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A Study of Home-Stay:
Description of International
Tourists' Profile in Kumasi,
Ghana



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Abstract

There is a dearth of research on the demographic profile of international tourists who use home-stay accommodation in Africa. An understanding of home-stay tourists' demographic profile is crucial to make marketing activities more successful. The current study makes a significant contribution to this discussion by profiling the users of home-stay in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. This paper highlights and critically examines the demographic features of users of home-stay accommodation and further defines the type of tourist based on the identified profile and travel characteristics using. In all, 151 international tourists responded to the survey. The analysis suggests that majority of tourists who stayed in home-stay accommodation are volunteers and students who have taken a gap-break to learn diverse cultures across the world. Group travel is the dominant travel pattern of home-stay tourists. Moreover, home-stay users relied on local intermediaries for home-stay arrangements.

Keywords

tourist accommodation, home-stay, international tourists, Kumasi Metropolis

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INTRODUCTION

The literature confirms the inexorable relationship between tourism and accommodation (Fridgen, 1991; Holloway, 1998; Bhatia, 2006; Akyeampong, 2007; Cooper et al, 1998; Page & Connell, 2006; Gartner, 2006). Per definition, tourism involves a stay away from a person's usual environment for not more than one year and for at least 24 hours at the destination (Jafari, 1977; Mathieson & Wall, 1987; WTO, 1992; Holloway, 1998; Mensah, 2009). The definition of tourism implies that tourists are aliens and for that matter, though "physically located at the destination they are mentally far off" (Biju, 2006: 66). Moreover, a major requirement of all tourists which is "overnight stay" brings to fore the indispensable role of accommodation (Bhatia, 2006; Akyeampong, 2007). As a result, Bhatia (2006) opined that accommodation is a crucial part of tourist supply and gives a broader picture of the entire tourist image of a country. In an attempt to find a suitable wording for its role, he goes on to call it the "tourism matrix". In the view of Akyeampong (2007), accommodation is one of the specific tourism products aside attraction and transportation.

To enhance their experience, tourists, unlike other travelers, resort to different types of accommodation to realize their purpose of visit at the destination. The types of accommodation may range from serviced to non-serviced. An accommodation option which has been known in the 21st century to add a home touch to tourist overnight facility is home-stay. More importantly, the concept of home becomes the unambiguous feature that distinguishes home-stay from other accommodation types. Significantly, home-stay accommodation focuses on showcasing the culture of a group through tourism (Wang, 2007). It has become a major new area in the tourism industry because of people's inclination to serve local communities, learn traditional culture, history and interaction with local people (Hollinshead, 1993; Thomas, 2004). As Dale *et al.* states "most people find staying at home charming and a sure-fire for experiencing local culture" (2005: 24).

However, a major gap in the literature is the link between tourist types and their accommodation use. Although classical tourist typologies, whether based on socio-psychological or segmentation

variables have tried to classify tourists into some identifiable homogeneous groups (Decrop & Snelders, 2005), their use of accommodation has attracted little attention. Profiling users of an accommodation facility is crucial because tourist accommodation constitutes an important aspect of total tourism expenditure as well as an impetus of the tourists' experience, hence the need for this study. The present study extends previous work on tourist typology by empirically identifying the type of tourist that uses home-stay accommodation.

One classical model which helps to understand the tourist types and their dependence on the tourism industry is Cohen (1972). According to Cohen (1972), there are four types of tourists. They include organized mass tourist, individual mass tourist, drifters and explorers. The first two groups can be further classified as institutionalized whereas the latter two groups belong to non-institutionalized category.

According to Cohen (1972), the organized mass tourist purchases a package tour and seeks to minimize exposure to the unfamiliar. The individual or small group mass tourist takes short sightseeing trips to provide a blend of familiarity and novelty. They depend partly on the tourism industry to provide some elements of tourist package, especially travel and accommodation. The experiences sought are familiar. However, there are some elements of exploration and novelty (William, 2009).

The explorers generally arrange their own trips seek experiences that are not embodied in mass tourism. Consequently, the desire to interact with host communities is high. The explorer travels on a self-guided tour and try to get off the beaten path while maintaining comfortable accommodation and reliable transportation. The drifter, on the contrary, forgoes tourist establishments and seeks to envelop himself or herself in the host's culture. They may shun other tourists with the exception of fellow drifters. Cohen's (1972) tourist typology is used in this paper to help describe the type of international tourists who patronize home-stay accommodation in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana.

TOURIST TYPOLOGY

One approach to understand the type of tourists who patronize home-stay is to identify their demographic profile, travel characteristics and experiences sought. Tourist typologies as used in this paper refer to “lists or categorization of tourists based on a particular theoretical or conceptual foundation” (Telfer & Sharpley, 2002:150). Consequently, tourist typologies provide a descriptive insight to the study of tourists. According to Williams (2009) tourist typologies are useful for identifying major dimensions of tourism activity and its participants.

A plethora of literature exists on the types of tourist and one of the earliest attempts to classify tourists into socio-psychographic types was Plog (1974). Plog (1974) identifies two personality types among tourists. The ‘psychocentric’ traveler is safety seeking and prefers the familiar whereas the ‘allocentric’ traveler is adventure-seeking and prefers exotics. The two categorizations were later represented by ‘venturers’ (allocentrics) and ‘dependables’ (psychocentrics) in 2001. ‘Venturers’ prefer unconventional or local accommodation and are more readily to spend their disposable income. Central to holiday experience is participation in local customs and culture. On the contrary, ‘dependables’ travel with family and friends and prefer to stay in hotels and motels.

On his part, Cohen (1979) classifies tourists into recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential tourists based on major socio-psychological variables (roles, motives and sought experiences). Mayo and Jarvis (1981) identify five types of travelers namely: the peace and quiet, the overseas, the historian, the recreational vehicle and the travel now/pay later traveler. Smith (1989) classifies tourists into:

- Explorers (small group of anthropologist-like travelers);
- Elite tourists (experienced frequent travelers who like expensive tailor-made tours);
- Off-beat tourists (aim to get away from other tourists);
- Unusual tourists (make side trips from organized tours to experience local culture);
- Incipient mass tourists (travel to established destinations where tourism is not yet totally dominant);
- Mass tourists (expect the same things they are used to at home).

Other equally important tourist typologies include that of Lowyick *et al.* (1992) and Swarbrooke and Horner (1999). Finally, Decrop & Snelders (2005) extend existing typologies after criticising them as lacking practical relevance in tourism decision-making. Consequently, based on tourist decision-making variables and processes, they classify tourists into habitual, rational, hedonic, opportunistic, constrained and adaptable.

A major weakness that characterizes the above typologies is their mutually exclusive nature which makes it impossible for tourists to move between categories in response to personal or situational changes (Pearce, 1988).

STUDY AREA

Considered as the second most populous city in the country, the Kumasi Metropolis, the study area, has a population of 2,035,064 according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). Figure 1 shows the map of the metropolis with its major suburbs. Kumasi has been described as the “cultural hearth” of Ghana (Briggs, 2007). Its investment and tourism attractiveness can be attributed to its being the country’s most conspicuous nodal city as well as its enviable history and culture. The striking Ashanti culture is well demonstrated in their language, chieftaincy and festivals.

Some of its attractions include the Manhyia Palace which is the main seat of the Ashanti king. Another important attraction is the Kumasi Centre for National Culture popularly known by folks as “Cultural Centre”. Established in 1952, its specific attractions include the craft centre, Prempeh II Museum, cultural displays and a gift shop. One cannot talk about popular attractions in Kumasi without mentioning the famous legend, Okomfo Anokye whose remarkable contribution to the Ashanti Kingdom is applauded and well documented in Ashanti history. His sword site is designated one of the famous attractions in the metropolis. Moreover, the popular festival “Adaye Kese” draws a large number of both domestic and international tourists to the metropolis (Briggs, 2007; Ghana Tourism Authority, 2011).

Popularly known to be one of the bustling cities in the country, its central market attracts large numbers of tourists every day. The War Museum in the Fort St George has a large collection of historical and cultural artefacts. Other attractions in the metropolis worth mentioning are the zoological gardens, kente weaving at Bonwire, Ahwia crafts, shrines at Ejisu Bisease, just to mention but a few (Briggs, 2007; Ghana Tourism Authority, 2011).

Kumasi was considered suitable for this study because it has a large number of home-stay accommodation facilities spread across the various suburbs in the metropolis. More importantly, some of the private homes have been officially registered with the Kumasi office of the GTA, and this made it easy to locate them.

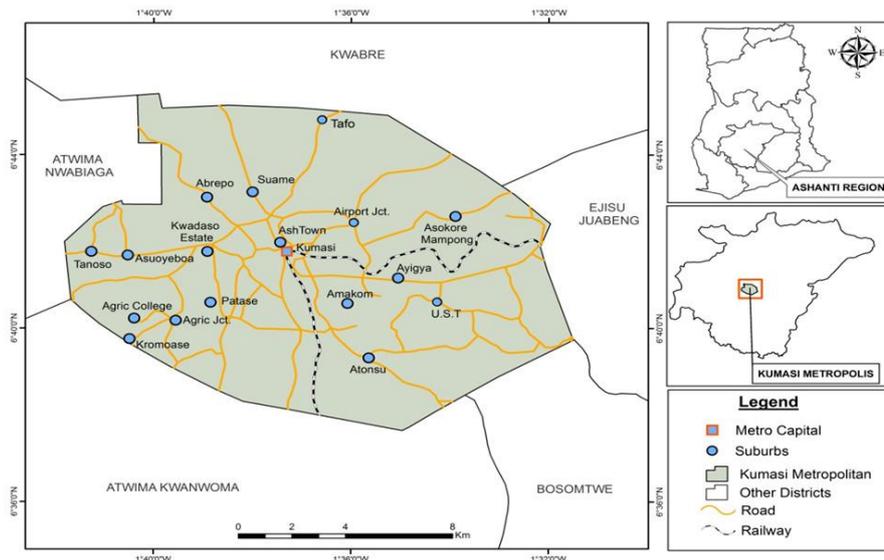


Figure 1 - Map of the study area showing suburbs (© E. Agyeiwaa & O. K. Akyeampong).

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

An initial pilot study in Cape Coast revealed that international tourists using home-stay accommodation were largely brought into the country by intermediaries. For that reason, the majority of international tourists could only be reached through travel intermediaries who acted as “honest brokers” for international tourists

(Akyeampong, 2008). In line with Cohen's (1972) typology of tourists, institutionalized tourists were reached through travel intermediaries (mostly NGOs) that brought groups of tourists to Ghana. Other independent travelers who resorted to the services of intermediaries based in Ghana were also contacted through their intermediaries. The main research instrument was a questionnaire containing both open and close-ended questions. There were three broad sections. The first part dealt with demographic characteristics of international tourists. The second section of the questionnaire was devoted to the travel characteristics of international tourist. Specifically, it sought to indentify the travel party, length of stay, sources of information and purpose of travel. The final part examined experiences sought by international tourists to the metropolis. In furtherance, a consent form was attached to the questionnaire to seek respondents' consent for both participation and publication of their responses.

The accidental sampling technique adopted yielded a total of 162 questionnaires of which 151 were useful for analysis. Data from the field were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented using descriptive statistics in the form of cross-tabulations, pie charts and bar graphs to facilitate understanding. Respondents were made up of 54.3% organized groups and 45.7% independent tourists who have stayed in the various home-stay facilities for a minimum of one to a maximum of sixty nights at the destination.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic profile

Table 1 presents a cross-tabulation of international tourists' profile by their originating regions. Generally, Europe (53.6%) was the dominant originating region for home-stay market which contradicts the statistics of the Ghana Tourism Authority (2009) which identified North America as the dominant originating market. Specifically, about 51.1% of international tourists from North America were males with a minority of them being female tourists (48.9%).

The results were different from that of Europe as more than half (65.9%) of European tourists who stayed in home-stay accommodation were females with about 34.1% males. Whereas all

respondents (100%) from Asia were females, Oceania recorded 50% each for both sexes. Over all, the analysis suggests that the preference of home-stay accommodation is dominated by female tourists. The results of the present study could perhaps be attributed to the fact that females are attracted to culturally inclined tourism experience like home-stay accommodation. As Mill and Morrison (1992) observed, females unlike their male counterparts prefer cultural attractions to outdoor recreation. However, results of North America differed significantly from the general picture as male tourists preferred home-stay to their female counterparts.

Generally, tourists who stayed in home-stay accommodation fell within 18 and 19 years age brackets. This trend perhaps could be attributed to the fact that most of the tourists are young adults and still require parental care of the home. However, specific age exploration across the four main originating regions gave a different picture. For instance, majority (50%) of the tourists from North America were aged 20-24 years followed closely by those within the <20 years age bracket. For the European tourists, about 62.9% were less than 20 years. A similar pattern was recorded for Asian volunteer tourists (<20=50%). However, a much different trend was seen for tourists from Oceania. About 50% each was recorded for respondents within <20 and 25-29 years age brackets.

In an attempt to explore the level of education of tourists who stayed in home-stay accommodation in the Kumasi Metropolis an interesting trend was noted. Even though with a general gauge, respondents' educational attainment could be described as very high as 51.7% had received university education, a regional break-down saw a different pattern. With the exception of respondents from

Oceania (Secondary=100%), almost the majority of tourists from other regions of origin were in the tertiary degree brackets: North America (41.6%), Europe (56.6%) and Asia (100%). However, with respect to the marital status of respondents, a similar pattern was noted for all the four originating regions: North America (100%), Europe (93.2%), Asia (100%) and Oceania (100%), as majority of respondents from all the regions were unmarried. An exploration of tourists' occupation revealed that generally, respondents were students. Specifically, about 93.9% of respondents from North America were students. A similar pattern was recorded for both

Europe (79.1%) and Asia (75.0%) with the exception of tourists from Oceania. A religious dimension of the results revealed that majority of tourists from North America (80.9%) and Europe (58.3%) were Christians whereas Atheists dominated respondents from Asia (50%) and Oceania (100%).

Travel characteristics

Table 2 provides an in-depth analysis of the travel characteristics of guests that uses home-stay accommodation. In all, a majority of the guests came in organized groups (54.3%) while the remaining travelled independently (45.7%). Specifically, a majority (63.8%) of males travelled in organized groups while more females travelled independently (51.6%). From Table 2, an over whelming majority of the respondents (71.5%) spent between 1 and 30 nights in the home-stay facility whereas with respect to repeat visits to Ghana, as many as 92% of the respondents were first-time visitors.

Tourists travel for a number of purposes. The purpose may include leisure, business and voluntary work. Figure 2 shows that a large number of home-stay patrons travelled for voluntary work camps (32.8%) followed by culture (24.4%).

To enhance their experience, respondents took time off to explore the unique attractions in and outside the metropolis. The dominance of volunteers in the home-stay market can be explained in terms of the cost compared to hotel charges. As students and volunteers, they cannot afford the latter. On the other hand, business people are not so attracted to home-stay market since they can afford to stay in hotels where their bills will be footed by their employers. This finding is inconsistent with official sources that visiting friends and/or relations accounted for 25% of total arrivals to Ghana in 2009 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2009).

Tourists utilize various sources of information for their holiday planning process. Brent *et al.* (2003) identified two broad sources, namely, formal and informal sources. Formal sources include travel agents, travel brochures and magazines whereas; informal sources include information from friends, relatives and personal experience (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983). Figure 3 provides the sources of information on home-stay for guests in the present study.

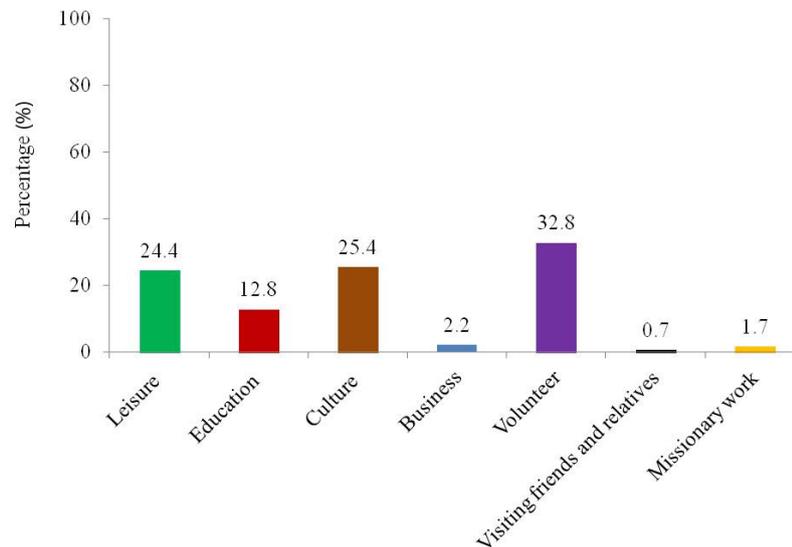


Figure 2 - International Tourists' purpose of visit.

Figure 3 shows that tourists generally relied on the internet as their main source of information on home-stay in the Kumasi Metropolis. Additionally, relatives or friends constituted an important source of information for the guests. With its widest coverage, the internet constituted the dominant source of information, accounting for as many as 36.5% of the sources although it was in combination with others. This finding concurs with that of Carr (1997) who found that young people mostly relied on formal sources of information when pursuing international travel.

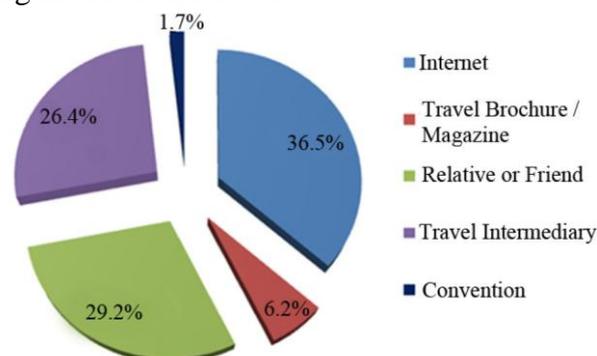


Figure 3 - Sources of Information on Home-Stay (based on 178 multiple responses)

EXPERIENCES SOUGHT IN HOME-STAY ACCOMMODATION

Table 3 presents the type of experiences sought by international tourists in home-stay accommodation. The study revealed that interactions with local communities were paramount for guests' choice of home-stay facilities. Thus, on the average, an overwhelming majority (82.5%) agreed that staying in home-stay was the only means of getting to know the culture and a platform for authentic tourist experience. However, there were some international tourists who did not lay much emphasis on the authentic and cultural significance of home-stay as about 5.8% disagreed to the statements with a little above one-tenth (11.7%) uncertain.

The three top-most experiences sought [Interact with local folks (96.7%); Make new friends in Ghana (94.0%); and Have authentic experience to enhance my personal development (93.4%)] provide evidence of guests' quest to stay with host families and not a hotel which will ultimately deprive them of extensive host contacts.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The international home-stay tourists share a lot of characteristics with the institutionalize tourist typology by Cohen (1972) but differ in significant ways. Even though an overwhelming majority came as small groups (individual mass tourist) and relied on travel intermediaries for accommodation and travel packages they still wanted contacts with host community and hence the choice of home-stay. The link between purpose of travel and accommodation choice needs further elaboration here. From the data analysis, volunteering was the main purpose of visit for home-stay tourists and since volunteering has community service and intercultural exchange at its core, home-stay, an alternative accommodation option, managed by local communities becomes the fulcrum for such intercultural exchanges as tourist live and share food with locals. As Yankholmes & Akyeampong (2010) state in their study, one major attribute of volunteer tourists in Ghana is the fact that they mostly stay with host families who provide them breakfast.

Moreover, home-stay tourists who come independently also (explorers) rely on intermediaries for home-stay booking which deviates from Cohen's (1972) typology which indicates that explorers plan their own tour. The home-stay tourists in the Kumasi Metropolis based on the findings are hybrid of both individual/small group mass tourist and explorers. Another major characteristic of home-stay in Ghana is the dominance of NGO intermediaries who liaise with their western counterparts and package tours for volunteers (Agyeiwaah, 2012). As part of organizing volunteer activities they adopt home-stay as the main accommodation. Perhaps, home-stay unlike hotel facilities exposes volunteers to the traditions and culture of the destination. Hence, home-stay accommodation facilities in the Kumasi Metropolis are used by volunteers. The dominance of student volunteers can be attributed to the so called "gap years" which give students ample time to travel and volunteer in deprived communities around the world. According to King (2007) gap years are common phenomenon in Western countries where students decide to break from school to enhance their global and cultural understandings.

In short, home-stay tourists in the Kumasi Metropolis are volunteers and students who take gap-breaks yearly to embark on voluntary activities in vulnerable regions. For that reason, they seek contact with host families and therefore prefer to stay in local homes. The local nature of their accommodation needs make the services of local intermediaries indispensable. The intermediaries' main duty is to post volunteers to local host families who act as care takers during this volunteering adventure.

Table 1- Region of origin and Profile of Respondents

Profile	Regions of origin			
	Europe (%) (n=81)	North America (%) (n=58)	Asia (%) (n=8)	Oceania (%) (n=4)
Gender				
Male	34.1	51.1	0.0	50.0
Female	65.9	48.9	100.0	50.0
Age				
<20	62.9	46.0	50.0	50.0
20-24	27.4	50.0	25.0	0.0
25-29	3.0	4.0	25.0	50.0
30+	6.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Level of education				
Secondary	26.6	32.8	0.0	100.0
Tertiary(non degree)	16.8	25.6	0.0	0.0
Tertiary(degree)	56.6	41.6	100.0	0.0
Marital status				
Unmarried	93.2	100.0	100.0	96.3
Married	6.8	0.0	0.0	3.7
Occupation				
Student	79.1	93.9	75.0	50.0
Teacher	19.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Travel advisor	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Banker	0.0	4.2	0.0	50.0
National service personnel	0.0	0.0	25.0	0.0
Religion				
Christianism	58.3	80.9	25.0	0.0
Atheism	36.0	13.4	50.0	100.0
Buddhism	0.0	0.0	25.0	0.0
Judaism	5.7	5.7	0.0	0.0

Table 2- Respondents' travel characteristics

	Male	Female	Total
	(%) (N=58)	(%) (N=93)	(%) (N=151)
Travel arrangement			
In organised group	63.8	48.4	54.3
Independent	36.2	51.6	45.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Length of stay			
1-30 night(s)	84.5	63.4	71.5
31-60 nights	10.3	25.8	19.9
61-90 nights	5.2	10.8	8.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average length of stay = 36 nights			
Loyalty			
First-time visitors	87.9	94.6	92.1
Repeat visitors	12.1	5.4	7.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3 - Experiences Sought by guests in Home-stay accommodation

	Number of respondents	Agree	No opinion	Disagree
I want to:				
Interact with local folks	151	96.7	2.6	0.7
Make new friends in Ghana	151	94.0	4.6	1.3
Have authentic experiences to enhance my personal development	151	93.4	4.0	2.6
Know Ghanaian delicacies	151	88.7	7.9	3.4
Share my knowledge with others	151	84.1	15.2	0.7
Speak a Ghanaian language	151	78.1	11.9	10.0
Learn how to cook Ghanaian foods	151	76.8	14.6	8.6
Understand Ghanaian dressing style	151	70.2	23.2	6.6
Experience Ghanaian religious life	151	60.3	21.2	18.5

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