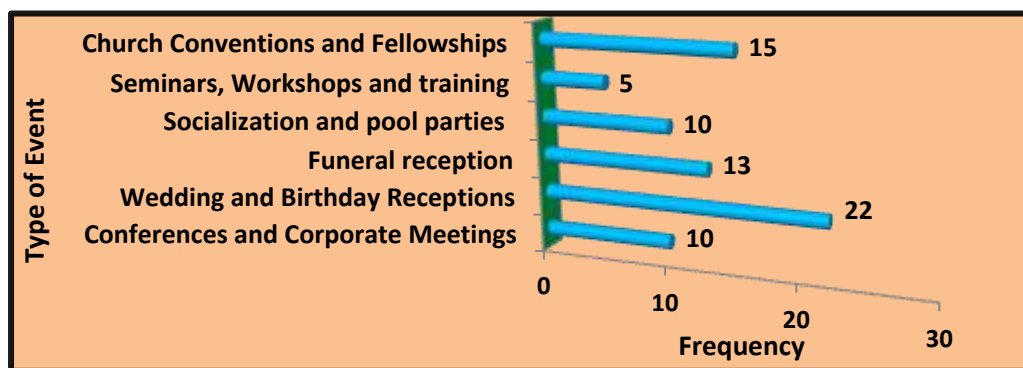


Figure 2: Events attended by respondents
Note: The results are from multiple responses

From Figure 2, it can be noted that a majority of the clients attended wedding and birthday receptions, with few attending seminars, workshops or training. These events are mostly social in nature. The respondents were further asked about their satisfaction levels of the events they had attended, which results are presented on Table 2. The data on Table 2 show that 5 of the clients indicated that their expectation levels were exceeded as the events they attended were well planned. Fifteen of them indicated that their expectations were met; therefore they were satisfied with how the programmes were organized, whereas 10 of them indicated that their expectations were partially met, with 8 of them saying that their expectations were not met as they were dissatisfied with the events they attended.

Table 2: Expectations of the clients from event organizers

Results of Expectations	Frequency	Percentage
Expectations were exceeded	5	13.2
Expectations were met	15	39.5
Expectations were partially met	10	26.3
Expectations were not met	8	21.0
Total	38	100

The satisfied clients indicated that the events started and closed on time. Furthermore, the guests were well-catered for in terms of the provision of food and drinks. However, the dissatisfied

customers cited the reverse as to have occurred at the events they attended. With regard to the specific items that the customers expected at any given event, the respondents stated that they expected that first; invitation for the programme must be sent early enough so that their potential guests can have ample time to prepare. The time and venue for the event should be stated clearly on the invitation card. Secondly, they expected that there was enough food and drinks at the event.

Another expectation of the clients was availability of a good source of entertainment at the events. This implied that there should have been good music, clear lighting, sound and decorations at the event. All these facilities were available in the hotels making their hosting of events very convenient (Allen, 2009). Finally, the people expected that there was good publicity of events to ensure attendance of intended guests.

Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of the data collected and findings of the study revealed that management of the hospitality industries involved in the study, the African Regent and Mensvic Grand Hotels did organise events for individuals and corporate bodies. The events mentioned included wedding receptions, conferences, conventions, corporate meetings and training workshops, as well as birthdays and other parties. Organisation of these events implied that the role of the hospitality industry in Ghana, is gradually changing from the known conventional roles of refreshment and accommodation to event organisation. In organizing these events, three departments; i.e. in-house and external clients, conference and banqueting department and the food and beverage department played very crucial roles. These departments ensured that customer satisfaction was always on top of their priority list.

Secondly, it was also evident from the study that though both hospitality facilities undertake event planning, the knowledge of some officers in charge of event planning and management was quite deficient in the application of essential event management techniques. However, all the event managers indicated that they took into consideration the number of people attending the event, the type of organization requesting to organize the event, the date as well as the types and background of guests expected, into consideration when planning any event. Finally, the study also revealed that the participants of such events had expectations which were either met or not. These expectations included early delivery of invitations, effective communication on the time, date and venue and also the amount and types of food, drinks and a good source of entertainment available at these events. If their expectations were met, then it implies that they will have good word-of-mouth advertisement about the hotel to their families and friends.

From the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. First, in organizing events by the hospitality industries in Ghana, the managers of these facilities are sometimes faced with challenges such as ineffective communication about the number of expected participants, their backgrounds and expectations, thereby making planning at times difficult. Secondly, though the event organisers were mostly professionals in their respective fields, they sometimes lacked certain basic techniques of event planning, which needed to be addressed. Finally, the general public had some expectations about the events planned by the hospitality industries, which were sometimes not met due to late invitations and inadequate preparation for the number of guests expected to attend the events.

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made: First, hospitality facilities must have well-trained event managers, who will take charge of events organisation and execution, professionally. Next, there should be proper supervision and in-service training for management and staff of the various departments within the hospitality industries that are concerned with planning and organizing events. The in-service training to be given management and staff of the hospitality industries should include training on the application of event management essential techniques. This will ensure that the expectations of both the guests and clients of events are met.

Furthermore, event organizers in the hotels need to recognise the worth of all stakeholders involved in executing the events in their facilities. In addition, they should ensure that clients provide reliable and updated information regarding the number and demographics of participants expected to attend any event (Allen, 2009). They should also take feedback from the event attendees, so as to help mitigate the incidence of resource wastage and improve upon subsequent events. Finally, both event organisers and clients should be aware of the importance of proper time management; as this will ensure that events commenced and ended on time to prevent frustrations and customer dissatisfaction with some of the events planned and executed by the Management of hospitality industries, such as the hotels in this study.

Limitations and future research

This study, which was about a non-conventional role played by hotels, other than the usual refreshment and accommodation for guests, was conducted in only two of the numerous star rated hotels in Accra, Ghana. In addition, the respondents, some of whom were not selected randomly, were from small sample sizes; therefore, application of the results of the study must be undertaken with care, as what goes on in the two hotels may not be representative of the issues associated with organisation of events by the hospitality industry in Ghana, in general.

Moreover, as the study was conducted in both 3 and 4-star hotels in a prestigious location of Accra, the capital city of Ghana, results may also not be applicable to smaller scale and budget hotels located elsewhere in the countryside, where demand for such events may be non-existent. It is therefore suggested that future research could be undertaken in other smaller scale hospitality facilities in the countryside for a comparison of the results with the present study. Such studies may unearth activities undertaken by such hospitality facilities as a solution to the problem of seasonality, plaguing tourism and the hospitality industry in general and those in the countryside, in particular.

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