

Agrotourism Niche-Market in Ghana: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

Gabriel Eshun *

Tourism Programme, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana & School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Email, gabriel_eshun_knust@yahoo.co.uk, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9317-0492>

Kobby Mensah

Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, University of Ghana Business School, Accra, Ghana. E-mail: kobbymensah@ug.edu.gh, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7444-7989>

**Corresponding Author*

How to cite this article: Eshun, G. & Mensah, K. (2020). Agrotourism Niche-Market in Ghana: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 9(3):319-334. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720-21>

Abstract

The study examined multi-stakeholder inputs into agrotourism development in Ghana. Particular emphasis was placed on the potential and anticipated challenges for the emerging niche-market. The study employed a qualitative approach using a purposive sampling of 35 stakeholders selected from mainly tourism and agricultural related organisations in Ghana. The qualitative data generated were thematically analysed. The results of the study indicated that most of the stakeholders have no official documentation on agrotourism in the country. This notwithstanding, the stakeholders have a positive perception of agrotourism as a niche-market, with potential for becoming a market leader in the tourism sector in Ghana. The challenge, however, is the quality of frontline employees who, according to the literature, lack communication skills. The study showed amply that considerations such as public education on agrotourism, supporting locals with farm tools and equipment, giving technical assistance through capacity building, will help stimulate agrotourism in the country. In sum, the study presents a cardinal focus for agrotourism emergence in Ghana, and serves as a trajectory for a more robust development of the niche-market in Africa and beyond.

Keywords: Multi-stakeholder approach, perceptions, policy, agrotourism, Ghana

Introduction

Research on agrotourism is noted to have focused on the demand-supply binary of the niche-market, according to Flanigan, Blackstock and Hunter (2014). Currently, the demand side of agrotourism research focuses mainly on the characteristics of agrotourists; market size, their motivations, preferences, decision-making processes and buying behaviour (Barbieri, 2013; Catalino & Lizardo, 2004; Che, Veeck & Veeck, 2005). For the supply side of agrotourism research, the focus has been on the role and importance of infrastructure, service and organisations (e.g. transport, attractions, accommodation and intermediaries) that facilitate agrotourism development and management (Brouder & Rikard, 2013; Hall & Campos, 2014; Hamilpurka, 2012; Phelan & Sharpley, 2011). None of these studies has however looked at the field from the multi-stakeholder perspectives that this study concerns itself.

According to Kiper (2011:171), agrotourism is “a set of rural activities, including participating in farming activities, exploring local culture, enjoying the landscape and agrobiodiversity, observing organic and conventional agricultural practices and sampling tropical



fruits and vegetables”. Agrotourism is promoted as an important ‘tool’ for rural development (Eshun, Segbefia & Acheampong, 2014; Kizos & Iosifides, 2007; Zoto, Qirici & Polena, 2013). Proponents of the agrotourism niche-market, argue that its development can increase farm revenue in times when agriculture is not as profitable, therefore reducing farmers’ economic dependence on their agricultural activities (Eshun, Seebaway & Segbefia, 2015).

There is no universal definition of the term agrotourism as found in the literature (Barbieri, 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014). This implies that the meaning of the word could vary from one place to another. Agrotourism is a compound word constituting the prefix ‘agro’, a Greek term meaning ‘field’ (Eshun & Tetey, 2014). Agrotourism, therefore, is quintessentially a link between tourism and agriculture, where new products are developed for visitors (Okech, Haghiri & George, 2012; Wicks & Merrett, 2003). With the increasing interest of people in agricultural life, desires for experiencing gastronomic cultures, and the potential for agrotourism to shrink rural-urban migration, agrotourism is gaining the attention of a lot of nation-states (Che et al., 2005; Kizos & Iosifides, 2007; Rogerson, 2012; Torres & Momsen, 2004). Some authors added that agrotourism offers to local farmers an avenue to expand their farming operations and to reduce market risks (Hamilpurka, 2012; Rogerson, 2006; Rogerson & Visser 2004; Zoto et al., 2013). Others noted the caveat that agrotourism must not be presented as a new business (Barbieri, 2013; Brouder & Rikard, 2013; Hall & Campos, 2014; Hamilpurka, 2012; Hegarty & Przezborska, 2005; Zoto et al., 2013).

From the literature, agrotourism offers three unique propositions to visitors. It presents to visitors something to buy at the farm, something to do while at the farm and something to see or the attraction (often referred to as ‘agrobiodiversity’). To expand on the three propositions is to say that the farmer as the agripreneur offers various array of agrotourism products and services to visitors (Flanigan et al., 2014; Okech et al., 2012), including the sales of agricultural produce, handicrafts and artefacts, healthy eating options and farm-stays (Barbieri, 2013; Hamilpurka, 2012). As a consequence, Eshun and Tetey (2014) maintain that the potential of agrotourism in Africa lies in its capacity to contribute to rural development. In Ghana as a case for this study, the tourism industry maintained its position in 2018 as the 4th highest foreign exchange earner for the country after Cocoa, Gold and Oil and Gas. International arrivals increased by 5% from 980,141 persons in 2017 to 1,029,148 in 2018; while corresponding receipts increased by 5.1% from US\$1,854.8 Million in 2017 to US\$1,947.5 Million in 2018 contributing 4.9% to GDP. In terms of employment, there was an increase in the total number of jobs (direct and indirect jobs) created by the tourism sector from 550,000 in 2017 to 602,425 in 2018. Out of which direct jobs provided by the tourism sector rose from 135,000 in 2017 to 158,231 in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). Ghana is also known for some of its agricultural activities such as yam production and shea butter, thus the country should consider incorporating agrotourism into its tourism product and service mix.

Despite its potential, a cursory observation of tourism scholarship shows a silent contribution of this niche market to the overall tourism development in Ghana. The almost non-existent attention to agrotourism scholarship in literature and practice in Ghana is very disturbing given that agriculture is the mainstay of the country (Eshun et al., 2014). Eshun and Tetey (2014) and Eshun and Tichaawa (2020) provide a pioneering work on the potential of developing agrotourism based on the rich cocoa heritage of Ghana. Eshun et al. (2014) also address issues of agrotourism entrepreneurship and marketing in Ghana where they call for a concerted effort from both statal and parastatal organisations to help orchestrate its development. This call then demands the understanding of the roles of various actors as well as defining the scope and nature of the opportunities and challenges associated with agrotourism development (Rogerson, 2012; Rogerson & Visser 2004; Eshun & Tichaawa,



2020; Wicks & Merrett, 2003). It is against this backdrop, that this study seeks to examine a multi-stakeholder contribution towards agrotourism development in Ghana.

Literature review

Role of stakeholders in agrotourism development

To actualise the principal objective of agrotourism, which emphasises sustainability in both the environment and livelihood of mostly rural dwellers, a multi-stakeholder engagement is critical (Flanigan et al., 2014). In this regard, the active role of institutions and local communities in decision making concerning agrotourism development and tourism, in general, is important (Eshun, 2011; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020; Hegarty & Przeborska, 2005). Eshun (2011) and Eshun and Tagoe-Darko (2015) argue that National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and Destination Management Organisations have the august duty of helping local communities in tourism development and management. In Ghana, the NTOs in the agrotourism space are mainly the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC), Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), and Ghana Tourism Development Company (Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020). Eshun and Tettey (2014) assert that without a strong synergistic approach towards tourism by these NTOs, agrotourism will not emerge. Currently, there are seven main tourism inputs from a policy perspective that have ramifications on agrotourism development in Ghana, namely; the 15-Year Tourism Development Plan (1970-1995); the Medium-Term National Tourism Development Plan for Ghana (1993-1995); the 15 Year National Tourism Development Plan for Ghana (1996-2010); the Strategic Tourism Action Plan (2003-2007); the National Tourism Policy (2006); the National Tourism Development Plan (2013-2027) and the National Tourism and Hospitality Training Policy (2019).

From the agriculture-inputs perspective, there have been three main national policies since the 1990s namely the Medium-Term Agricultural Development Programme (MTADP), the Accelerated Agriculture Growth and Development Strategy (AAGDS) and the Food and Agricultural Sector Development Policy (FASDEP I & II). Currently, FASDEP II is the main agricultural policy in Ghana and was developed on the back of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I and II), Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and the Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy (Eshun & Tettey, 2014). Presently the specific roles of MoFA are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The specific roles of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture

<input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation
<input type="checkbox"/> Advice Cabinet on laws required to regulate agricultural activities in order to protect all stakeholders and the environment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordination and harmonization of policies and sector activities with other MDAs
<input type="checkbox"/> Government of Ghana (GoG) shall strive to achieve the Maputo Declaration of allocating at least 10% of annual government expenditure to the agricultural sector
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of public-private dialogue and partnerships
<input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy for sector interests locally and in international agreements
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of capacity building of the sector's human resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of research and technology development
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of the linkage between agriculture and industry
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of the integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender equality into the work of the Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of international trade and domestic marketing of agricultural commodities
<input type="checkbox"/> Provision and facilitation of agricultural service delivery
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordination of enforcement of regulations
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordination of Development Partners' development policies and activities with sector policies and activities.



Despite the allusions to coordinating with other partners at various levels, there is not as of now a direct collaboration of MoFA with Ghanaian NTOs. Eshun et al. (2014) therefore argue that even in the nascent literature on agrotourism in Ghana, the roles of stakeholders in its development remain non-existent. Many authors have outlined that the intersectoral nature of agrotourism implies that, there is the need for synergistic collaboration of efforts and resources of the various stakeholders to achieve every intended purpose outlined for agrotourism development (Brouder & Rikard, 2013; Eshun & Tettey, 2014; Hamilpurka, 2012; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). This affirms the assertion of Andereck and Vogt (2000) and Barbieri (2013), that although tourism stakeholders play different roles and may work interdependently, their overall outcomes must contribute towards sustainable tourism development in any country.

Aside from the NTOs, other major stakeholders in the tourism sector include NGOs working in agriculture and tourism-related areas, hoteliers, restaurants, travel and tour operators, small-scale and commercial farms, among others (Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015; Eshun & Tettey, 2014). Their main role in agrotourism development is to provide investments on major and complementary tourism facilities, small-scale infrastructures, and other tourists' demands. Many others posit that the NGOs also play the role of managing the agrotourism market by providing tourists with many kinds of local cuisines and ancillary agricultural-related experiences (Barbieri, 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014; Hamilpurka, 2012). Prominent among these stakeholders is the government, represented by the NTOs, as they have the leading duty to make policies and formulate plans on major issues concerning tourism development in a country (Brouder & Rikard, 2013; Hall & Campos, 2014; Hamilpurka, 2012; Phelan & Sharpley, 2011; Rogerson, 2012; Zoto et al. 2013). Other important stakeholders include local communities, visitors and universities. Local communities include mainly farmers and landowners and other residents at where agrotourism is developed. The role of farmers is to provide on-farm experience to tourists, provide souvenirs, and farm products that tourists would like to purchase (Barbieri, 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014). Tourists or visitors' role is very important in agrotourism development in local communities. Based on the Doxey's Irridex, responsible and uninterrupted co-existence of visitors with locals contributes to the sustainability of any tourism business by ensuring a longer spread of the euphoria stage. Tourists showing goodwill can also help in raising funds for other societal development such as the provision of borehole water supply, building of roads, hospitals, schools and giving scholarships to brilliant but needy students in local communities. The role of universities as stakeholders is to train and develop human resources, conduct research on tourism and issues relating to agriculture and make scientific recommendations for novel and sustainable tourism development (Eshun, 2011; Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020; Eshun et al., 2015).

Challenges facing agrotourism and its ramifications on policy formulation

According to the World Economic Forum Global Competitive Report (2018), Ghana is ranked 106th, 110th 116th, and 104th in terms of her global competitiveness, enabling environment, infrastructure development and skills development, respectively. The World Bank Report (2018) on Ghana also added that as much as 50% of the tourism workforce is either under-trained or unqualified for the positions they currently hold. Eshun et al. (2014) anchored the need for capacity building for agritourpreneurs, on both hard and soft skills of agrotourism. One of the soft skills is how farmers are able to create positive moments-of-truth. The host-visitor interaction is considered to be an important aspect in achieving good visitor satisfaction (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2006). The drawback in the tourism industry, especially in rural Africa, is the lack of communication skills or mastery over the internationally known languages especially English and French (Eshun, 2011). This will mean that, although there should be



effort at training guides for agrotourism, agrotourists who to a large degree are allocentrics, should take interest in culture sensitivities. Also, their interactions with the local communities especially the farmers and their families should help them to learn and appreciate the local languages. The appreciation of cultural diversity in agrotourism communication is important because it requires the right physical ambience, process and personnel. Eshun et al. (2014:7) add that “the success of agrotourism initiatives is ineluctably intertwined with the quality of frontline employees who create lasting moments-of-truth”.

In addressing the challenges associated with agrotourism development and sustainability, Norida and Abdul (2014) present six strategies that are often employed by governments. The first is diversification of agrotourism based on products such as farm produce, agricultural education, natural conservation and heritage, health, handicraft and culture. The second is to offer agrotourism package specifically by country, which includes preparation of suitable food and multilingual guide. The third is to upgrade infrastructure, transportation and accommodation. It also includes other incentives such as simplifying loan application to encourage them on upgrading their facilities and accommodations. The fourth strategy is to strengthen the agrotourism quality and safety through the introduction of agrotourism product rating and certification. The fifth is to prepare agrotourism calendar and directories to simplify agency bookings and tourist itinerary planning. The sixth and final strategy is to strengthen workforce with all stakeholders such as tour agencies and increase promotion.

Methodological approach

The study employed a qualitative design to collect data for analysis. A purposive sampling of 35 individuals from the noted stakeholders was done. The respondents, all of whom are from tourism and agriculture-related organisations or establishments, were individuals who by their area of expertise and experience are competent to address the research questions. Thus Cresswell (2015), argues that purposive sampling is germane for research projects where there is less literature available on the topics. The respondents for the study were categorised into four distinct areas, namely; respondents from the local community level; the NTOs and agriculture-related areas and universities (see Table 2).

Table 2. Selected Respondents for the Study

	Sampling Frame	Number	Interview Modules
1.	Local Community Stakeholders		
	Farmers	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived potential for Agrotourism Existing agrotourism initiatives Perceived challenges
	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs),	3	
2.	NTOs		
	GTA	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for agrotourism Product development Promotion of agrotourism
	Ghana Tourism Development Company	2	
	Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF),	2	
	Ghana Hotel Association (GHA)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of awareness Perceived challenges Perceptions on agrotourism Innovations in accommodation
	MoTAC	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agrotourism’s position in policies Supports for agrotourism Commitment towards agrotourism
3.	Agriculture-related Organisations		
	MoFA, headquarters	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional agrobiodiversity potentials Support towards agrotourism Agrotourism’s position in policies
	Department of Agriculture	2	
	Parks and Gardens	2	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agrotourism Opportunities Perceived challenges facing

4.	Universities		
	KNUST	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrotourism in curriculum • Internship opportunities
	University of Ghana	2	
	University of Cape Coast	2	
	Total	35	

The selection was spread across the 16 regions in Ghana. Interestingly, each region has an agricultural base, that can serve as a fulcrum for agrotourism (See Figure 1).

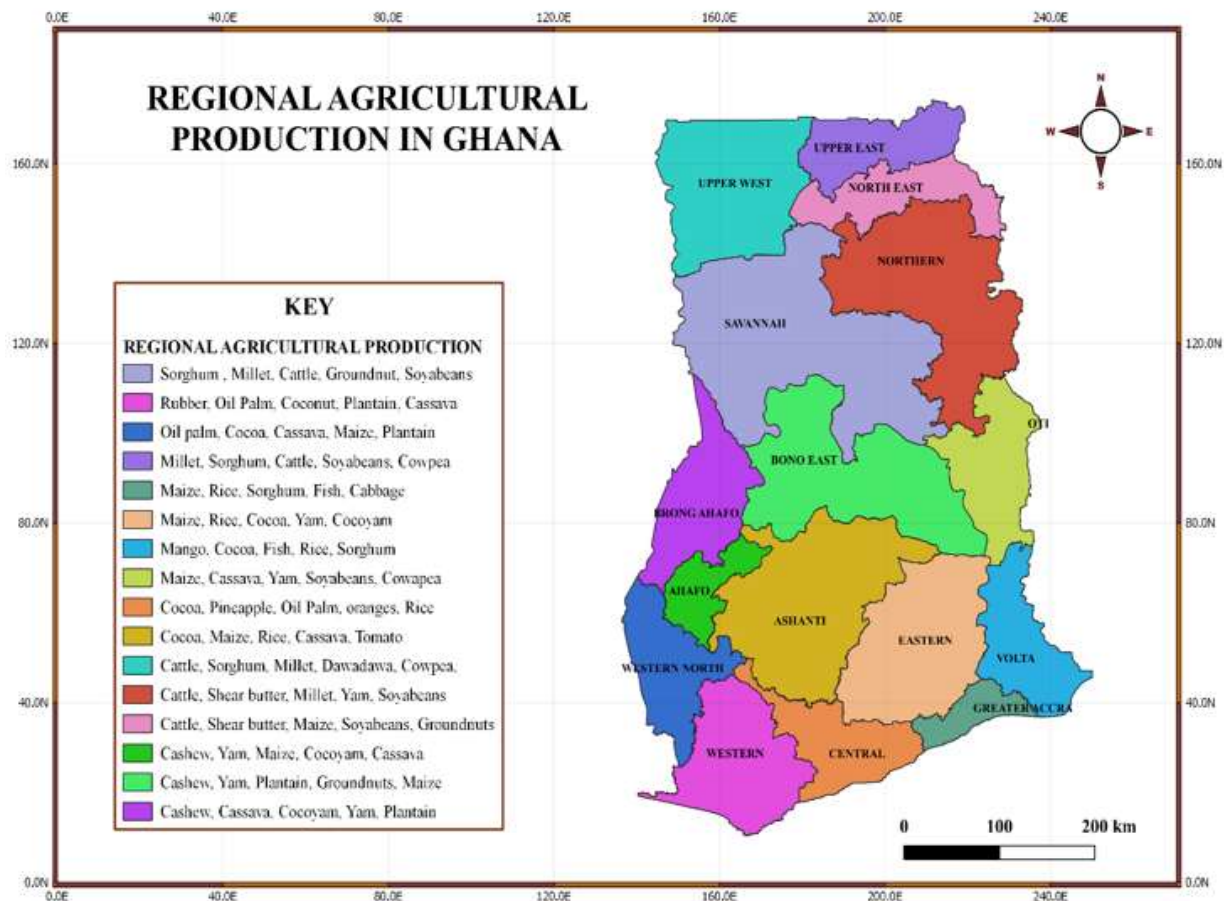


Figure 1. Map of Regional Agricultural Production in Ghana

The collected interview data were analysed using thematic analysis involving categorisation of responses and identification of relationships between categories (Cresswell, 2015; Eshun, 2011; Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020; Mkono, 2013).

Results and discussion

How stakeholders have captured agrotourism in their policies

The concept of agrotourism is novel in Ghana and therefore requires that its various stakeholders should have consultation workshops and formulate policies as guidelines for its development (Eshun & Tettey, 2014). To achieve this objective, the researchers interviewed stakeholders on various issues of their policy guidelines relating to agrotourism, policy implementation and measures put in place to monitor agrotourism activities in the country. Out of the 35 stakeholders interviewed, none of them stated clearly that agrotourism has been captured as a priority area in their policies. Officials from MoTAC, GTA, GTDC, MoFA,



Department of Parks and Gardens indicated that there has been a seminar or two on it, but nothing as a serious activity yet in their organisations. Some of the lecturers, however, indicated that they have taught agrotourism as a course in their programmes, especially those from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). The findings agree with Eshun and Tichaawa (2020), who noted that agrotourism has not received much attention in the country since most of the actors have no specific policies on the niche-market.

Nevertheless, comparing the present state of agrotourism to previous years, it can be said that there is little improvement in knowledge and awareness of it. Some individuals have started to open agrotourism businesses—notably are the Tetteh Quashie Cocoa tours, Hans Cottage, near Kakum National Park and individuals who are operating agrotourism as a complementary and supplementary activity (Eshun & Tettey, 2014; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020). In an interview with an official from the Planning, Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) of the MoTAC, the country's 15 Years Development Plan underscores:

Product development, marketing and promotion, tourism investment, human resource development, tourism education and awareness, security, safety and privacy, regional and international cooperation, tourism research as well as management information systems (Interview, PPME, MoTAC, 2018).

The GTA is the implementing arm of the MoTAC, and they are concerned with product development and the overall marketing of Ghana as a tourist destination. Many proponents of agrotourism posit that the niche-market has direct positive externality on the local economy and can help to lengthen the stay of tourists thereby maximising benefits for both the local communities and national economy (Barbieri, 2013; Zoto et al., 2013). Thus, to explore the potential for agrotourism, there is an urgent need to categorise the agrobiodiversity resources in Ghana. The GTA has the mandate to effectively manage and conserve the cultural, agro-ecological and historical resources for tourism development in the country. Eshun and Tettey (2014) argue that marketing and promotion activities from the Authority can be extended to include agrotourism, by positioning the country as one of the preferred agrotourism destinations in Africa. Providing further explanation on this, an official at GTA emphasised how the Authority is seeking to implement some of the guidelines bordering on product development and tourism entrepreneurship laid out in the current tourism plan:

The 15 Year Tourism Development Plan (2013-2027) seeks to develop tourism in a sustainable manner, by conserving three things namely; the historical, cultural and natural landscape. Agrotourism will bring lead to the promotion of agricultural products (Interview; GTA, 2018).

Many authors argue that without any policy guidelines to monitor agrotourism, the new niche-market will suffer from inadequate planning and controlling that will reduce its economic potential (Phelan & Sharpley, 2011; Zoto et al., 2013). Agrotourism development needs to focus on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects. Like the direct mandates of the other alternative forms of tourism, agrotourism must create and maximise wealth for the agritourpreneur, while also contributing to improving the wellbeing of it employers and the larger community (Hall & Campos, 2014). The unique selling proposition of agrotourism is to use local resources such as farms, cultural and heritage resources and develop them into attractions for tourists who seek for backstage experiences in the rural communities (Catalino & Lizardo, 2004; Che et al., 2005; Okech et al., 2012; Phelan & Sharpley, 2011; Zoto et al.,



2013). This implies that agrotourism must seek to increase its socio-economic benefits to local community. An official at the MoFA indicated that an effective agrotourism development will:

Engage women since they are the bedrock of our rural agriculture. To ensure sustainability, there is the need to sustain private and public sector partnerships (Interview, Official, MoFA-Headquarters, 2018).

To this, Barbieri (2013) and Zoto et al. (2013) affirmed that the most favourable scenario would be to stimulate state and private initiatives to propose a joint national plan for agrotourism that could offer new employment opportunities, especially at the local community level.

Policy guidelines in relation to agrotourism activities Ghana

Stakeholders were asked whether or not they have specific policies regarding agrotourism activities. Out of the 35 respondents, it was found that 10 of the respondents commented on having specific policies to monitor agrotourism activities. This implies that stakeholders in the country fall short in terms of formulating policy guidelines to monitor agrotourism activities. This can be attributed to the novelty of agrotourism on the Ghanaian tourism landscape of which there is limited knowledge on the niche-market among stakeholders. There must be advocacy and public relation campaigns for agrotourism development in Ghana, to bring it directly into the awareness of the general public (Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020). There is the need for direct awareness and training to engage local communities and especially farmers to increase their willingness to engage in agrotourism business (Eshun et al., 2014; Eshun & Tettey, 2014). Thus, the setting of agrotourism policies and monitoring mechanisms must be done in *pari passu* with local communities. Further, respondents were asked to state the policies they have in place to monitor agrotourism activities in country. One respondent added:

Our institution is seeking to formulate a national policy on agrotourism. The national policy on agrotourism will encourage and promote agrotourism among government agencies and the general public. This will spell out the various activities, and the formation of national body responsible for the control, direction and promotion of various forms of parks in Ghana (Interview, Landscape Designer, Department of Parks and Gardens-Sunyani, 2018).

This finding supports earlier research that claimed that agrotourism policies should aim at establishing specific guidelines, obligations, and incentives to assist and encourage farmers to diversify their entrepreneurial portfolio to include agrotourism (Barbieri, 2013; Flanigan et al. 2014). To an official from the GTA, agrotourism has a nuanced multiplier effect:

The 15 Year Tourism Development Plan (2013 - 2027), seeks to develop tourism in a sustainable manner, by conserving three things thus, historical, cultural and natural landscape, which also includes agrotourism (Interview; GTA, 2018).

Che et al. (2005) re-emphasise that stakeholders should help create a vision for tourism development in their regions based on sustainable strategies and investment decisions, which should include agrotourism, because of its comparative advantage as a complement to local economies. In Ghana, the 15 Year Tourism Development Plan (2013-2027) is guided by the principles of Ghana's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006-2009), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Revised Treaty of the Economic



Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The policy is formulated around eleven themes, and the emphasis is put on private sector-led growth, high level of public-private partnership and government creating appropriate environment to attract investment. However, many authors have provided the caveat that, in order to avoid creating policies that project ideals but fail to address actual sustainability challenges, policymakers, through their actions and rhetoric, should encourage farmers to actively participate in policy design processes (Flanigan et al., 2014; Phelan & Sharpley, 2011; Rogerson, 2012; Zoto et al., 2013).

Potentials for agrotourism development in Ghana

Andereck and Vogt (2000) and Ollenburg and Buckley (2007), re-echo that the two sectors of agriculture and tourism as seen in agrotourism can help alleviate local economic hardships issues by providing employment and addressing market shortages for the two sectors. Although some of the respondents indicated that there are not many success stories especially in West Africa to benchmark, there were others who maintained trenchantly that there are examples in Ghana that could serve as models for further expansion of the niche-market:

The Tetteh Quashie cocoa farm has a high potential of increasing revenue and can serve as the archetype agrotourism site. Agrotourism has the potential of revamping the agricultural sector and increase income generation through the use of agriculture for tourism purposes (Interview; GTDC, 2018).

Major issues mentioned by stakeholders with regards to agrotourism potential is its capacity to add significantly to the country's revenue, foreign exchange and reviving the agricultural sector. This finding buttresses earlier results by Torres and Momsen (2004), Zoto et al. (2013) and Eshun and Tichaawa (2020), which showed that agrotourism has the potential of creating employment for rural dwellers, increasing crop production and food supply, generating an additional source of income for farmers during off farming seasons and fostering general economic development. These benefits were further made evident in this avowal:

Agrotourism could provide jobs for the youth, preserve the natural environment, enhance livelihoods, increase tourists' inflow, increase revenue and promote peace. Cash crop production, greenhouse technology in vegetable production, animal production, horticulture and non-traditional agriculture are existing options for our agrotourism development (Interview, Lecturer –KNUST, 2018).

Eshun and Tettey (2014) add that agrotourism development can minimise the rate at which natural resources are used to meet human needs by encouraging farmers to adopt environmentally friendly practices. Barbieri (2013) argues that agrotourism that is linked to local communities will help to improve the quality of life of locals by allowing stakeholders to engage in livelihood enhancement programmes. This implies that agrotourism is a great source of rural development strategy that can add value to life in local communities (Hall & Campos, 2014). Earlier studies confirm that agrotourism could have positive influence on family income, and may also contribute to local communities via sales taxes, local employment and stimulation of local businesses such as restaurants and shops (Barbieri, 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014). Also, other non-economic societal benefits may include maintaining rural lifestyles and increasing awareness and preservation of local customs and their unique cultural heritages (Hamilpurka, 2012; Eshun et al., 2014; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Hence, to exploit the potential of agrotourism in the country, one respondent posited trenchantly that:



Agrotourism should be fully developed in the next 10 years in the country. Agrotourism will become one of the top priorities in the next few years, for we are engaging our members on product diversification (Interview, GHATOF, 2018).

However, to some researchers, agrotourism possesses the potential to compete and complement other sectors in the country (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Brouder & Rikard, 2013; Hall & Campos, 2014; Hamilpurka, 2012). Eshun and Tettey (2014) therefore provided the caveat that to maximise the multiplier effect of agrotourism, there is the need to assess its strategic fit with the various agro-productivity competitiveness in the country. As alluded to, agrotourism presents the opportunity to synergistically increase agriculture productivity, while increasing revenues from tourism, especially to rural landscapes. Agrotourism will complement the major income earners in Ghana since its potential spread across several sectors of the country. Eshun et al. (2014) also present the argument that agrotourism represents a large variety of income-earning opportunities, because agriculture continues to be important, and for some families, the primary source of income generation. However, this demands proper planning that should underlie the country's agrotourism potential, and the proper actions needed to attract the right investment to the niche-market. Eshun and Tettey (2014) stressed cogently that, despite the first-mover advantage of ecotourism in Ghana, the country's existing stupendous agrobiodiversity, gives it a comparative advantage in becoming an agrotourism hub in the West African sub-region. A respondent added:

Each community has some agrobiodiversity potential, that can be developed to attract different categories of tourists (Interview, MoFA, Accra, 2018).

Ghana is still largely an agrarian economy, thus, agrotourism can leapfrog to become the market leader in the tourism sector in Ghana, with the right strategic marketing. This will mean that there is a need for multi-stakeholder engagement aimed at forming farming associations at the community levels based on the unique selling propositions of those areas. The findings and the discussion so far, present a strong locus for stating that agrotourism has the potential for national development through employment creation, increased tourist inflow, youth participation in agriculture, increased local participation in tourism, local culture revivification and environmental sustainability.

Hall and Campos (2014) maintain forcefully that tourism has over the years depended on entrepreneurs identifying opportunities and turning them into viable businesses. Eshun and Tettey (2014) therefore introduced the term agritourpreneur to refer specifically to agripreneurs engaged in tourism. An agritourpreneur may engage in tourism at the primary, complementary or supplementary level. The study further asked stakeholders to respond to how agrotourism would attract the interest of the youth to engage in agricultural activities. Over the years, there has been overt dwindling of interest among the youth for agripreneurship in Ghana (Eshun et al., 2014). This has resulted in the rural-urban migration phenomenon in Ghana, with the tremendous movement of youth from agriculture-dominant areas to urban and peri-urban centres in search of industrial work. However, stakeholders were particularly of the view that agrotourism will encourage youth participation in agrotourism. An official from the MoTAC expounded:

Agrotourism will lead to increased participation of the youth in the industry since this would mean farming for money not farming for only food. Agrotourism can reduce the high unemployment rate among the youth (Interview, MoTAC, 2018).



In addition, access to working capital and ready markets for agricultural produce and product will rekindle the interest of the youth in agriculture. However, there should be mechanisms put in place to ensure that farm equipment and implements are available and affordable to farmers such as fertilisers and machinery. Currently, some assistances are given to cocoa farmers especially in the form of training and provision of fertilisers (Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020). Agriculture in Ghana is seen as a labour-intensive sector, due to largely the rudimentary tools still in use, inappropriate technology and lack of ready markets for farm produce, which douse the interest of the youth in agriculture (Eshun et al. 2014; Eshun & Tettey, 2014; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020). Edwards's (1992) Constrained Choice Model to farm businesses cautions that although farmers have the prerogative to the mix of enterprises on their farms, they are restrained by the opportunities and threats posed by the prevailing micro-and-macro business environment. These foregoing avowals are coterminous with the below statement:

Agrotourism can lead to increase in packaged tours across the country. Partnership between farmers and hoteliers and other consumers will boost the market base and encourage productivity (Interview; MMDA, Sunyani, 2018).

This reality puts onuses on governments in Africa, to reassess ways in which they can work in tandem with private investors (i.e. agripreneurs) to develop robust agrotourism businesses, based on each country's comparative advantage.

Contributions of stakeholder towards agrotourism development

The decentralisation process in Ghana, which started in the 1980s, proceeded with the aegis that policies and plans of Government should be generated from the MMDAs. This has not been the case. Currently, the MMDAs are to ensure the implementation of plans, policies, and programmes, often initiated at the national level. In fact, one cardinal challenge facing the MMDAs is their overreliance on central government for funding, which frustrates most of their activities (Eshun, 2011; Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015). Against this backdrop, the attention to formulation of policies is now mainly within the mandates of the national ministries (e.g. MoTAC, MoFA etc) and other international tourism organisations (i.e. the UNWTO, World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC] and The International Ecotourism Society [TIES]). Another important stakeholder is the NGOs. In Ghana, the role of NGOs in initiating tourism development cannot be downplayed. For example, the Nature Conservation Research Council (NCRC) is credited with initiating community-based ecotourism in Ghana (Eshun, 2011). NGO's can help mobilise community members and provide them with the necessary support to participate in agrotourism activities (Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015). However, the plethora of information on agrotourism takes place within the milieu of public-private sector collaboration (Okech et al., 2012; Zoto et al., 2013). Stakeholders have also mentioned capacity building as a core function in their plans whereby locals will be able to brand their farms for tourism purposes. This stance was re-echoed by an official at the GTA:

The GTA has the role of creating an enabling environment and technical support for tourism development. There are various benefits that can come from agrotourism, for example, the initiation of cocoa, rubber, shea butter and oil palm museums will benefit the country as a whole (Interview, GTA, 2018).

In Ghana tourism development initiatives fall directly within the mandates of public sector tourism institutions such as the MoTAC, the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and the Ghana Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC). Eshun and Tettey (2014), however, showed that



the foremost national level attempt at developing agrotourism in Ghana was on 6th April 2004, spearheaded by Courage Quashigah, the then minister of MoFA, who inaugurated a 14-member National Committee on the Development of Agrotourism. However, the overt lack of collaboration between the NTOs in Ghana has so far stifled the emergence of agrotourism in the country. Nonetheless, the National Tourism Development Plan (2013-2027), cited in passing the agrotourism potential of Ghana, to be based particularly around cocoa farms and rubber plantations. Eshun and Tetey (2014) asserted that the most favourable scenario would be to stimulate state and private initiatives to propose a joint national plan for agrotourism, spearheaded by a joint committee from MoTAC, GTA, GTDC and MoFA. Although, Eshun and Tetey (2014) argue that local communities are the silent element in agrotourism development. Nonetheless, across the world, there is clear evidence that local community involvement is important in agrotourism and sustainability (Andereck & Vogt 2000; Eshun & Tetey, 2014; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020; Flanigan et al., 2014; Zoto et al. 2013). The silence of local communities in agrotourism literature in Africa is properly due to the fact that unlike ecotourism, where the biodiversity is a common pool resource, farms are however private entities and as such, local communities do not have the direct stake in them. There is the need for especially governmental NTOs, to increase the participation level in communities to guarantee the success of agrotourism project (Okech et al., 2012).

Challenges of stakeholders in agrotourism development

This study identified some of the challenges facing agrotourism in Ghana. A respondent made a straightforward enumeration of some of the leading challenges:

I will put the challenges to successful agrotourism development in the country to the following; inadequate funding from government and development agencies, inadequate knowledge on agrotourism, poor infrastructure and roads linking major farms areas to the consumer market, inadequate provision of social amenities, poor communication between farmers, consumers and other stakeholders, the poor communication among stakeholders in both the tourism and agriculture sector (Interview: Farmer; MoFA–Accra, 2018).

Lack (1997) also asserts that the lack of maintenance and basic infrastructure is one of the problems facing the agrotourism operators. Accessibility to agrotourism destinations has been recognised as problematic for many destinations since most of the farms are located in rural areas with poor road and transportation networks from urban centres. Following from Kotler et al. (2006), visitors will only visit and re-visit areas which are easily accessible, with proper basic utilities and well-maintained farms. Earlier research by Eshun and Tichaawa (2020) identified the impediments to the development of cocoa agrotours in Ghana to include inadequate skilled personnel to carry out cocoa agrotours activities in the area, low level of education and entrepreneurial capacity of locals to benefit from agrotourism, inadequate working capital and menace of diseases affecting cocoa farms in the area and lack of good promotion and under-developed marketing strategies. Eshun and Tichaawa (2020: 33) further emphasised that “Internet is one of the best tools for product promotion; however, searching for agrotourism online shows almost non-existence of agrotourism site in the country”.

The study further asked respondents to mention specific priority areas for developing successful agrotourism in Ghana. Six main priority areas emerged in the transcribed data namely, product offerings, physical ambience, quality assurance, personnel, reservation systems and packaging and promotional strategies. Under product offerings, the specific categories included the type of farm produce, revamping farmhouses into guestrooms, selling



handicrafts, providing hiking or farm walking experience and promoting healthy eating lifestyle through organic farming. The physical ambience priority area, showed these specific categories, namely the urgent need for constructing good roads, good accommodation facilities, visitor centre and parking space. It is replete in literature that the right physical ambience contributes to visitor satisfaction and engenders repeat visits (Bharadwaj, 2018; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009; Kotler et al., 2006). In addition, the following categories emerged under the personnel priority area, specifically the need to have trained tour guides, frontline operators and agrotourism managers. Also to avoid the greenwashing phenomenon that is often associated with ecotourism businesses (Chan & Baum, 2007; Eshun, 2011; Fennell, 2014; Honey, 2008), the respondents indicated that there should be certification schemes in place for all farms and farmers who register to be included in the agrotourism development project in Ghana. This standpoint was the focus of the quality assurance priority area. Another important priority area was the reservation systems and packaging, which showed the following categories: getting the right market information to farmers and other important stakeholders and giving training to tour agencies and operators on agro-tour packages. It is also worthy to note that, in Ghana, budget for promotion of tourism destinations is almost none-existent (Eshun, 2011; Eshun et al. 2014; Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015). Consequently, under the promotional strategies priority area, the respondents stressed unambiguously on the need for effective communication systems, especially in the form of billboards to depict farm types and activities, road signs, information centres to help visitors in their travel decision. Literature has emphasized these categories and how their disavowals in policy and implementation frustrate the success of agrotourism around the world (Edwards, 1992; Andreck & Vogt, 2000; Barbieri, 2013; Eshun, 2011; Eshun & Tettey, 2014; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020; Kizos & Iosifides, 2007; Norida & Abdul, 2014; Wicks & Merrett, 2003; Zoto et al., 2013).

Conclusion

This study, in the tradition of Torres and Momsen's (2004), proposes that agrotourism has the potential of adding value to farmers in Ghana, especially during off-season, and to increase the country's tourism receipts. It examines multi-stakeholder inputs into agrotourism development in Ghana, with particular emphasis placed on the potential and anticipated challenges for the emerging niche-market. However, there is inadequate provision of basic infrastructure such as poor road and institutional ineptitude that frustrate successful agrotourism development in the country. Again, there is inadequate awareness and popularity of agrotourism and its attractiveness to farmers. Though farmers have elementary knowledge and skills in farming, they have poor business management skills, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship and communication skills, and without the proper capacity building (i.e. intensive training and education programmes) for farmers on agrotourism, there will be the rampant cases of entrepreneurial seizures. Also, farmers have limited access to credit and financial assistance to expand farming and acquire necessary equipment to manage their farms well. These foregoing challenges need to be addressed if agrotourism is going to be successful in Ghana. Other observations include the awareness of stakeholders on agrotourism as a niche-market in Ghana, as captured in policy guidelines in tourism documents, and tourism activities.

On the evidence of agrotourism as a priority area in policy documents of key government agencies, there was near universal response on the absence of the former. Respondents from government agencies could not categorically state that agrotourism have been captured as a priority area in policies, acknowledging, however, that there have been awareness creation and capacity building programmes for officials in the area. This contrasts academic respondents who noted active pedagogical presence of agrotourism in the bouquet of academic programmes available to students in the Universities. It is noted that although



agrotourism may not have been a priority in policy documents, government institutions still implemented policies to monitor activities of agrotourism in Ghana. On this issue, majority of the respondents commented on having specific policies to monitor agrotourism activities, such as efficient use of resources to generate income, dissemination of relevant information about agrotourism enterprises, ensuring community complaint to agrotourism guidelines, and finally ensuring value addition to agrotourism products and services by the operators. Despite the seeming success, it was also noted that there is still limited knowledge among a significant number of stakeholders due to the novelty of the sector. They acknowledge that a significant number of players may have little knowledge in what qualifies as agrotourism and its scope, as barriers to its practice and monitoring. Hence, the call for advocacy campaigns for agrotourism development in Ghana. In this direction, it was noted that agrotourism projects such as the Tetteh Quashie Cocoa Farm could serve as a model to demonstrate how agrotourism could lead to increased revenue in the tourism sector.

On the basis of the observations above, it was noted that the MoFA, GTA and MoTAC should take the initiative to formulate clear and implementable policies to promote and monitor agrotourism development in Ghana. The GTA should develop television and radio programmes as a means of connecting people and educating them about the potential benefits of agrotourism development in the country. The MoTAC and MoFA and other relevant actors should find creative approaches to assisting farmer associations to sources of financial and technical support towards developing agrotourism in Ghana. MoTAC and MoFA should partner with other NTOs and NGOs and other development partners towards creating the conducive environment for a viable and sustainable agrotourism development in Ghana.

This study departs from the existing literature in terms of its stakeholder approach; looking at the key contributions of the various stakeholders involved in the development of agrotourism in Ghana. It contributes to knowledge in the existing literature by providing evidence on the emergence, and huge potential, of agrotourism in Ghana, popularly known as a culture and heritage destination, given the county's predominant 'agricultural environment' both in policies and implementations. However, the study demonstrates that a country's agricultural environment does not necessarily translate into a burgeoning agrotourism sector without the needed capacity building, including policy framework, skill development, infrastructure and the willpower of key actors, as noted by the stakeholders. As noted in the study findings, despite being an agrarian economy, stakeholders in Ghana are still less confident in their know-how on agrotourism, hence, the need for the necessary actions to be taken in order to realise the country's potential in agrotourism.

The current study offers a base knowledge in the area, which could support a broader study in future. In this direction, a future quantitative study is important to map the existing agrotourism ecosystem in Ghana and their levels of development in order to identify areas needing attention. Such a study would also require a policy review to understand the limitations of government actions that impact on the agrotourism ecosystem, resulting in the underdevelopment of the sector. In sum, this mapping could identify the areas needing stakeholder actions towards agrotourism development and serves as a trajectory for a more robust agrotourism development in Africa and beyond.

References

- Andereck, K.L. & Vogt, C.A. (2000). The relationship between residents' attitudes toward tourism and tourism development options. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 27-36.
- Barbieri, C. (2013). Assessing the sustainability of agritourism in the US: A comparison between agritourism and other farm entrepreneurial ventures. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(2), 252-270.



- Bharadwaj, S. (2018). Customer satisfaction leads to sustainable competitive advantage: with special reference to the Lalimou eco-tourism camp in Nameri national park. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 6(7), 29-38.
- Brouder, P. & Rikard, H.E. (2013). Tourism evolution: On the synergies of tourism studies and evolutionary economic geography. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 43, 370-389.
- Catalino, A.H. & Lizardo. M. (2004). Agriculture, environmental services and agrotourism in the Dominican Republic. *E-Journal of Agricultural and Development Economics*, 1(1), 87-116.
- Chan, J.K.L. & Baum, T. (2007). Ecotourists' perception of eco-tourism experience in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15(5), 574-590.
- Che, D., Veeck, A. & Veeck. G. (2005). Sustaining production and strengthening the agritourism product: Linkages among Michigan agritourism destinations. *Agriculture & Human Values*, 22(2), 225-234.
- Creswell, J.W. (2015). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Edwards, C. (1992). Changing farm enterprises. In Bowler, I.R. (ed) *The Geography of Agriculture in Developed Market Economies*. London: Longman Group.
- Eshun, G. (2011). *Ecotourism and Social Research*. Saarbrücken: VDM.
- Eshun, G. & Tettey, C. (2014). Agrotourism development in Ghana: A study of its prospects and challenges at Adjeikrom Cocoa Tour Facility. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 25(25), 81-99.
- Eshun, G., Segbefia, A.Y. & Acheampong, J.F. (2014). The nexus of agrotourism and marketing: A case study of poultry farms in Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 3(2), 1-12.
- Eshun, G. & Tagoe-Darko, E. (2015). Ecotourism development in Ghana: A postcolonial analysis. *Development of Southern Africa*, 32, 392-406.
- Eshun, G., Seebaway, Z. & Segbefia, A.Y. (2015). 'Beyond entrenched positions': towards a more comprehensive understanding of methodological choices in tourism research in Ghana. *Journal of Critical Southern Studies*, 3, 3-39.
- Eshun, G. & Tichaawa, T.M. (2020). Developing agro-tourism tours on the cocoa sector in africa: emerging issues from Ghana. *EuroEconomica*. 39, 13-34.
- Fennell, D.A. (2014). *Ecotourism: an introduction* (3rd Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Flanigan, S., Blackstock, K. & Hunter. C. (2014). Agritourism from the perspective of providers and visitors: a typology-based study. *Tourism Management*, 40, 394-405.
- Goeldner, C.R. & Ritchie, J.R.B. (2009). *Tourism: principles, practice, and philosophies*. 11th Edition. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Hall, C.M. & Campos, M.J.Z. (2014). Public administration and tourism– international & Nordic perspectives. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 18(1), 3-17.
- Hamilpurka, S. (2012). Agri-tourism in Karnataka–issues, constraints and possibilities. *International Journal of Research in Commerce, Economics and Management*, 2, 106-111.
- Hegarty, C. & Przeborska, L. (2005). Rural and agri-tourism as a tool for reorganising rural areas in old and new member states—a comparison study of Ireland and Poland. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 72, 63-77.
- Honey, M. (2008). *ecotourism and sustainable development. who owns paradise* (2nd Ed). Washington: Island Press.
- Kiper, T. (2011). Land use planning regarding sustainable development through agritourism: Şarköy example. *Journal of Agricultural Biotechnology and Sustainable Development*, 3(8), 171- 181.



- Kizos, T. & Iosifides, T. (2007). The contradictions of agrotourism development in Greece: evidence from three case studies. *South European Society & Politics*, 12 (1), 59-77.
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J.T. & Makens J.C. (2006). Marketing for hospitality and tourism. 4th Edition. Pearson/Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.
- Lack, K.J. (1997). Agritourism development in British Columbia. Master of Natural Resource Management. Master's Thesis submitted to Simon Fraser University.
- Mkono, M. (2013). African and western tourists: object authenticity quest? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 41, 195-214.
- Norida, M. & Abdul, S.J. (2014). Development and challenges of agritourism in Malaysia. *Journal of International Society for Southeast Asian Agricultural Sciences*, 20(1), 131-138.
- Okech, R., Haghiri, M. & George, B. (2012). Rural tourism as a sustainable development alternative: An analysis with special reference to Luanda, Kenya. *CULTUR*, 6, 3-33.
- Ollenburg, C. & Buckley, R. (2007). Stated economic and social motivations of farm tourism operators. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(4), 444-452.
- Phelan, C. & Sharpley, R. (2011). Exploring agrotourism entrepreneurship in the UK. *Tourism Planning Development*, 8(2), 21-136.
- Rogerson, C.M. (2006). Pro-poor local economic development in South Africa: the role of pro-poor tourism. *Local Environment*, 11(1), 37-60.
- Rogerson, C.M. (2012). Strengthening agriculture-tourism linkages in the developing World: Opportunities, barriers and current initiatives. *African Journal of Agricultural Research*, 7(4), 616-623.
- Rogerson, C.M & Visser, G. (2004). Tourism and development issues in contemporary South Africa: *Issue 19 of African century publications series*: African Institute of South Africa, 2004.
- Torres, R. & Momsen. J.H. (2004). Challenges and potential for linking tourism and agriculture to achieve pro-poor tourism objectives. *Progress in Development Studies*, 4(4), 294-318.
- Wicks, B.E. & Merrett. C.D. (2003). Agritourism: An economic opportunity for Illinois. *Rural Research Report*, 14(9), 1-8.
- World Bank. (2018). improving vocational training and skills development delivery systems for the tourism sector in Ghana Prepared for the WB, Accra.
- World Economic Forum. (2018). *The global competitiveness report*. Geneva, World Economic Forum.
- Zoto, S., Qirici, E. & Polena, E. (2013). Agrotourism - A Sustainable development for rural area of Korea. *European Academic Research*, 1(2), 209-223.