

Volunteer tourists' motivations for choosing homestay in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana

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Abstract

Volunteer tourists' motivations for choosing homestay accommodation have received little attention from researchers. The objective of this research was to explore the push and pull factors that account for volunteer tourists' choice of homestay in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Insights gained from this study will inure better understanding of volunteer tourists' behaviour to ensure appropriate service delivery by homestay providers. With the help of the "Push and Pull" motivation model by Dann (1977), the findings indicated two main push factors: socio-cultural immersion and economic value; and pull factors: environmental sensitiveness and community service and development. The study found that the most important push and pull factors as perceived by volunteers to Ghana are socio-cultural immersion and environmental sensitiveness. The study confirms the supporting role of homestay for volunteer tourists to Ghana. In the end, the implications of this study are discussed.

Key words: homestay, Kumasi, volunteers

Introduction

Tourism and Hospitality is one of the world's largest service industries (Mensah, 2009). And Ghana, with its own traditions, special history, cultures and various attractions and facilities, is emerging as one of the most popular destinations in West Africa. United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) have become significant markets for Ghana. Records of the Ghana Tourism Authority indicate that in 2007 there were 76,900 tourists from the USA and 50,400 tourists from the UK. This number increased to 86,800 and 58,100 tourists respectively in 2008 with an average expenditure of US\$2010 in 2008. The sector contributes 6.7% to Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (Ghana Tourism Authority [GTA], 2009). The growth of Ghana's tourism industry is credited to the mid-1980s International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank prescribed Economic Recovery Programme and Structural Adjustment

Programme (ERP/SAP) that liberalised the Ghanaian economy and gave Ghana's tourism industry a new beginning (Akyeampon, 2007; Mensah, 2009). A period described by Akyeampong (2009) as the "golden age" of Ghana's tourism industry. Popular among the initiated policies were the Integrated Tourism Development Plan (1996-2010) that sought to promote and market tourism resources in Ghana; develop Ghana's human resource and ensure quality service delivery. To give the tourism industry the power to operate as an autonomous body empowered to develop programmes/products, the then Ghana Tourism Board (GTB) was legally replaced by Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) in 2011. Prominent among its objectives was the setting up of a Tourism Development Fund of which a levy of one per cent was to be levied on all tourism

products which took place in October 2012 (GTA, 2011).

Presently, the industry witnesses various forms of tourism and one of the prominent forms is volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism in Ghana has grown significantly over the past decade and is opening up new geographical areas. Moreover, one unique feature of volunteer tourists, who visit Ghana, is the fact that they stay with local families in Ghanaian private homes where they share meals and are entertained by the host families (Yankholmes & Akyeampong, 2010). Despite the increased patronage of homestay by volunteer tourists, little has been done to explore their motivation for opting for a homestay and not a hotel. Thus, volunteer tourists' motivations for choosing homestay have been silent in the literature. Much of the early scholarship on volunteer tourism focused on the potential benefits of this form of travel for tourists, host communities and the natural environment (Lo & Lee, 2011). Knowledge of volunteer tourists' motivations for homestay is necessary to assist tourism marketers in understanding the travel patterns of volunteers so that the appropriate tourism products could be developed in accordance with the needs and wants of tourists (Fondness, 1994). Hence, the current study has the main objective of exploring the motivations that account for the choice of homestay by volunteer tourists using the push and pull theory as a conceptual framework.

Push and Pull motivational theory

Tourist motivation continues to attract increasing attention from researchers (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Holden, 1999), though its significance has soared, particularly, over the last decade (Bogari et al, 2004). According to Oh et al, the study of motivation is key in segmenting markets and designing promotional packages for tourists. Additionally, the study of satisfaction is dependent on motivation since without psychological needs/tension

that propels a person to move and consume a tourism product, there would be nothing like satisfaction.

A plethora of literature exists on tourism motivation including Cohen (1972), Plog (1974), Dann(1977), Crompton (1979), Hudman (1980), Iso-Ahola (1982), Pearce (1982) Beard and Ragheb (1983), Smith (1990), Mansfeld (1992), Fondness(1994), McIntosh, Goeldner and Ritchie (1995), Gnoth (1997), McCabe (2000), Harrill and Potts (2002), Pearce and Lee (2005) and Yoon and Uysal (2005). Each of the above studies adopted different models in analysing tourist motivation. However, popular among the models is Dann's (1977) push and pull tourism motivational theory. This theoretical framework provides a useful approach for examining the motivations underlying tourist and visitation behaviour (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). The concept behind this framework is that people travel because they are pushed by their own internal forces and pulled by external forces of the destination attributes (Cooper et al, 2000). In Dann's (1977) framework, push factors drive individuals to leave their homes for a different destination whereas pull factors are the attributes of the destination of choice (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981, Holden, 2005). Likewise, Crompton (1979) adopted Dann's (1977) framework and found seven push (socio-psychological) and two cultural pull motivational factors.

The push factors included escape, self-exploratory relaxation, prestige, regression, kinship-enhancement and social interaction whereas the two pull factors were novelty and education. Other studies that have adopted the push and pull framework include those of Oh et al (1995), Baloglu and Uysal (1996), Lam (1999) and Uysal and Jurovski (1994).

To help unravel the main factors that motivate volunteer tourists to choose homestay facilities in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana, the researcher resorted to the

push and pull model by Dann (1977) as the conceptual framework for the study. As a result, the motivations for choosing homestay has been categorised into two broad categories of push (internal) and pull (external) factors. The pull factors here refer to characteristics of homestay that pull the individual to opt for it at the destination whereas the push factors are socio-psychological motivations that predispose the tourist.

Study area

Ghana has ten administrative regions of which the Ashanti Region is one. Currently, the Ashanti Region is the most populous region according to the 2010 Ghana Population and Housing Census with about 4,780,380 people. The Kumasi Metropolis is the central political and cultural centre of the Ashanti Region. It was founded in 1695 by King Osei Tutu (Karlya, Dreyfuss, Dugal & Nguyen, 2012).

The city was named after the Kum tree, which the then, King Osei Tutu planted as a

symbol of victory for the Asante Empire over the British. The metropolis is located between latitudes 6.35°N to 6.40°N and longitudes 1.30°W to 1.35°W. It covers a land area of approximately 254km² (GTA, 2010).

Presently, Nana Osei Tutu II, a descendant of King Osei Tutu I, is King of the Ashantis, receiving allegiance from the people within the democracy of Ghana. He is said to be the richest King on Africa's West Coast. The King resides in Kumasi, and his home, the Manhyia Palace, is one of the city's most spectacular sights. Hence, Kumasi is described as the "cultural hearth" of Ghana (Briggs, 2007; GTA, 2010). Its investment and tourism attractiveness can be attributed to its being the country's most conspicuous nodal city as well as its enviable history and culture. The striking Ashanti culture is well demonstrated in their language, chieftaincy and festivals. The nodal nature of the city has made it to witness the growth of homestay facilities since the metropolis provides the base for most tourists exploring the region.

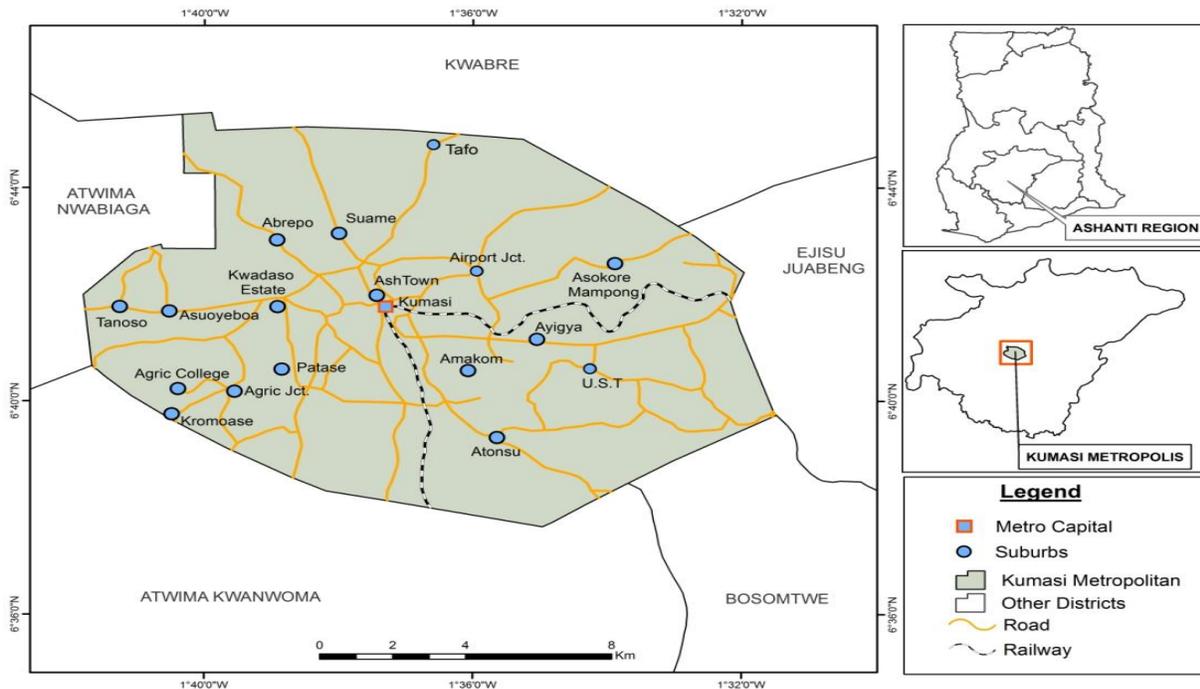


Figure 1: Kumasi Metropolis in regional and national context

Methodology

The study focused on volunteer tourists to Ghana. A survey using a self-administered questionnaire was conducted to collect primary data from a convenience sample of 200 volunteer tourists visiting the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Since the study had volunteers as the main target population, volunteer institutions were used to get respondents. Consequently, four volunteer organisations that use home-stay as the main form of accommodation were selected purposively. They included Projects Abroad, Light for Children, School for International Training (SIT) and Students and Youth Travel Organisation (SYTO).

Having obtained the list of homes from the volunteer organisations, volunteer tourists aged 18 years and above who were living in homestay accommodation within the study period of June-August constituted the target population for the study. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 151 were useful for analysis.

Questionnaire design

In line with the conceptual framework of the study, motivations were divided into push and pull factors. Twenty-two (22) items were used to measure motivations and were selected from motivation factors previously

identified by the travel literature (Wang, 2007; Hamzah, 2010). The items were adopted to describe volunteer tourist motivation to Ghana but relevant items included push and pull motivations like Socio-cultural immersion, environmental sensitiveness, community service and development and economic value. Responses to the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scales of 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; and 5=Strongly agree.

Results

Table 1 presents respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics. In all, 38.4% identified themselves as male and 61.6% as females. They represented age groups <20 (55.0%), 20-24 (35.1%), 25-29(6.6%) and 30+ (3.3%). Majority of the respondents were single (96.7%). Given their age groups it was expected from international trends that majority of them were not married. About 51.7% of the respondents were highly educated with a university degree. In terms of occupation, the study revealed that about 83.4% of the respondents were students. Meanwhile, majority of the respondents were Christians (64.2%) with Americans 28.5% and British (19.95) dominating. This finding confirms reports by the Ghana Tourism Authority (2009).

Table 1: Socio-demographic description of volunteers

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	58	38.4
Female	93	61.6
Age		
<20	83	55.0
20-24	53	35.1
25-29	10	6.6
30+	5	3.3
Marital status		

Single	146	96.7
Married	5	3.3
Educational Attainment		
Secondary	44	29.1
Tertiary(non-degree)	29	19.2
Tertiary (degree)	78	51.7
Religion		
Christian	97	64.2
Atheism	44	29.1
Buddhism	2	1.3
Judaism	8	5.3
Occupation		
Student	126	83.4
Teacher	15	10.0
Banker	6	4.0
Travel advisor	4	2.6
Nationality		
American	43	28.5
British	30	19.9
Dutch	14	8.6
Norwegian	12	7.9
Canadian	12	7.9
Swede	11	7.2
French	9	6.0
Irish	9	6.0
Chinese	8	5.2
German	4	2.6

Push and pull motivations for choosing homestay

First, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were applied to demonstrate the suitability of data for factor analysis and the existence of factors. The results showed the factorability of the items (KMO=0.645; Bartlett's test= 0.000). In order to identify the motivational dimension of homestay, 22 push and pull items were subjected to principal component analysis with Varimax orthogonal rotation using SPSS factor analysis.

Thus, Varimax rotation was used to refine the orthogonal factor matrix. Rotation of the initial solutions maximises variance loading within factor. Moreover, rotation of the original matrix assists in the recognition of

the variables that best describe the factor. A factor loading of 0.30 was used as a cut-off for inclusion of any item among various factors. The results of the principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation produced two broad push factors and two pull factors with eigen- values as shown in Table 2.

The two push factors explained 24.7% of the total variance and the two pull factors explained 26.5% of the total variance. The First Factor for push and pull explains the highest proportion of the observed variance in the data set. The second factor for push and pull accounts for the other variance not explained by Factor II.

Moreover, in order to test the reliability and internal consistency of each push and pull

item, the Cronbach alpha was adopted. The results confirmed that the alpha coefficients for both factors ranged from 0.616 to 0.787. Although socio-cultural immersion was highest in terms of factor loading, it did not

record the highest reliability. However, community service and development recorded the lowest values for the variance explained and Cronbach alpha respectively.

Table 2: Factor loading for push and pull motivation-related items for homestay

Reason	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Reliability Cronbach
Social-cultural immersion (Push)		5.459	14.722	0.729
Learning how to cook Ghanaian foods	0.802			
Learning how to speak Ghanaian language	0.699			
Understanding Ghanaian dressing style	0.575			
Knowing Ghanaian foods	0.568			
experiencing Ghanaian religious life	0.526			
interacting with local folks	0.503			
Environmental sensitiveness of homestay (Pull)		2.439	13.281	0.787
Reducing waste at the destination	0.848			
Minimising pollution at destination	0.705			
Preserving local environment	0.610			
Economic value of homestay (Pull)		1.762	13.167	0.770
Enjoying affordable accommodation	0.794			
Giving back to local community through homestay	0.651			
Enjoying value for money	0.642			
Saving money through homestay	0.580			
Community service and development (Push)		1.596	9.991	0.616
Serving /teaching in Ghanaian communities	0.725			
Contributing to community development	0.676			
Experiencing new things in Ghana	0.615			
Enjoying local protection	0.574			

Discussion

Gender related issues have emerged in every facet of life and the domain of homestay and volunteering is not an exception. The results of the current study revealed that majority of female volunteer tourists preferred to stay in homestay accommodation than their male counterparts. An overwhelming number of them were in their teens taking advantage of their youthful age through gap-breaks. They were mostly pushed by the need to immerse themselves and pulled by the need to reduce pollution as they visit deprived communities. Traditionally, women are attracted to home than their male counterparts (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Perhaps, their natural role as wives and care-takers has made this accommodation option more attractive. On the whole, volunteer tourists to the Kumasi Metropolis were mostly Americans, which confirms records of the Ghana Tourism Authority (2009). However, deviating from the Authority's records was the existence of Chinese volunteer tourists. Even though there is an avalanche of research on volunteerism, the literature on the link between volunteerism and homestay is scant. To help bridge this gap, the study reveals the significant contribution of home-stay facilities in volunteer tourism which provide a structure for volunteer tourists to experience local's daily life (Santos-Delgado, 2011). According to Harnng Luh (2010), home-stay programmes that are joined with volunteer tourism are more sustainable and beneficial to tourists and host families. This is because the two phenomena are interlinked by three variables namely, community service and development, socio-cultural immersion and tourism. Thus, unlike other forms of tourism, volunteer and homestay tourism offer meaningful experiences to travellers as they volunteer to improve some aspects of the host community during their visit. These types of tourism contribute not only to the personal growth and satisfaction of

travellers but also to the development of the host community and its unique culture (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Significantly, volunteer tourists through community service are able to immerse themselves in local culture as they engage in local projects like building of schools, homes, and orphanages in developing communities (Lo & Lee, 2011). Moreover, both volunteer tourism and homestay require one common feature in addition to the above. Both activities (volunteer tourism and homestay) involve movement from one's usual environment to a destination with a specific purpose. As a result, the two, when joined bring effective results. For instance, narrating from an observation in Thailand on the link between volunteerism and homestay, Broad (2003) emphasized that volunteer tourists who lived in shared accommodation at the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project headquarters in a small village on the island were able to immerse themselves in the Thai culture and way of life and contributed to personal growth and a changed view of the world (Broad, 2003).

Similar to the previous study findings, through homestay accommodation, volunteer tourists to Ghana share meals with local families and through this gastronomic adventure immerse themselves in the local culture. It was not surprising that socio-cultural immersion emerged as the major push factor motivating volunteers to opt for homestay. Perhaps, this useful link has necessitated the preference of homestay by volunteers to the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify volunteer tourists' motivations for choosing homestay. A survey was conducted and a convenience sampling was used to select 200 respondents who had visited the Kumasi Metropolis from June-August, 2011. The push and pull motivation model was the

underlying conceptual framework for the study. Hence, using a 5-point likert scale, 22 items were developed to help identify major motivating factors. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. Statistical techniques such as frequency and factor analysis were used to achieve the objective set.

The results of the study revealed that homestay is an emerging accommodation option in Ghana patronised extensively by volunteer tourists. Significantly, volunteer tourists choose to stay in homestay with some key motives. They are pushed by the need to immerse themselves through socio-cultural interaction with local folks and pulled by the need to conserve the

environment through less pollution as well as promoting community service and development at the destination. In short, the push and pull model has proven to be useful in identifying motivational factors for homestay in the Kumasi Metropolis.

As volunteer tourism is increasingly becoming an important form of tourism in Ghana's tourism sector, it can be argued that the major findings of this study have significant policy and managerial implications for Ghana's core attractions and support services in tourism. These are crucial in extending length of stay and moreover, increasing satisfaction. However, the sudden trend of private homes as a commercial accommodation may trigger staged authenticity in most homes.

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