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Diversification of the Tourist Landscape on Ghana's Atlantic Coast: Forts, Castles and Beach Hotel/Resort Operations in the Tourism Industry.

Edward Addo

Abstract

European settlements, trans-Atlantic trade in commodities and slaves, and colonization are indispensable components of Ghana's political history, heritage, and tourism industry. European forts and castles built as far back as 1482 still characterize the Atlantic coast of Ghana. Since March 6, 1957 when Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain political independence from European colonial rule, the country has faced many socio-economic and political challenges. Tourism did not receive significant political attention until the late 1990s. In more recent years, the industry has experienced remarkable growth and increasing operations of beach hotels and resorts on the Atlantic coast of the country. The beach hotels/resorts benefit economically from the forts and castles which are European 'blackspots' and destination-based cultural capital in the tourism industry. The degree of dependency of the tourism industry, in general, and the beach hotel/resort operations, in particular, on international tourists is overwhelming and highly susceptible to changes in the global tourism industry.

Key Words: Ghana, international tourism, forts, castles, 'blackspots', cultural capital, beach hotels/resorts.

Introduction

This paper discusses the forts and castles of Ghana as cultural capital against the backdrop of a recent trend in the tourism industry, i.e., diversification of the tourist landscape on the Atlantic coast whereby beach hotels/resorts have become ubiquitous and lucrative operations. In addition to changing the tourist landscape on the Atlantic coast, the beach hotel/resort operations are creating jobs, generating revenue, meeting hospitality needs of international tourists, and underscoring the need for more, diverse and high quality hospitality facilities, education, training and research. These findings are discussed within the context of a 15-year tourism development plan implemented in 1996, and the tourism industry which is very much dependent on international tourists.

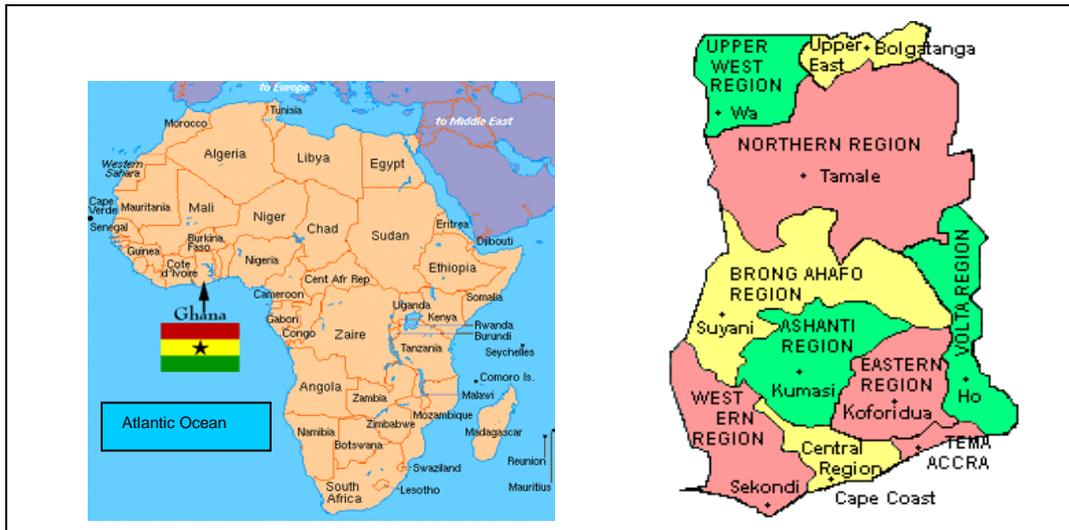
The research methodology included visits to castles, forts and beach hotels/resorts in three coastal regions of Ghana. The Christianborg Castle in Accra was excluded from the research because it is the seat of government, and for that matter, not accessible to the general public. Visits were made to the Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle, Fort St. Jago and Fort Victoria. Visits were also made to all five beach hotels/resorts selected for this paper, namely Labadi Beach Hotel, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Coconut Grove Beach Resort, Elmina Beach Resort, and Busua Beach Resort to collect secondary data and to interview senior officials (managers) for information on ownership and management, types and quality of products available to guests/tourists, and tour operations. The site visits were made in the afternoon and at night over a period of two weeks to ascertain the nature and volatility of operations. Additionally, participant observations were made in the course of four events [Panafest (Pan African Arts Festival) on two occasions, Emancipation Day, and the Joseph Project] held at the Elmina and Cape Coast castles. Whilst on the familiarization trips, some secondary and supplementary data were obtained from the head office of the Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) in Accra, the nation's capital city

The discussions are made under five main headings and sections: geography and political history of Ghana in brief; institution building, public policy and planning of Ghana's tourism industry; growth and development of Ghana's tourism industry; forts and castles as 'blackspots' and cultural capital; and beach hotel/resort operations and tourism. Analysis of the relationship between inbound international tourists and ecotourism or nature-based tourism in Ghana is beyond the scope of this paper, and for that matter, has not been provided. The concluding section offers some recommendations for cultural tourism development and hospitality management in Ghana.

Geography and Political History of Ghana in Brief

Ghana is located on the Atlantic coast of West Africa between latitudes 4.5° N and 11° N and shares borders with three former French colonies: la Cote d'Ivoire, to the west; Togo, to the east; and Burkina Faso, to the north (Figure 1). The Gulf of Guinea, part of the Atlantic Ocean, stretches about 540 km (338 miles) along the southern border. The distance from the coast to the northern border is about 672 km (420 miles). The land area of the country measures about 238,540 sq km (92,100 sq miles), almost the same size as Great Britain or the states of Illinois and Indiana in USA combined (Briggs, 2002). The topography of the country changes from coastal plains and rolling land to mountain peaks and plateaus in the eastern and central areas. The country has ten administrative regions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Ghana: Location in Africa and Administrative Regions



Pictures courtesy of Ghana Tourist Board (2007a)

The ten administrative regions of the country, more or less, reflect the major ethnic and tribal diversity of the country. The five major ethnic groups are Akan, Ewe, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe in the southern and central areas, and Mole-Dagbane in the northern area. The Asante, Fante, Akim, and Kwau are the major tribes of the Akan ethnic group (Library of Congress, 2007). The country's population increased from 6.7 million in 1960 to 8.5 million in 1970, 12.3 million in 1984, 15 million in 1990, 17.2 million in 1994, and about 21.8 million in 1996. It is projected that about 25 million people would be counted in the 2010 national census.

There are regional variations in population distribution. Most of the people live in the southern half of the country and regional capitals have high population densities due in part to urban-bias policies and development strategies that encourage rural-urban migration. This trend has persisted since the era of colonization (Boahen, 1975; Buah, 1998; Amenumey, 2008). English is the official language used in government offices, large-scale businesses, national media, and educational institutions. National culture is portrayed in diverse traditional, 'highlife' and 'hip-life' music and dance, funerals, festivals, durbars, folklore and religion.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to visit and settle on the Atlantic coast of Ghana in 1471. The initial objectives of the visit and settlement were to trade in commodities such as gold, spices, guns, gun powder and textiles and to solidify Portugal's position in the process

of European empire-building. The Portuguese visit and settlement were followed by those of the Dutch, Danes, Swedes, English, French and Germans involving trade in commodities and slaves. Britain officially abolished the slave trade in 1807 but colonized Ghana (then the Gold Coast) between 1874 and 1957. To facilitate the trans-Atlantic trade in commodities and slaves and to protect and solidify European political and economic interests, three castles and many forts were built along the entire Atlantic coast of Ghana to serve as trading posts, residences, and strategic defence. On March 6, 1957 Ghana became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain political independence from European colonial rule under the leadership of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Boateng, 1966; Boahen, 1975; Briggs, 2002; Anquandah et al, 2007).

In 1996 the government implemented a 15-year tourism development plan (1996-2010) and started investing in physical infrastructure to boost domestic and international tourism. The private sector has responded positively to increasing demand for travel and tourism products in all the ten regions of the country. Consequently, the tourism industry has grown to become Ghana's fourth largest foreign exchange earner, ranking behind mineral exports, cocoa exports, and remittances from abroad. The European legacies of forts and castles have become cultural capital in the tourism industry attracting many tourists, including those from the Diaspora.

Ghana's Tourism Industry: Institution Building, Public Policy and Planning

The first indication of government interest in developing the tourism industry was a feasibility study conducted in 1970 on the development of tourist attractions for a five-year development plan, 1972-1976 (Obuan Committee, 1972). Following the study, the Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) was established in 1973 to implement national tourism policies and coordinate tourism activities. GTB was charged with the responsibility to regulate accommodation, catering, travel, transport, and charter operations through registration, inspection, licensing, classification, and enforcement of decisions. GTB was also charged with the responsibility to promote and market tourism both in Ghana and abroad, to conduct studies and research into trends in the tourism industry at home and abroad to aid decision and policy making, to promote the development of tourist facilities, and to carry out any function that might be conferred on it by legislative instruments (GTB, 1998).

GTB's mission in the early 1970s was to ensure sustainable tourism development through the creation of an enabling environment for the provision of quality tourism services to the

traveling public. It has been striving to promote tourism to become one of the leading sectors of Ghana's economy. The institution's mission has not changed since 1973 and its vision has been 'to see Ghana become the tourism capital of West Africa especially in culture, heritage, ecotourism as well as conference tourism in a high quality non-mass manner' (GTB, 1998).

Financial and technical constraints on GTB necessitated more studies and evaluation of Ghana's tourism potential by international development organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United States International Executive Services Corps (USIESC) in the mid 1970s. All the studies and evaluations indicated that Ghana had great potential for tourism development. Consequently, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) was established in 1993 to formulate policies and plan for the development and promotion of domestic, regional, and international tourism. In 1995 MOT, with assistance from UNDP and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), now known as UNWTO, prepared and introduced a 15-year National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP, 1996-2010) to stimulate growth and development of the tourism industry (GTB, 1995).

An academic policy analysis (i.e., focusing on the policy determinants and contents) of the 15-year NTDP indicates that the tourism policy reflected the national economic development policy in the late 1990s. The plan was, and still is, very comprehensive underscoring three interrelated scopes and levels of planning: an integrated national tourism development planning (macro level); regional development planning, programmes and projects (meso level); and tourism development planning, programmes and projects at the district level of administration (micro level). The same topics and activities are discussed on all three levels of planning. The objectives of developing the tourism industry, how to assess tourism resources and tourist markets, and how to optimize the benefits of tourism while minimizing problems are discussed on all three levels of planning. The key objective of the policy is to develop tourism as a leading sector of the economy and make the country an internationally competitive tourist destination. The policy and plan also stress the need to develop tourism as one of the major socio-economic sectors of the nation's economy to generate substantial foreign exchange earnings, income, employment and tax revenue, to raise the standard of living of Ghanaians, and to strengthen both urban and rural economies.

The tourism policy draws the attention of government, developers and other stakeholders to

some basic tenets of sustainable tourism development: the socio-economic benefits of tourism must be distributed widely throughout the country and society; tourism must be developed in a manner that helps achieve conservation of cultural, historical and environmental heritage; tourism must be developed on a sustainable basis, so that it does not generate any serious environmental or socio-economic problems; tourism must be carefully planned, developed and managed so that socio-economic benefits are optimized and negative impacts are minimized; and tourism development must be comprehensive based on attractions, facilities, services and marketing that are aimed at serving a broad but desirable range of international, regional, African and domestic tourists (GTB, 1995).

The tourism policy further underscores the importance of sustainable tourism planning and management. It points out that sustainable management of attractions is a necessary condition to attract tourists. All stakeholders in the tourism industry are urged to provide good quality tourism that is internationally competitive, compatible with the country's social values and environmental setting, and capable of attracting tourists who show respect for the country's culture, history and environment; to integrate the tourism development policy, planning and programming into the overall national, regional and local development policy, planning and programming within the framework of Vision 2020; to integrate Ghana's tourism development policy, planning, programming and standards at the regional, African and international levels with those of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), other African countries, UNWTO and other relevant international organizations; and to develop tourism based on close cooperation and coordination among public sector agencies and between the public and private sectors.

The 15-year NTDP provides detailed analyses of destination management and marketing strategies for Ghana's tourist attractions which are organized into four categories: natural environmental heritage, defined as those features primarily related to the natural environment and ecology of the country (climate, water, wildlife, vegetation, and topography); historical heritage, defined as those features primarily related to the history of the country including both physical features and historical events; cultural heritage, defined as those features primarily related to the cultural patterns of the country, both traditional and contemporary; and other types of attractions or features, usually man-made that do not fit into any of the aforementioned categories. The plan draws the attention of all stakeholders to the fact that, in addition to attractions, the political and economic climate of the country could have diverse impacts on the tourism industry.

Growth and Development of Ghana's Tourism Industry

Ghana's tourism industry thrives on diverse natural resources (climate, water, wildlife, vegetation, and topography), and historical and cultural resources which include the European and colonial legacies of forts and castles, unique political history, traditional festivities, and diasporic relations. Consequent to the 15-year NTDP, Ghana moved from the seventeenth to the eighth position among the top 20 leading tourism revenue-earners in Africa in 1998 (WTO, 1999) and in the past decade, the industry has grown to become the fourth largest foreign exchange earner, ranking behind mineral exports, cocoa exports, and remittances from overseas.

Table 1. International Tourist Arrivals and Receipts 1987-2009

Year	Arrivals	Receipts (US\$ 'M)	Year	Arrivals	Receipts (US\$ 'M)
1987	103,440	36.5	1998	347,952	284.0
1988	113,784	55.3	1999	372,653	304.1
1989	125,162	72.1	2000	399,000	386.0
1990	145,780	80.8	2001	438,833	447.8
1991	172,464	117.7	2002	482,643	519.6
1992	213,316	166.9	2003	530,827	602.8
1993	256,680	205.6	2005	428,533	836.1
1994	271,310	227.6	2006	497,129	984.8
1995	286,000	233.2	2007	586,612	1,172.0
1996	304,860	248.8	2008	698,069	1,403.1
1997	325,438	265.6	2009	802,779	1,615.2

Source: GTB (2010)

The sector's contribution to GDP steadily increased from 3.6% in 1996 to 6.7% in 2008 (GTB, 2010). Data obtained from the statistics office of GTB (Tables 1, 2, and 3) indicate a steady growth of the tourism industry between 1987 and 2009.

GTB data further indicate that inbound international tourism is the lifeblood of the tourism industry. In general, the purposes of travel include business (23%), conference/meetings (9%), study/training (8%), visiting friends and relatives/VFR (25%), medicals (1%), holiday (19%), transit (10%) and others (5%). The main sources of the international tourists are USA, United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. Non-African developing countries from where most international tourists originate are China, India, and Lebanon.

African sources from where most of the international tourists come are the sub-Saharan countries of la Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. As Table 1 indicates, international tourist arrivals earned the country US\$248.8 million in 1996. The figure increased to US\$1,615.2 million in 2009. In recent years, there were increases in domestic employment from 172,823 in 2005 to 263,157 in 2009. The growth rate in 2006 was 6% compared with approximately 13% average growth rate between 2007 and 2009 (Table 2).

Table 2. Tourism Development Statistics 2005–2009

Indicators	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Arrivals (International)	428,533	497,129	586,612	698,069	802,779
<i>Growth rate (%)</i>	-	16.0	18.0	19.0	15.0
Receipts (International), US\$ million	836.1	986.8	1,172	1403.1	1,615.2
<i>Growth rate (%)</i>	-	18.0	18.8	19.7	15.1
Employment (Domestic)	172,823	183,192	206,091	234,679	263,157
<i>Growth rate (%)</i>	-	6.0	12.5	13.9	12.1
No. of hotels	1,345	1,427	1,432	1,595	1,775
<i>Growth rate (%)</i>	-	6.1	0.4	11.4	11.3
No. of hotel rooms	18,752	22,835	20,788	24,410	26,047
<i>Growth rate (%)</i>	-	21.8	-9.0	17.4	6.7
No. of hotel beds	23,924	27,839	26,063	29,645	31,664
<i>Growth rate (%)</i>	-	16.4%	-6.4%	13.7%	6.8%

Source: GTB, 2010

Table 3 further highlights the scope of development in the lodging sector in recent years, while Table 4 indicates that the average tourist expenditure per trip increased from US\$1,125 in 2002 to US\$2,010 in 2008. The average expenditures on various tourism products were steady with those on accommodation, and food and beverage accounting for approximately 30% and 14% respectively. Table 5 also shows that room occupancy rates were over 60% for all hotel categories between 2002 and 2007. The highest occupancy rates were recorded by 5-star and 4-star lodging facilities which are typically used by international tourists. The highest room occupancy rates in 2007 were attributed to the golden jubilee of independence, and three Diaspora-related events, namely Panafest, Emancipation Day, and the Joseph Project that brought many international tourists to Ghana.

Table 3. Development and Growth in Lodging Facilities 2006-2009

Category of Lodging Facility	2006			2007			2008			2009		
	No.	Rooms	Beds									
5-Star	1	104	104	1	104	150	1	104	150	1	104	150
4-Star	4	658	664	4	676	987	4	672	983	5	843	1,120
3-Star	30	1,264	1,866	20	905	1,151	26	1,373	1,827	17	1,047	1,326
2-Star	138	2,996	4,030	133	3,311	4,563	149	3,903	4,973	165	4,741	5,305
1-Star	169	3,028	3,891	154	2,742	3,510	188	3,355	3,988	184	3,340	4,201
Guest House	194	1,260	1,469	129	842	964	120	793	938	181	705	856
Supplementary*	24	229	489	28	213	462	53	337	724	87	740	1,398
Budget	867	13,296	15,326	963	11,796	14,276	1,054	13,873	16,062	1,135	14,527	17,346
Total	1,427	22,835	27,839	1,432	20,581	26,063	1,595	24,410	29,645	1,775	26,047	31,664
Yearly % Growth	6.10	21.77	16.36	0.35	-9.84	-6.38	11.38	18.56	13.75	11.23	6.71	6.8

*Hostels, Home Lodges and Tourist Homes

Source: GTB, 2010

Table 4. Average Tourist Expenditures (2002-2008)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Average expenditures (US\$)	1,125	1,344	1,711	1,950	1,985	1,998	2,010
Tourism Products and Activities							
Local Transportation (taxi, local flights, car rentals, etc.)	8	7	8	10	7	7	9
Shopping at Formal Markets (gift stores etc.)	9	9	10	12	9	10	11
Shopping at Informal Markets (open and wayside areas)	10	10	11	12	10	11	12
Food and Beverage	17	14	13	12	15	14	13
Accommodation	33	31	30	27	32	30	28
Entertainment and Recreation	8	9	9	9	9	9	9
Other Expenditure	15	20	19	18	18	19	18
Total Percentage (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: GTB, 2010

The three events were culturally and historically associated with the forts and castles of Ghana. Political stability and democratic governance since 1992, public sector investment in infrastructure, and private sector investment in tourism facilities have also contributed to the recent surge in international tourist arrivals and expenditures on upscale lodging facilities.

Table 5. Room Occupancy Rates (%), 2002-2007

Hotel Category	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
5-Star	73.4	74.2	74.0	79.0	86.3	94.4
4-Star	80.6	76.1	78.5	81.3	81.6	87.0
3-Star	65.0	63.1	66.5	68.2	79.0	69.9
2-Star	64.0	62.4	64.5	78.0	88.0	64.3

Source: GTB, 2010

Conceptual Considerations: Castles and Forts as ‘Blackspots’ and Cultural Capital

Three castles and about 80 forts were built by Europeans along the entire Atlantic coast of Ghana to serve as trading posts, residences, and strategic defence. Some of the forts are in ruins. The Netherlands built 37%; England, 20%; Denmark, 14%; Portugal, 9%; Sweden, 7%; France, 7%; and Brandenburg (Prussian portion of Germany), 6% of the forts and castles in Ghana (Ghana Tourist Board, 2007b; Anquandah et al, 2007). The three castles in Ghana are St. George in Elmina (often called the Elmina Castle) built by the Portuguese in 1482, Carolusburg in Cape Coast (often called the Cape Coast castle) built by the Swedes in 1653, and Christianborg in Accra (often called the Osu Castle) built by the Danes in 1659 (Figure 2). The 92,000 sq ft. St. George castle holds the record of being one of the oldest European buildings in sub-Saharan Africa and perhaps outside Europe. Table 6 provides the names of the existing forts in Ghana, their locations (cities or towns) listed from west to east on the Atlantic coast, the administrative regions in which they are located, the years in which construction was completed, and their European architects.

In 1979 some of the forts and castles of Ghana were designated UNESCO world heritage sites. However, in accordance with Rojek’s classification of tourist sites or landscapes (i.e., ‘blackspots’, heritage sites, literary landscapes, and theme parks), it has been argued that the forts and castles of Ghana are European ‘blackspots’, not merely heritage sites, on the landscape of Ghana’s cultural tourism (Addo, 2007a). Rojek (1993) identifies tourist sites or landscapes as ‘blackspots’ if they have experiences of wars, deaths, disasters, violence or sufferings. It is in the same sense that Stone and Sharpley (2008) also discuss the cultural

significance of such sites in dark tourism. The forts and castles of Ghana were places where slaves were kept, traded, and forced to emigrate to Europe and the New World to work on plantations and in industries. Some of the slaves died in chains and dungeons whilst awaiting ships for the forced emigration (Ramerini, 2007; Anquandah et al, 2007). The colonial edifices, therefore, undeniably qualify as European ‘blackspots’ in cultural heritage tourism.

Figure 2. The Castles of Ghana



Pictures courtesy of Ghana Tourist Board

Table 6. European-built Forts in Ghana

Name	Location: City/Town	Region	Year Built	Built by
Ft. Appolonia	Beyin	Western	1756	British
Ft. St. Anthony	Axim	Western	1515	Portuguese
Ft. Groot Friedrichsburg	Prince's Town	Western	1683	Dutch
Ft. Metal Cross	Dixcove	Western	1693	British
Ft. Batenstein	Butri	Western	1650	Swedish
Ft. Orange	Sekondi	Western	1690	Dutch
Ft. St. Sebastian	Shama	Western	1640	Portuguese
Ft. St. Jago	Elmina	Central	1665	Portuguese
Ft. Victoria	Cape Coast	Central	1702	British
Ft. William	Anomabo	Central	1630	Dutch
Ft. Amsterdam	Kromantse	Central	1638	British
Ft. Leydszaamheid	Apam	Central	1698	Dutch
Ft. Good Hope	Senya Bereku	Central	1702	Dutch
Ft. Ussher	Accra	Greater Accra	1649	Dutch
Ft. James	Accra	Greater Accra	1673	British
Ft. Prinzenstein	Keta	Volta	1784	Danish

Source: National Atlas Development Center, 1995

In the past two decades, many tourists from the Diaspora, especially USA, have visited the forts and castles of Ghana and participated in mega and Diaspora-related festivals such as Panafest, Emancipation Day, and the Joseph Project held at the Elmina and Cape Coast castles (Addo, 2007b). Panafest is a biennial festival celebrated to enhance the ideals of Pan-Africanism, African development, and diasporic relations. The Cape Coast Castle has been the site for Panafest since its inception in 1980 and launch in 1991. Emancipation Day and the Joseph Project have similar historical and cultural rationales. When President Barack Obama and his family visited the Cape Coast castle in July 2009 they engaged with the built heritage and underscored the significance of the site as a 'blackspot' and destination-based cultural capital. A newspaper reported that the president was in tears whilst on the historic site visit (Daily Guide, 2009).

The concepts of destination-based/ latent cultural capital and commoditization or commodification of heritage (i.e., heritagization for commercial purposes) have received significant attention in postmodern literature on cultural tourism (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1973; Bourdieu, 1984). Places and symbolic objects such as museums, castles, forts, churches, monasteries, old mills, statues, memorials and galleries are offered as tour products and attract visitors for various reasons. Some authors maintain that it is only with commodification that destination-based/latent capital reaches a wide audience; and local authorities and businesses are often involved in the commercialization of the products (Busby, 2002, 2003, 2004; Laviolette, 2003; Hale, 2006; Boissevain, 1996; Meethan, 2001; Smith, 2009).

Smith and Robinson (2006: 3) also note that 'the most distinguishing feature of mature capitalist systems over recent decades has been the re-creation of economies around the symbolic value of culture(s)'. The authors advocate a paradigm shift in the democratization of cultural tourism that underscores the importance of symbolic objects, tourist experiences, community values, and the essence of places. The forts and castles of Ghana are considered as cultural capital in this broader context of cultural tourism. The emotional attachments and meanings that tourists like President Barack Obama and his family read into symbolic objects like the forts and castles of Ghana (i.e., the various kinds of personal cultural capital) are worth exploring in another research.

Data being compiled by GTB indicate that about 47,938 visitors went to the Elmina Castle in 2006. The figure increased to 65,677, 60,074 and 74,293 in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively. Additionally, 55,450 visitors went to the Cape Coast Castle in 2006 and the figure increased to 74,266 in 2007 and 60,842 in 2008. The number of visitors dropped to 50,884 in 2009. While the data did not specify the number of international tourists, officials of GTB confidently maintained that the celebration of Panafest in 2007 and 2009 and the yearlong golden jubilee of independence in 2007 greatly accounted for the higher total visitations in those years. All the officials interviewed at the GTB head office, castles and hotels were quite confident that the colonial landmarks would continue to attract both domestic and international tourists.

Beach Hotel/Resort Operations and Tourism

In the past two decades beach tourism in Ghana has been accentuated by hotel/resort operations along the entire coast of the country. Five chain properties, namely Labadi Beach Hotel in Accra, Coconut Grove Beach Resort in Cape Coast/Elmina, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in Accra, Elmina Beach Resort in Elmina, and Busua Beach Resort near Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region are the most popular (Table 8). All the six beach hotels/resorts enjoy some chain advantages in the hospitality industry: name and brand recognition; relatively easier access to capital; discounts on advertising and bulk purchases; frequent personnel training programs; regular research and development initiatives; availability and utilization of up-scale information, communication and technology systems; direct and frequent contacts with senior public officials to solicit business; and site selection, development and management expertise. The amenities, attractions, and operations of the hospitality facilities are discussed in subsequent sections of the paper.

Table 8. The Five Most Popular Beach Hotels/Resorts in Ghana

Lodging Facility/Property	Location: Region and City	Rooms	Beds	Grade*	Room Type	Tariff/Rate** \$US
Labadi Beach Hotel	Greater Accra, Accra	104	150	5-star	Single	\$230
					Double	\$280
					Twin	\$250
					Suite +	\$450
Coconut Gove Beach Resort	Central, Elmina near Cape Coast	55	66	3-star	Single	\$81
					Double	\$92
					Suite +	\$132
La Palm Royal Beach Hotel	Greater Accra, Accra	162	200	4-star	Single	\$225
					Double	\$295
					Suite +	\$250-\$590
Elmina Beach Resort++	Central, Elmina	106	181	3-star	Single	\$72-\$87
					Double	\$79-\$94
					Twin	\$79-\$94
					Suite	\$118-\$128
Busua Beach Resort	Western, near Sekondi-Takoradi	53	53	3-star	Single	\$60
					Double	\$70
					Suite	\$80

* ** As of September, 2010. Regular room rates included 15% VAT/NHL taxes; Standard rooms and suites included breakfast. + Included Presidential Suite (single and double) and Royal Suite (single and double). ++Upgraded to 3-star in 2010.

Sources: GTB (2008, 2010)

Labadi Beach Hotel

Labadi Beach Hotel (Figure 3), the only 5-star chain property in Ghana, was built in 1991. Other properties (hotels, resorts and lodges) in the chain, Legacy Hotels & Resorts International, are located in South Africa and Namibia (Legacy Hotels & Resorts International, 2008). The property is located about 15 minutes drive to and from the city center and Kotoka International Airport, Ghana's only international airport (ACC), and a few meters from the International Trade Fair Center. The property is operated to meet the needs of international business travelers and pleasure-seeking tourists. Its conference, meeting and banquet rooms are set amidst 15 acres of tropical landscaped gardens and its two specialty restaurants enable guests to savour African and international cuisines.

Figure 3. Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra



Pictures courtesy of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd.

Labadi Beach Hotel provides car rental services, free parking, fitness facilities, swimming pools, tennis courts, business center, health club, spa massage, and beach amenities. It also boasts 100 spacious executive double and twin rooms and four deluxe suites. Some rooms are specifically designed for physically challenged guests. Smoking and non-smoking rooms are available with amenities and services such as air-conditioning, remote-controlled color television sets with 15 cable/satellite channels, overhead fans, mini bars, refrigerators, tea and coffee making facilities, direct-dial telephones with voice mail, luxury bathrooms with deep tubs, hairdryers, razor points, 24-hour room service, same day laundry and dry cleaning services, free newspapers, in-room safes, and daily maid services. The rooms have large balconies/terraces.

The management of Labadi Beach Hotel maintains that the property's competitive edge stems from the fact that its *Labadi Suite* is an ideal place for business meetings, conferences, presentations and fashion shows. The *Terrace Bar* overlooking a swimming pool is also an ideal place for lunch time relaxation. The *Akwaaba (Welcome) Restaurant* is open all day and serves full English breakfast and extensive lunch and dinner buffet. The *Primavera Restaurant* is Accra's most sought after site for business and special occasions and the cocktail bar/lounge is a popular meeting place for businessmen. The variety of amenities, exquisite beach landscape, state of the art audio visual equipment and friendly and professional services, including tours to the forts and castles in the Central and Western Regions, account for the property's success and hard-won reputation as the only 5-star hotel in Ghana.

Coconut Grove Beach Resort

Equally successful and popular on Ghana's Atlantic coast is the 3-star Coconut Grove Beach Resort (Figure 4) located in Elmina near Cape Coast in the Central Region. The resort which has been in operation since December 1994 is one of four chain properties solely owned and operated by Ghanaians in the private sector. The other three properties are Regency Hotel in Accra, Bridge House in Elmina, and Miners Lodge at Obuasi, a mining city in the Ashanti Region (Figure 1). The efficient operations of Coconut Grove Beach Resort have earned its managers several awards and high reputation in both domestic and international tourism. Location advantages of the property include the beautiful beach, and proximity to the Elmina and Cape Coast castles, Fort St. Jago in Elmina, Fort St. Victoria in Cape Coast, and Kakum National Park which features the only canopy (tree-top) walkway in Africa and the longest in the world. The 1000 ft walkway consists of seven bridges, hanging 100 ft above the forest floor.

Figure 4. Coconut Grove Beach Resort, Elmina/Cape Coast



Pictures courtesy of Coconut Grove Hotels, Ghana.

The lodging facilities of Coconut Grove Beach Resort include 3 large family suites comprising 2 bedrooms each, a living room and a kitchenette; 3 executive suites comprising a bedroom, a living room and kitchenette, 8 family rooms comprising 2 interconnecting bedrooms, 38 standard rooms (ideal for both single and double occupancy). All rooms are air-conditioned and have hot and cold water, mini bars, satellite and multi channel TV receptions, and Wi-Fi connections.

The resort's conference facility which consists of 4 meeting rooms (seating from 50 – 400) and 4 syndicate rooms with a fully fitted secretariat is the largest outside Accra, and the popular *Ocean View Restaurant* has an enviable reputation for the best sea food served fresh in the region. A fresh water swimming pool located close to the Atlantic Ocean enables guests to swim any time of day. Among the outdoor recreational facilities available to sports enthusiasts are two clay tennis courts, a basketball court, and a well set 9-hole golf course. Horse riding and bird watching enhance outdoor experiences of guests.

Coconut Grove Beach Resort has had the privilege to host many Ghanaian and foreign celebrities including the Crown Prince of Holland, Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the UN, Will Smith, world renowned film actor, comedian and musician from USA who visited Ghana to shoot the film 'Mohammed Ali', Mr. Azumah Nelson, Ghana's former WBC Featherweight and Super Featherweight champion, and ministers of state from neighboring countries. Additionally, the resort has played host to many tour groups including Expert Travel & Tours, Sunseekers, Land Tours, Africa Linkage, Starline Travel, and Stable Tour. Guests usually visit the Elmina and Cape Coast castles, Fort St. Jago, Fort St. Victoria, and Kakum National Park.

Coconut Grove Beach Resort's operations underline the importance of corporate business in the tourism industry. In the past decade its Ghanaian and international clients have included the World Bank, Gender and Development Institute, Standard Chartered Bank, Social Security Bank (SSB), Barclays Bank, Agricultural Development Bank, Ashanti Goldfields (GH) Ltd., Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust, Conference of Ministers of Environment from forty countries, International Finance Corporation of the World Bank, Plan International and UN Agencies. Guinness Ghana Limited, Ghana Breweries Limited, and Accra Brewery Limited are some of the property's repeat business clientele. The ultimate goal of Coconut Grove Beach Resort is to make guests feel very much at home. This goal has been partially realized through surprise birthday parties, wedding and birthday receptions, and regular interaction with guests.

Golden Beach Hotel and Resorts

La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Elmina Beach Resort, and Busua Beach Resort are 4-star, 3-star and 3-star chain properties of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd., respectively. They were initially operated as independent properties until June 24, 1999 when a merger facilitated by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), a financial institution in Ghana,

and Rexol International brought the development and management of the three properties together. SSNIT and Rexol International signed a Shareholders' Agreement on September 14, 1999 and adopted the slogan *Uniquely Golden, Traditionally Ghanaian* for the chain properties.

The mission of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd. is to be a quality-driven hospitality group with empowered staff providing excellent services and above average returns to shareholders. Its vision is to be internationally recognized as the leading Ghanaian hospitality group and its goals and objectives are to improve three key areas: generic standardization and quality control, communications, and capacity building. Tourism development and excellence in hospitality management are major business principles of all three chain properties of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd. All the chain properties operate group tours to the forts and castles in the country.

La Palm Royal Beach Hotel

La Palm Royal Beach Hotel (Figure 5) was originally incorporated under the 1963 Companies Code (Act 179) of the Republic of Ghana on November 17, 1993 and consequently was issued with a Certificate to Commence Business. The property is located on a 30-acre landscape overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and it is not too far from the International Trade Fair Center. Its location is about 15 minutes drive to and from the international airport (ACC) and city center. The site forms part of a tourism zone which includes a popular local beach (Labadi beach) and is next to the 5-star Labadi Beach Hotel (Figure 3). Since its incorporation, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel has undertaken many business operations (i.e., market diversification) including civil and environmental engineering and construction, real estate development, transport and telecommunications, tourism and hospitality development, international trade and procurement, and natural resources development.

The guest rooms of La Palm Royal Beach Hotel include royal, presidential and junior suites (singles and double). Guests staying in presidential and junior suites are provided with a 24-hour tea and coffee service, are served canapé, and have access to the executive lounge and protocol services. Standard rooms include complimentary use of leisure facilities, protocol services, and tea and coffee services. All guest rooms are air conditioned and have balconies, key card access, internet access, mini bars, satellite/cable televisions, direct dial

telephones, in-room safes, smoke alarms, bath robes, iron and ironing boards (on request), razor electrical sockets, complimentary toiletries, and facilities for guests with disabilities.

Figure 5. La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra



Pictures courtesy of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd.

La Palm Royal Beach Hotel features a variety of dining experiences at eight separate restaurants and bars. *The Ghanaian Village Restaurant* is a replica of a northern Ghanaian village and offers some of the finest Ghanaian cuisine served with continental flavors. There is a variety of lounges and pubs, each with its own unique ambiance, on the premises. *The Palm Lounge/Cocktail Bar* is a place where guests usually rendezvous with their visitors. *The Equator Bar* is an authentic English pub and the *Geletaria Piazza*, Ghana's gourmet ice cream parlor, is the perfect spot on a hot day for home-made Italian ice cream. *The Bali Hai Restaurant* serves meals with flavors of French Polynesia and a touch of the Orient. The menu features a large variety of exotic dishes and seafoods. One of the specialities is *Teppanyaki* (succulent meats and seafood). The *Sunken Pool Bar* which provides tropical refreshment all day is also a very popular spot.

For recreation and meetings, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel offers some of the best facilities and services in Ghana. The *Homowo Conference Centre* consists of eight fully equipped function rooms. Together with the *Adae Kesie Banquet Hall*, they constitute one of the largest convention and meeting facilities in Ghana with a seating capacity of over 1,500. The *Atlantic Mall* comprises a 700-seater banquet hall on the second floor and meeting and seminar rooms on the mezzanine level. A large convention hall, situated above a shopping

arcade, is supported by several syndicate rooms and a reception terrace that offers panoramic views of the picturesque coastline. The property has the largest swimming pool in the country, a sunken pool bar and separate pool areas for children. The swimming pool is a maze of lagoons, bridges and islands with both shallow and deeper areas. Other facilities and services include a fitness centre, hair styling and manicure salon, jogging track, sauna, shopping arcade and gardens. The *Hewale Health Club* has exercise machines and a rack of free weights. The *Palm Court Shopping Center* features four boutiques and a full service beauty salon, nightclub, health club, casino, spa and gymnasium. Hertz and Avis car rental services are available to guests.

Elmina Beach Resort

The 3-star Elmina Beach Resort (Figure 6) is the largest hotel outside the capital city of Accra. The property was originally incorporated on June 8, 1976 and was issued with a Certificate to Commence Business on June 30. Its 106 luxurious rooms include a presidential suite and 8 crown executive suites. In addition to the lodging facilities, the property provides extensive leisure and entertainment facilities including two outdoor swimming pools, tennis and squash courts, a basketball court, a gymnasium, and a nightclub.

Figure 6. Elmina Beach Resort, Elmina



Pictures courtesy of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd.

Elmina Beach Resort has five conference facilities capable of accommodating over 200 delegates. The host city, Elmina, is a few kilometers from the world renowned Kakum

National Park, and the Elmina and Cape Coast castles. The resort provides air-conditioned single and double rooms (smoking and non-smoking), and rooms for the physically handicapped. All the rooms have private balconies and amenities similar to those of La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in Accra and Busua Beach Resort located about 37 kilometers to and from Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region.

Busua Beach Resort

Busua Beach Resort (Figure 7), located 37 kilometers west of Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana, has been in existence for almost 40 years and has been managed successfully to become a resort for business, leisure and pleasure. The resort was incorporated on September 1, 1993 to do business similar to those of La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in Accra and Elmina Beach Resort in Elmina. Its unique attributes are the serene location and environment, all chalet style facilities, and a feeling of being in paradise in a rural area. Its white and beautiful three-kilometer long sandy beach is breathtaking.

Figure 7. Busua Beach Resort near Sekondi-Takoradi



Pictures courtesy of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd.

Busua Beach Resort consists of 53 rooms built in a chalet style right on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Major renovations of the chalets have taken place in the past five years. The guestrooms and outdoor facilities of the property are similar to those of the other chain properties in Accra and Elmina. Events management and local tours are routine operations of the property. The resort offers tours to the forts and castles in Elmina and Cape Coast, Kakum National Park, and Nzulezo, a village on stilts in the Western Region. At the time

when the final portion of field research was being conducted, the property had 36 technical and 39 support personnel providing different hospitality services to guests.

Since their incorporation and certification to do business, the properties of Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd. have won several prestigious awards. For example, Busua Beach Resort's awards include: the Best Kept Tourism Site (1996), Marketing Campaign of the Year (1997 and 1999), Hotel of the Year (1998), Host Manager of the Year (1999) awarded to the General Manager, and Good Corporate Citizen Silver Award (2000) awarded to the General Manager by the Ghana Tourist Board (GTB). The resort has also hosted several dignitaries including senior politicians and industry leaders from Ghana and abroad.

La Palm Royal Beach Hotel won the award of the Best Foreign Business of the Year (1999), awarded by the Millennium Excellence Awards. It has hosted many dignitaries/VIPs including Queen Elizabeth II of England, the King and Queen of Swaziland and their families, several African heads of state including the presidents of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, La Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Benin and former US presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The property was also chosen by the Ministry of Tourism and GTB to host the gastronomic fair of the international World Tourism Day celebration on September 27, 2009. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) chose Ghana to host the 30th international World Tourism Day event. The theme of the celebration was 'Tourism - Celebrating Diversity'.

Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd. has excelled in other hospitality services and management in Ghana. The chain has extended its roles in tourism development to include renovation of the Mole Game Reserve Hotel, a lodging facility in a national park in the Northern Region (Figure 1). Visitors to the park get the opportunity to see untamed elephants and other wildlife. Golden Beach Hotels (GH) Ltd. also has plans to develop a new lodging facility in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city in the Ashanti Region (Figure 1). The Ashanti Region is rich in culture and ecotourism. Additionally, the chain has been working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism to facilitate safe road transport, emigration formalities, flight rates in and out of Ghana, and to make international tourists always feel welcome to Ghana.

Conclusion

In about two decades, beach hotel/resort operations have gradually, but steadily, been changing the tourist landscape on Ghana's Atlantic coast and becoming more popular in the tourism industry. Such operations are creating jobs, generating revenue, meeting hospitality needs of domestic and international tourists, and underscoring the need for more, diverse and high quality hospitality facilities. However, in common with some other destinations, the extent of dependency of the upscale beach hotel/resort operations on international tourists is overwhelming and is also highly susceptible to changes and wider trends in the global tourism market.

As this paper has shown, European-built forts and castles are still important landmarks on the tourist landscape of Ghana's Atlantic coast, and visits to them are an important component of the overall tourist package. This paper also addressed the concept that the forts and castles of Ghana are tourist 'blackspots', that is, places associated with suffering, which also have global significance through the UNESCO designation of them as World Heritage sites. As such they can be accurately described as possessing latent cultural capital for tourism development which has in part been realized through forms of diasporic tourism. The author also subscribes to the proposed paradigm shift in the democratization of cultural tourism identified above that encompasses symbolic objects, tourist experiences, community values, and the essence of places. In the case outlined here we see the recreation of a tourist economy centered on symbolic objects and cultural capital that can be ascribed to the 'blackspots'.

It remains, however, to be ascertained through further research, whether or not the commodification or commoditization of the forts and castles augur well for sustainable cultural tourism. Tour operations already benefiting from the forts and castles as European 'blackspots' and cultural capital should embrace more prudent and stringent principles of sustainable destination development to benefit local economies. This recommendation is in accord with the viewpoint that Curtin and Busby (1999) express in another study regarding tour operations and sustainable destination development. The emotional attachments and meanings that tourists read into the forts and castles of Ghana, such as the various forms of personal cultural capital, are also worth exploring in future research.

In recent years, Ghana has set some unparalleled records that augur well for the tourism industry. The country hosted three successive and sitting presidents of USA: Bill Clinton in

1998, George Bush in 2006, and Barack Obama in 2009. The country also hosted many mega events including the 30th international World Tourism Day on September 27, 2009, the first of its kind in Africa; and on December 15, 2010 the country commenced oil production in commercial quantity to augment revenues generated by cocoa and mineral exports, and the tourism industry. Hopefully, as the country continues to enjoy high reputation of being a beacon of democratic governance in sub-Saharan Africa more attention would be paid to the development of heritage and diasporic tourism that would bring more socio-economic, cultural, and environmental benefits to local communities.

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