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ARTICLE



Cultural tourism and socio-economic regeneration of rural communities: the *Apo* festival of Bono Takyiman, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has been part of humankind since time immemorial. People visit destinations for educational, religious, medical or entertainment purposes. Tourism includes short-term travel of people to destinations outside their communities. It is an important income generation and source of employment in many countries. In many former European colonies, some historical sites and events still attract thousands of visitors who like to get the first-hand information about the past. An important event that attracts thousands of visitors to rural Ghana is cultural tourism. It takes place when people visit specific destinations to attend, observe, learn or enjoy cultural events of an ethnic group. Ghana is endowed with a variety of festivals which attract local and foreign visitors. This study investigated the socio-economic impact of the annual *Apo* festival of Bono Takyiman. This qualitative-ethnographic research employed interviews and participant observation in the investigation. The study found that the *Apo* festival as a cultural tourism has a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the Bono Takyiman Municipality. In view of its positive impact on communities, the paper recommended to the local authorities to make the product more attractive for cultural tourism to contribute to the socio-economic regeneration of the countryside.

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Introduction

Bennet (2007, p. 7) describes tourism as ‘any activity concerned with temporary or short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at such places’. Tourism, whether urban or rural, is as old as humankind; since time immemorial human beings have been visiting places for various reasons. People may visit places outside their homes for educational, religious and medical purposes or to entertain themselves through participation in some cultural events, especially in the countryside. Greg (2018, p. 2) observes that cultural tourism is driven by the ‘heritage boom’. That is, the growth of international and domestic travel and the identification of cultural tourism as a good form of tourism that would stimulate the economy and help conserve culture. Cultural tourism usually takes place at the countryside where rural communities dearly hold on to their culture. As Sharpely and Sharpely (1997, p. 22) attest; ‘the countryside in both physical and cultural sense of the word is

a resource for tourism. It is a resource which attracts tourists, a resource which is exploited by the tourism industry for financial gain. By implication, a resource upon which both tourists and the tourism industry depend’.

Cultural tourism, which is the focus of this study, takes place when people from various background visit specific destinations to attend, observe, participate, learn or enjoy cultural (festive) events of a particular ethnic group. Sampson (2018) affirms that cultural tourism in Ghana covers over 30 traditional festivals and events celebrated by different ethnic groups at different calendar months and it is a key driver generating foreign exchange earnings and creating jobs. A number of authors including Hannam and Offeh (2012), Sampson (2018) and Adom (2017, 2019) acknowledge the capacity of cultural tourism in contributing significantly to the socio-economic development of Ghana in general. The authors also agree that cultural tourism serves as avenues for propagating the rich cultural heritage of local communities, honour ancestors and improve the local economic conditions. These earlier studies, however, did not specifically focus on the capacity of cultural tourism in creating Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) for the socio-economic regeneration of the Bono Takyiman area. Adom’s (2017, 2019) studies, for example, focused on the biodiversity and environmental conservation through traditional festivals in Ghana including the *Apo* of Bono Takyiman. The current study sought to fill in the vacuum by investigating the socio-economic impact of the *Apo* festival, as a cultural tourism product, on the rural communities within the Takyiman Municipality. This study ties in with the literature in that it seeks to contribute to the existing knowledge by illuminating the capacity of cultural tourism in encouraging self-employment initiatives in communities within the Bono Takyiman area in Ghana.

Ghana is a peaceful country with a variety of annual cultural festivals which attract both local and foreign visitors to most of the countryside communities. One of the annual cultural events which attracts thousands of visitors to the countryside is the *Apo* festival. In recent times lots of small businesses such as restaurants, guest houses, hotels, night clubs, souvenir shops and taxi services have sprung up in the Bono Takyiman area. The researcher was motivated to investigate what is behind the rapid changes in the socio-economic life of the Takyiman municipality. This study was therefore undertaken to explore the socio-economic impact of *Apo* as a cultural tourism product on the otherwise quiet countryside area. The ethnographic research methods of interviews and participant observation were employed in data collection. The study found that the *Apo* cultural festival is a major factor in the socio-economic regeneration of the Takyiman area. The author undertook this ethnographic study in Ghana and read it as a paper at the 2018 SAAFECS Conference in Pretoria before improving it into this full research article.

The context of the study

Ghana is a relatively small multi-ethnic and cultural country on the West Coast of Africa. One of its main ethnic groups is the Bono which is located at the mid-west of the country. Adu Boahen (1975) and Buah (1998, p. 7) attest that Bono was ‘great, famous, rich and the first Akan kingdom that came into existence in the present day Ghana between 13–14 A D with Bono Manso as its capital’. The Bono were the first of the 11 Akan-speaking groups to emerge in the modern-day Ghana (Adu Boahen, 1975) and according to Buah (1998, p. 7) ‘the Bono kingdom was the centre of Akan civilization’ but tribal warfare in the

pre-colonial era negatively affected the greatness of the kingdom economically and politically. The Bono are endowed with rich culture which is displayed during festivals. They are identified by their rich culture and traditions.

Yanev and Zlatarov (2017, p. 373) describe culture as ‘a multiplicity of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional traits of a society or a social group’. Culture encompasses not only art and literature but also the way of life, cohabitation, value systems, traditions and beliefs. The cultural identity of the Bono is portrayed through their way of life such as farming, dressing, language, religion, symbols, artifacts and festivals. Nkonko (1999) affirms that traditional African values foster a communalistic worldview towards life. The Apo festival which is tied to the history and social life of the Bono Takyiman people of Ghana is celebrated annually in March–April. The festival is celebrated through folk music and dance to entertain visitors but it is an opportunity for citizens to advise their chiefs by venting out their grievances through proverbial folk songs and dance. Adom (2019, p. 2) affirms that the proverbial songs which contain the words of the wrong deeds are enchanted throughout the streets and specific homes of the people rebuked.

According to Bono oral tradition, the festival was constituted by the king, Nana Amoyaw Akumfi 1, one of the founders of the Takyiman State around the 15th century AD. Oral tradition has it that in the early days of the kingdom some of the kings and the chiefs wielded absolute power and were ruthless despots. The people became dissatisfied and fed up with the tyranny of the chiefs and the monarchy but the king did nothing to stop the oppression and the cruelty meted out to the subjects. Some of the people planned to rebel against the monarchy. The plan leaked to some of the king’s advisors who informed him to avert the disaster by allowing the subjects the opportunity to air out their grievances without any fear of punishment.

In a bid to save his kingship and satisfy the subjects, the king, through his advisors, set a day aside every year for the people to masquerade, compose and sing folk songs amidst drumming and dancing to voice out their grievances through songs and thus reject what they do not like. The name *Apo*, therefore, comes from the Akan word **Po** (literary means to **reject**). As Quan-Baffour (2019, p. 157) points out ‘it is the day the Bono people of Takyiman are granted permission by the King to *reject* (**po**) bad governance, corruption, abuse of power and all unacceptable behaviours of fellow citizens including the king, chiefs and all people in high places’. Indeed it is the time to reject all forms of undesirable behaviours in the Bono Takyiman area.

The *Apo* festival is a week-long communal celebration which focuses on African values of servant leadership, accountability and virtues such as honesty, peaceful co-existence and social justice. The traditional festival reaches its climax on the 8th day, which is always arranged to be on a Friday. During the **Apo** festival, the people masquerade, wear funny hats, head gear and cultural outfits to hide their faces or identity as they parade through the main streets singing songs some of which rebuke even the paramount chief (Quan-Baffour, 2019). The participants of the festival hold their leaders accountable for their bad deeds through proverbial folksongs. If the person to be rebuked has engaged in acts of corruption, it would be laid bare in the proverbial songs (Adom, 2019). The local leaders are subjected to ridicule by exposing their corrupt practices, abuse of power, misuse of resources and immoral behaviours through proverbial folksongs. It is believed that when the corrupt and other unethical behaviours of the leaders (chiefs, civil servants, politicians

and business men and women) are exposed they may be careful in their actions. The *apo* is the time of accountability and so all local Bono leaders are careful and are aware that whatever they do in secret can come out during the *Apo* festival.

The Bono Takyiman is the administrative capital of the newly created Bono East Region. Its geographical location connects the area to the North and South of the country. The Municipality has the largest informal market in the central part of Ghana and as such there are variety of business activities in the area which attract thousands of people from all parts of the country and beyond throughout the year. The major business activities in the area include but not limited to the sale of foodstuffs, building materials (cement, iron rods, roofing sheets, nails, tiles and paint) farming implements (machetes, hoes, seeds and fertilizer), clothes, footwear and the brewing of local beer (*pito*) and whiskey (*apetishie*) restaurants, guest houses/hotels and transport services.

Cultural tourism in perspective

In the contemporary world, one type of tourism which has become very popular and acts as a catalyst for rural development is cultural tourism. Lots of people travel to various destinations for cultural purposes. Briedenham and Wickens (2004) attest that the realization that people are interested in their unique African culture and lifestyle has led to a diversity of new cultural tourism projects. Greg (2018, p. 1) opines that culture and tourism have always been inextricably linked. He points out that cultural sights, attractions and events provide an important motivation for travel, and travel itself generates culture (Greg, 2018). Cultural tourism may be described as all the movements of persons to specific cultural attractions such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama outside their normal place of residence (Okumus et al., 2012). The UNWTO (2017, p. 18) defines cultural tourism as the type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions or products in a tourism destination. Cultural tourism is thus a form of experiential tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences of an aesthetic, intellectual, emotional or psychological nature. Briedenham and Wickens (2004) report that culture tourism ranges from a revitalization of traditional ceremonies, rituals and dances to enactments of momentous events in the history of their tribe and opportunity for tourists' immersion in local music, food and crafts. Petkova (2017) observes that cultural tourism is the movement of people for essentially cultural motivations which includes study tours, performing arts, cultural tours, travel to festivals, visits to historic sites and monuments, folklore and pilgrimages.

Greg (2018) reports that cultural tourism has recently been re-affirmed by the UNWTO as a major element of international tourism consumption, accounting for over 39% of tourism arrivals. This researcher has observed that very often the common values and unique attitudes of a particular group of people which find expression in certain customs, traditions, rituals, events, buildings, monuments and artefacts attract people to various destinations. The UNWTO (2017) affirms that such attractions relate to spiritual and emotional features of society which cover arts, architecture, historical and cultural heritage, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. In the contemporary world culture encourages people to travel to foreign countries and various destinations because of the interest they have in

different cultures and this has turned cultural tourism into an important commodity. Through cultural tourism activities, many people visit various destinations to experience the different ways of life of other ethnic groups. It also assists visitors to gain firsthand information and understanding of the customs, traditions, language and places of historical and cultural significance. This kind of tourism covers local outfits, handicrafts, artefacts, religious sites, traditions, musical displays, festivals and dramatic performance. Yanev and Zlatarov (2017) intimate that material and intangible elements of cultural tourism include historical landmarks, works of art, painting, music, architecture, museums, language, education, clothing, religion and rituals, crafts and folklore. Unique cultural attractions or discourse can motivate people to travel to destinations to participate, enjoy and learn from other cultural activities.

The various destinations compete for cultural tourists and for that reason it is important for every cultural destination to identify its niche, unique and distinctive resources such as safety, cuisine, cultural dresses, displays, events and festivals as a competitive advantage over their peers. Destinations that offer best attractions are likely to have competitive advantage over others which lack such attributes.

Petkova (2017) attests that the subject of cultural tourism is culture, history, traditions and customs of a destination. Participants in cultural tourism are driven by cognitive reasoning because they visit specific sites to get to know people and their culture. Cultural tourism existed during the pre-industrial era however mass cultural tourism is rather a new phenomenon since the last few decades (Petkova, 2017). In the contemporary world, there has been dramatic increase in domestic and international cultural tourism. Globalization and technological advancement have created a global village in which people are able to identify interesting and attractive cultural destinations to visit. This kind of tourism covers cultural and heritage activities and can be regarded as a show case for heritage, beliefs and way of life of a group of people in a particular tourist destination. Cultural tourists often buy unique cultural products such as clothes, artefacts, bags, or food as souvenir. Cultural tourism has therefore become a commodity consumed by both domestic and international visitors on regular basis. Tourists visit various destinations to attend, enjoy, appreciate and participate in cultural activities which interest them. The visitors see cultural events as commodity to be consumed hence they experience cuisine, cultural displays, folksongs, festivals, ceremonies, performances, folkdances and outfits during their visit to destinations.

Tourism, temporary visit to places, is a fast-growing industry in the contemporary world. It is an important human activity that provides employment for lots of people and foreign exchange earning to many countries. Cultural tourism often takes place in countryside destinations and is often tied to rural tourism.

Quan-Baffour (2004, p. 13) contends that the countryside is 'unspoiled and has multi-resources for tourism'. Tourists like to visit destinations that have something to offer in terms of attractive features such as cultural activities, heritage sites, lakes, mountains, forests, education, religious and recreational facilities. Cultural and rural tourists may take part in an array of activities at the countryside destinations. Such activities may include participation in cultural events, visiting, heritage sites, horse riding, swimming, fishing, farm tours and pong trekking (Quan-Baffour, 2004). Although lack of good road network and amenities made people dislike the countryside in the past, with advancement of technology and good communication network the negative perception of people has

changed in recent times. Many urban dwellers spend their holidays in rural areas to seek peace, relaxation and get close to nature. Thus, the rural 'idyll' motivates people to engage in cultural and rural tourism.

Cultural tourism provides the host communities with social and economic benefits. The folkways of rural communities reflected in festivals and cultural displays bring both the urban and rural dwellers together as people with common interests and identity (Quan-Baffour, 2004). The establishment of hospitality industry by the local people (e.g., restaurants, motels, guest houses, bed and breakfast) could contribute to the social and economic improvement of the host communities. Cultural tourism therefore can effect positive changes in the quality of life of rural community residents. For example, the frequent visit to rural cultural tourism destinations by both domestic and international visitors could motivate governments to improve social services such as roads, clinics, security and recreational facilities in the host areas. Quan-Baffour (2004) attests that cultural tourism can also lead to the regeneration of local customs, crafts and cultural identities of tribes and communities. Small and medium scale enterprises such as street vendors, transport (taxis, motor bikes, horses) can emerge in rural communities as a result of visitors arriving at the destinations. Apart from socio-economic benefits, cultural tourism can directly or indirectly influence the physical environment of the host communities. As a result of frequent visits by tourists the host communities may often ensure a clean physical environment in order to attract tourists. Indeed, a destination with a beautiful and clean physical environment can attract visitors than a filthy environment.

Theoretical framework

This article describes and discusses how an annual cultural event and performance of the Bono ethnic group in the greater Takyiman Municipality attract tourists to the rural area in Ghana. It focuses on the culture of a group of people hence it is underpinned by Castro-Gomez's (2000) traditional theory of culture. In its simplest sense, culture may be described as the way of life of a group of people (Castro-Gomez, 2000). Woodside (2011, p. 785) describes culture as 'the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. Culture affects all aspects of human life in a society. It is the expression and meaning a group of people give to identify and define themselves as people. That is, through culture people express and define who they are, what they are and what they believe in. Schuster and Copeland (2008) attest that culture is a total way of life held in common way by a group of people. Learned similarities in language, in speech, behaviours, ideology, livelihood, technology, value system and society bind people together in a culture. Saleebey (1994) is of the view that human beings build themselves into the world by creating meaning, and culture gives meaning to action by situating underlying states in an interpretive system. Quan-Baffour (2019, p. 157) also posits that 'it is through practice, performance or action that a group of people express their beliefs and identity through stories, narratives, myths, rituals, dance and songs'.

Castro-Gomez's (2000) theory of culture postulates that the radical separation between subject and object of knowledge converts theory into a pure activity of thought and the theorist into a disinterested spectator who is limited to describing the world as it is perceived. Since the laws of social life have a cosmological foundation, independent of

human will, 'the wisdom of the good ruler consists precisely in recognizing this foundation and ensuring that the laws of the polis are organized around man's 'cultural disposition' (Castro-Gomez, 2000, p. 504).

The traditional theory of culture, according to Castro-Gomez (2000, p. 504) is the 'natural facticity' i.e. the type of culture that is rooted in 'human nature'. The theory hinges on three important characteristic elements which are 'national spirit', national identity and identity between people, nation and culture. The theory of culture emphasizes the fact that culture is a practice, belief, way of life and therefore a social construction. This indicates that the stories people tell and the constructions they devise about their lives identify them as a unique group from others (Quan-Baffour, 2019). The modern idea of 'man' is understood as a being that produces himself in history and creates cultural values. Culture constitutes the sphere of moral, religious, political, philosophical and technological values that permit man to 'humanize himself (Castro-Gomez, 2000). When man is perceived to be the sole architect of his own destiny then it could be said that humanity lay in the capacity to humanize i.e. man's ability to constitute himself in time through the creation of his own world – **culture** (Castro-Gomez, 2000).

Castro-Gomez's (2000) traditional theory of culture is relevant to this study in that it emphasizes the importance of culture and its practices and how people can market it through celebrations or festivals to exhibit their identity and beliefs to the outside world. Another important lesson from the theory is that as individuals within a particular ethnic group subordinate themselves to the beliefs, values and laws of their group and the community mediates between its members the people learn to be conscious of what they are. That is, what their aspirations and beliefs are and what their destiny is as members of the particular ethnic group or tribe.

The importance of the theory to the study can also be deduced from its teaching that the best way to study and understand any group of people is through their cultural practices as it is culture that portrays life, beliefs and values of people. It is through cultural practices that individuals are reconciled with ethical substance of the collectivity.

The Bono are traditional and as such culture occupies the pinnacle of the entire gamut of all their indigenous social practices including the *rites de passage*, birth, marriage, naming ceremonies, death and agricultural activities (preparation of land, sowing and harvesting). Indeed, culture identifies ethnic groups and their pride which is why people are always prepared to fight or die to retain any attempt to undermine their culture. People would do whatever it takes to protect, defend and project their culture (language, beliefs, values, songs, dance, religion etc) because that is their identity. Quan-Baffour (2019, p. 157) adds that 'without culture there is no identity and any ethnic group without identity literary fails to exist.'

Research methodology

This study aimed at exploring the socio-economic impact of the annual *Apo* festival as a cultural tourism on the municipality of Bono Takyiman in Ghana. The research was anchored in the interpretive paradigm and as an investigation into the culture of a group of people it took the form of an ethnographic study. The researcher participated in some educational project in Ghana between 2015 and 2019. He seized the opportunity of being in the country to spend some time in the area to study and investigate the people to gain

rich and detailed experiences of the phenomenon- *cultural tourism*. Creswell (2009) and Nieuwenhuis (2012, p. 76) agree that ethnography is 'a qualitative research approach in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in their natural setting through collecting primarily observational and interview data'. It can be regarded as a holistic approach to the study of cultural systems and a process of discovery, making inferences and continuing inquiring (Whitehead, 2004). Ethnographic study uncovers and explicates the ways a group of people understand their settings and provide information based on their lived experiences (Quan-Baffour, 2012). This research approach advocates for data collection in a natural setting which is not manipulated. Being a qualitative research it involved an in-depth study using face-to-face interviews and participant observation as tools to collect data from rural tourism-related business owners in their natural settings (Bowling, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The study aimed at knowing the candid views of the tourism-related business owners on how the annual cultural celebration affects their businesses and the socio-economic development of the Bono Takyiman area.

Qualitative research is based on the assumption that 'reality' is multiple and socially constructed through the interaction of individuals who interpret issues by assigning meaning to their perceptions and experience (Bowling, 2004). Qualitative researchers view events and the social world through the eyes of the subjects that they are studying. The study spread over 3 years to enable the researcher to understand the participants' experiences of the phenomenon and the personal meaning they might construct from their 'lived experiences' (Johnson & Christenson, 2004). To ensure that the study generated systematic or replicable data, the researcher interviewed the same group of entrepreneurs during the three-year study period. Bryan and Bell (2011) suggest that in order to obtain the candid views of any individual or group on specific issues the social world should be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied rather than as though those subjects were incapable of their own reflections on their social world.

Population and sample

The researcher initially spent two weeks at the study site to find out the type of businesses in the Takyiman municipality and recorded sixty (60) identifiable small to medium scale enterprises. The sample frame covered businesses that sold foodstuffs, building materials, farming implements, clothes, footwear, the brewing of local alcoholic drinks, restaurants, guest houses/hotels, handicrafts and transport services. The researcher observed that most of the entrepreneurs in the area were engaged in similar business activities. In view of the duplication of businesses, he clustered the sixty (60) enterprises under more General businesses and Tourism related activities and purposively chose twenty (20) people whose businesses related to rural tourism to participate in the study. The twenty (20) purposively selected participants comprised five (5) guesthouse/hotel proprietors, five (5) restaurant managers/owners, five (5) taxi operators and five (5) shop owners to participate in this study.

This was a qualitative-ethnographic case study which required the interpretation of the participants' experiences of the *Apo* festival as a cultural tourism product. The selection of the sample size (of 20 information-rich individuals) therefore took cognizance of the '**interpretative**' nature of the data and as such followed the precepts of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation. Being a case study, a reasonably small number of

participants (i.e. a third of the total population) were considered adequate for an in-depth study and vivid interpretation of the feelings, views, opinions and experiences of the participants regarding the *Apo* festival. The researcher solicited the participants' experiences of the tourism product and interpreted them in line with the research objectives and the research questions. The 20 entrepreneurs whose views were solicited by the researcher were a true representation of the cultural tourism-related business owners at the study site. There was a clear connection between the sample size and the interpretivist paradigm in that the number [20] was manageable and aided an in-depth and quick interpretation or explanation of the data for the case study.

The criteria for eligibility to participate in the study were that the participant should be:

- a resident of the Takyiman Municipality and
- an owner of small to medium scale business for over five (5) years

The approach allowed the researcher to see the investigation from the perspective of the interviewees (King, 2004). It also allowed the participants to recount their lived experiences as business owners, residents and observers of the *Apo* festival.

The following items were used for the interview:

- What motivated you to start this small/medium scale business?
- What is the average number of clients/visitors you serve per month?
- Which time of the year does your business boom?
- How does the *Apo* festival affect your business?
- How does the presence of the *Apo* visitors affect this municipality?

Data collection procedures

The researcher used both participant observation and semi-structured interviews for data collection because of the flexibility of the approaches in qualitative research. He tested the interview items on two neutral business owners in the Municipality and used the results to revise the items before engaging in the interviews with the twenty (20) selected entrepreneurs. This measure was taken to ensure the reliability of the data collection tools. The researcher who was a participant observer of the cultural event conducted face-to-face interviews with the selected entrepreneurs in order to capture both their verbal and non-verbal responses. The participants were interviewed three times within the three year study period in their own setting in order not to disrupt their business activities. The yearly interviews were conducted two-three days before the cultural event which enabled the researcher time to participate and observe the activities and behaviours of the folks during the festival.

As a participant observer, the researcher kept a journal (record of events) throughout the weeklong celebration of the festival. He followed up with the selected participants after the day's event to seek more information on some behaviours he observed but did not understand. During the observation the researcher immersed himself in the cultural activities by wearing local outfit and participating in the matching, dancing and singing. This enabled him to converse with the festival folks to understand their behaviours and activities.

Ethical considerations

The issue of ethics is important consideration in any research that involves human participants. Bowling (2004) intimates that participants in a research project should not be harmed and must give their informed consent to participate. In this regard, the researcher informed all the participants the purpose of the study and sought their verbal consent before starting the data collection. He also informed them that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw their participation at any time they felt like doing so. As a measure to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher did not record names of the participants throughout the data collection.

Data analysis

This was a research study that aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Creswell et al., 2012). The study was undertaken to explore the effect of the Apo festival as a cultural tourism on the socio-economic regeneration of the Bono Takyiman Municipal area. The researcher, therefore, tried to establish how the participants made meaning of the phenomenon (cultural tourism) by analyzing their perceptions, experiences, values feelings, attitudes and knowledge and its socio-economic effects on their community. Being a qualitative research, the analysis of the data followed the interpretive paradigm tradition where data were interpreted through the use of words to explain the participants' views, feelings and experiences of the Apo festival.

The researcher analysed the data thematically by using the open coding approach to arrange the information under specific themes. The coding was done by pruning, reading and dividing the data into smaller and more meaningful units. He broke the data into smaller units with each unit arranged under a specific theme. The researcher thus segmented and labelled the text with descriptive words to identify and determine the categories. He compared the data from the individual interviews and observations and grouped similar or related information together as a specific theme. This process enabled the researcher to group similar information under specific themes to ease interpretation and description of the data. The process also assisted him to quickly retrieve and collect together all the texts and other data they are associated with (Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

Results and discussion

Using the thematic and interpretive approaches, the researcher presented, analysed and discussed the data under the following four themes:

Theme 1: motive for starting tourism-related small business

The entrepreneurs have motive for starting tourism-related businesses hence the researcher wanted to know their specific motives for starting the particular small businesses. Although the 20 participants were interviewed at different sites and times their responses corroborated with their fellow interviewees. The responses from the twenty (20) participants also confirmed what the researcher observed and heard during his attendance of the cultural festival. Among other things, he observed and heard from

some visitors about the huge demand for food, traditional regalia and accommodation during the weeklong festival.

They agreed in their responses that as unemployed people they looked out for opportunities to engage in self-employment activities in order to put food on the table. Being residents of the Bono Takyiman Municipality they have realized the need for accommodation, food, African cloths (shops), and transport for the thousands of people who visit the area for business and tourism purposes. This finding is consistent with Sampson's (2018) viewpoint that cultural tourism in Ghana covers over 30 traditional festivals and events celebrated by different ethnic groups and it is a key driver of job creation. The responses also indicate that the participants were motivated by the arrival of many people to the area, particularly during the *Apo* festival, to start tourism-related businesses for livelihoods. Being entrepreneurs, they seized the opportunity to open tourism small businesses to respond to the needs of the visitors to the Municipality to make a living. The responses from the participants and participant observation indicate a very strong relationship between rural tourism and job creation. Hannam and Offeh (2012) affirm that cultural tourism is a commodity that employs many people in rural Ghana. Thus, wherever rural tourism destination exists, the local people are motivated by visitor arrivals to create their own jobs and even employ other residents to serve the particular needs of the visitors in order to earn a living. Cultural tourism, therefore, provides job opportunities for the local people at tourist destinations and therefore acts as a catalyst for the socio-economic regeneration of countryside communities.

Theme 2: type and average number of clients/visitors per month

Regarding the type and the average number of clients or visitors per month the respondents gave different answers. They agreed in the responses by stating that their clients are both local residents and visitors but the difference in frequency of clients depends on the type of business the individual operates and the particular time of the year. For example, while the restaurant and taxi operators mentioned they served over thousand clients a month the owners of guesthouses and African shops put the number of customers around six hundred (600) people. They, however, added that the number of clients increases during market days and the period of the *Apo* festival when thousands of people visit the area as tourists. Okumus et al. (2012) affirm that cultural tourism is the movement of people to specific cultural attractions such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama outside their normal places of residence.

The responses from the participants regarding how the *Apo* festival attracts many visitors to the Takyiman area were confirmed by the researcher's observation. He witnessed how thousands of people from outside the municipality attended the *Apo* festival which acted as a cultural tourism product. The arrival of many visitors to the area also increases the number of customers for the tourism-related businesses such as restaurants, hotel accommodation, taxi operation, African and handicraft shops.

Theme 3: time of the year when business blooms

As a sequel to the type of clients and average number of clients visiting their businesses was the question of when businesses boom. All the participants agreed in their responses that although they receive patronage throughout the year, tourism-related businesses boom between March and April when the annual *Apo* festival is celebrated. One bed and breakfast owner had this to say, reproduced verbatim;

Throughout the year market women and men from far away places come for accommodation here every week from Wednesday to Friday between March and April however all my 20 rooms get fully booked and we run short of accommodation.

It can be deduced from the information provided by the participants that because of the weekly market, clients visit them throughout the year however they become overwhelmed during the *Apo* festival period. This shortage of accommodation was affirmed by many of the visitors who the researcher interacted with during the weeklong celebration of the *Apo* cultural festival. Through informal conversation with fellow visitors at the festival, the researcher learnt that some of them usually booked accommodation in advance to avoid disappointment. The participants confirmed what the researcher observed and heard during the cultural festival that the weeklong festival attracts thousands of visitors to the Bono Takyiman area and the presence of the large number of visitors benefits the small and medium business owners, particularly those who operate restaurants, bottle stores, guesthouses, African shops and taxis in the area. Briedenham and Wickens (2004) attest that cultural tourism revitalizes traditional ceremonies, rituals and dances to enactments of momentous events and opportunity for tourists' immersion in local music, food and crafts. The *Apo* festival increases the number of visitors to the area and this enables the tourism-related entrepreneurs to take advantage of the visitor arrivals to make huge profits from their businesses. The responses from the participants affirm that the thousands of visitors who come to the Bono Takyiman area to observe, participate or celebrate the festival increase the number of clients for tourism-related businesses such as guest houses, hotels, restaurants, taxi operation and African (souvenir) shops. The annual *Apo* festival which takes place between March and April, acts as a pulling factor for tourists to the Bono Takyiman area and also serves as a motivation for tourism-related small businesses to spring up in the otherwise quiet countryside area. Petkova (2017) attests that the subject of cultural tourism is culture, history, traditions and customs of a destination. Participants in cultural tourism are driven by cognitive reasoning because they visit specific sites to get to know people and their cultures. The researcher observed that there is paucity of formal government employment in the rural area and the *Apo* festival as a rural tourism product helps in self-employment creation. It can, however, be argued that the seasonality of the product coupled with poor infrastructure may continue to hinder rural tourism development in the area.

Theme 4: the effect of the Apo festival as a tourism product on small business and socio-economic development of the area

Touching on the effects of the cultural tourism on the area the participants were unanimous (100%) in their responses that the cultural tourism, in the form of an annual festival, has

brought about direct and indirect improvement to the lives of most people in the area in the form of self-employment. Hannam and Offeh (2012) and Sampson (2018) emphasize the importance of cultural tourism as a commodity that employs many people in rural Ghana in general and earns foreign exchange for the country. This researcher's observation of the businesses and the physical environment of the town and its suburbs confirmed the responses from the participants that the visitor arrivals have positive effects on businesses and the general socio-economic development of the Bono Takyiman area. The small to medium size tourism-related business owners indicated how their businesses have expanded since the past decade. The expansion in the sizes of small and medium scale rural tourism-related enterprises indicate the sustainability of the businesses. As one entrepreneur (guest house owner) echoed the views of the other participants (reproduced verbatim);

I started from a very humble beginning but now things are taking shape in my business; thanks to the number of visitors to this area.

The statement above affirms the assumption that the *Apo* festival is a rural idyll (uniqueness of a countryside) that increases visitor arrivals in the Bono Takyiman municipality, something which has positive socio-economic effect on the area. In talking about the benefits of the cultural tourism, the participants provided the following responses:

- self-employment and regular income for tourism-related business owners
- general social and environmental improvement of the area and
- employment for some community members by the tourism-related businesses.

The observation by the researcher confirmed the responses above. As he visited the various places and businesses in the Municipality, the researcher observed some attempts by the residents to keep the physical environment, particularly around their businesses clean. Again by employing some people from the local community to work in the businesses in various capacities (cleaners, cooks, messengers, security or sales assistants), the small businesses which emerged from the cultural tourism assist to reduce the unemployment situation in the municipality. In affirming this finding Quan-Baffour (2004) points out that cultural tourism can lead to the regeneration of local communities, customs, crafts and cultural identities of tribes. Informal enterprises such as street vendors, transport (taxis, motor bikes, horses) which emerge in rural communities as the result of rural tourism can increase the earnings of rural folks. As Adom (2019, p. 2) attests, a well-planned (eco) tourism in rural regions provides employment avenues for local people, especially the often disadvantaged in the society, women, through the marketing of local crafts and employment for the youth as tour guides. This sustains the local workforce that would have moved to the cities.

The *Apo* festival as a cultural tourism product however may have some negative social effects on the area. It has the potential of increasing prostitution, teenage pregnancies and the spread of HIV/AIDS within the Bono Takyiman Municipality. Throughout his 3 years' attendance of the weeklong celebrations, the researcher observed how lots of teenage girls mingled with boys and elderly men around street corners and bottle stores both day and night. This observation indicates the nature of rural tourism as a double-edged sword.

Conclusion

The study investigated the socio-economic impact of the *Apo* Festival as a cultural tourism on the Bono Takyiman area. Interviews and participant observations were used for data collection. The data obtained from the interviews of selected small to medium tourism-related business owners and the researcher's observation indicated that there is a positive relationship between the arrival of visitors to the rural tourist destination and the socio-economic improvement of the town and its suburbs. The increased number of visitor arrivals has led to the mushrooming of small businesses which provide jobs for many people and also improve the physical outlook of the town and its suburbs. In considering the findings from the study, it can be concluded that festivals, as cultural tourism products have the potential to regenerate countryside communities in spite of some social vices that may come with them. The findings, therefore, validate the objective of the study- finding out the effect of cultural tourism on countryside communities. Ghanaian rural communities should therefore use their cultural activities as tourism products to develop their areas.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings from the study the following recommendations were made:

- The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture should liaise with the local municipality to ensure that the physical environment of the destination is always clean and attractive to visitors. The ministry and the municipality should employ cleaners to sweep and pick up the refuse throughout the week. Refuse bins must be placed on the street sides to be emptied by Municipal workers. The Municipal workers should also be encouraged to plant and water flowers on all street flower beds. This may ensure the regeneration of the environment by making the town more attractive.
- Small and medium scale tourism-related business owners should form cooperatives in order to solicit support from financial institutions. As individual business owners, it might be difficult to secure financial support but under cooperatives they can approach the banks as a unified entity which is more likely to be heard and assisted with funds to expand their businesses.

Limitations of the study

This case study was conducted on only one traditional festival with few participants. The findings might therefore not be generalized or applicable to all cultural festivals and destinations in Ghana.

Disclosure statement

This research project was undertaken through the researcher's own resources. The study was not funded by any organization and it has no financial benefit or conflict of interest.

Notes on contributor

Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour is a Professor at UNISA's Department of Adult Education. He was organiser of adult education programmes at the University of Ghana's Institute of Adult Education from 1986-88. In 1988 he lectured at the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Lesotho. He joined the University of South Africa in 2002 as a Curriculum Designer before joining academia in 2006. In 2008 he was given the responsibility to transform the Institute of Adult Basic Education into a full academic department. He chaired the new department till February 2019 and currently coordinates the ACET Capacity Building Project sponsored by the Department of Higher Education. His research interests are in adult education, teacher education and indigenous knowledge systems. Kofi is the author of over 50 research articles in peer-reviewed journals, one joint book and seven book chapters. He has supervised to completion over 16 Masters and PhDs since 2004. Kofi has participated in several national and international academic forums and made over 40 presentations. He is a member of one local and two international academic and research associations and an external examiner for five Universities. He holds a D.Ed., three Masters Degrees and has three children.

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