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ATTITUDE OF VISITOR ATTRACTION MANAGERS TOWARDS

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

BY

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award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Tourism Management

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DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that

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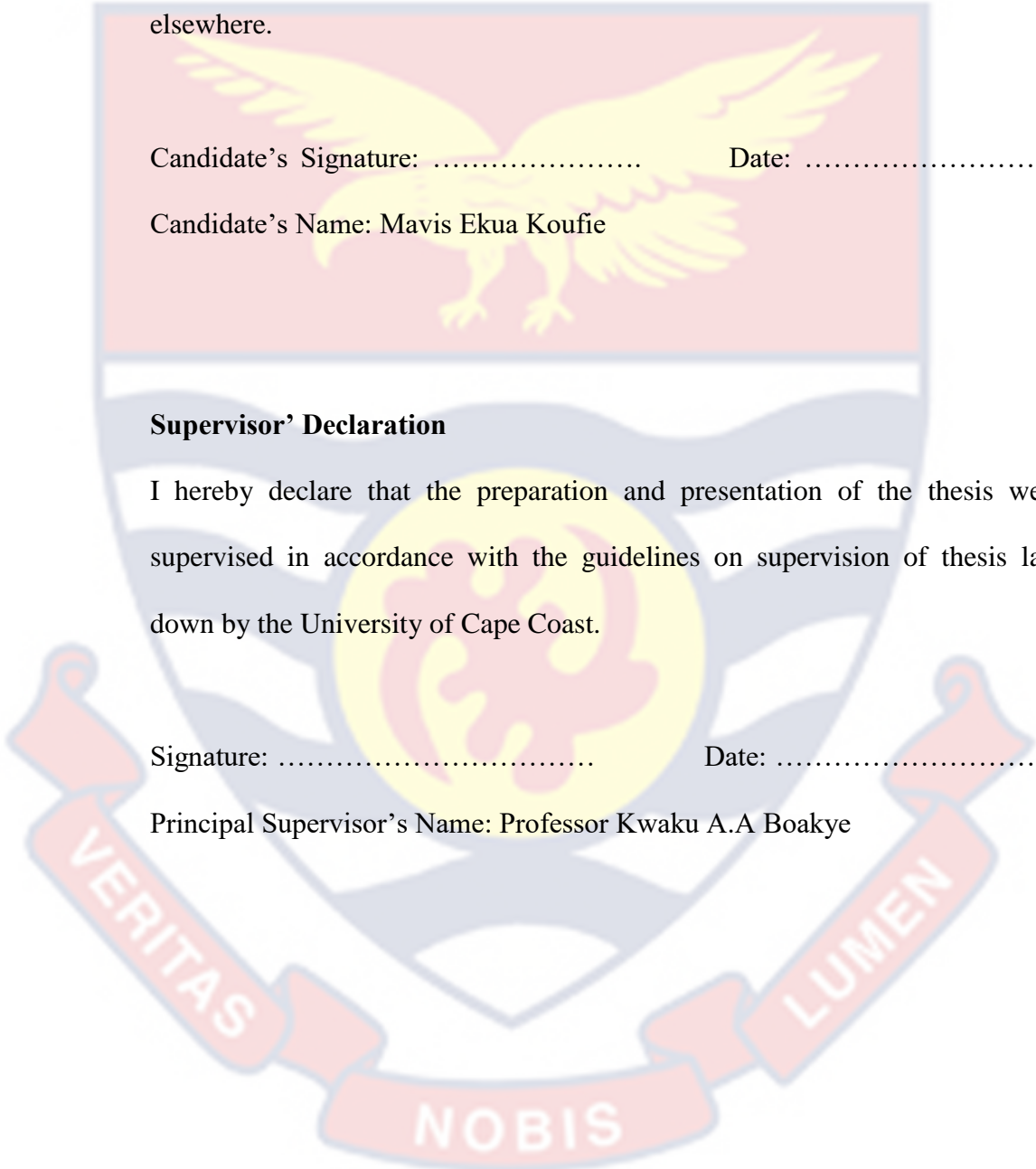
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ABSTRACT

Despite the critical role Visitor Attraction Managers (VAMs) play in the development of sustainable tourism at destinations, they are hardly ever the focus of any study on the topic. This study explored the attitude of VAMs towards Sustainable Tourism (ST) in the Central Region of Ghana. The qualitative approach together with a phenomenology design were adopted for the study. Data were collected from managers of seven functional attractions in the region using an in-depth interview guide. The deductive and inductive content analytical technique via a three-way coding format (open coding, creating categories, and creating themes) were used in the analysis of the data. The findings revealed that VAMs had some understanding of ST, which reflected in their emotional connectedness to the practice of the concept. Moreover, the strategies employed towards ST were mainly in line with the economic and environmental dimension of ST than socio-cultural dimension. However, insufficient funds, bureaucracy, lack of qualified employees, lack of national ST policy, and perceived lack of commitment from government officials impeded their practicing of ST. In conclusion, VAMs appear favourably disposed to the concept and practice of sustainable tourism. As a result, the study recommends that the central government should leverage the already formed attitude of VAMs to draft a national sustainable tourism policy that will guide the pursuit of the concept to the fullest.

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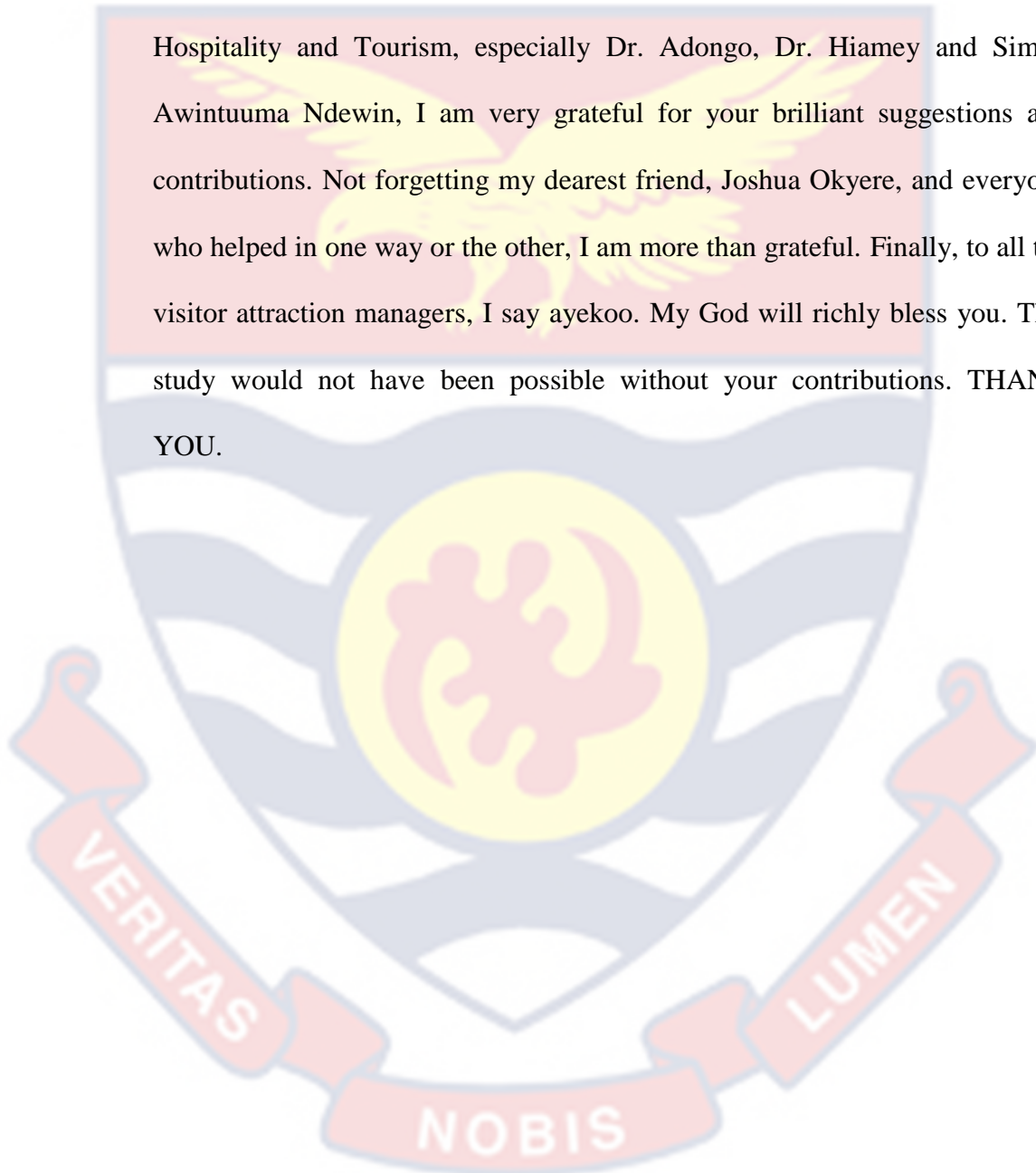
DEDICATION

To the Koufie Family and my girls: Aba, Pascal, Tasha and Olivia

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBT   Community-Based Tourism

EA   Ecological Attraction

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

GTA   Ghana Tourism Authority

HA   Heritage Attraction

IST   Indicators of Sustainable Tourism

MDGs   Millennium Development Goals

OECD   Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

ST   Sustainable Tourism

STD   Sustainable Tourism Development

UNWTO   United Nations World Tourism Organization

VA   Visitor Attractions

VAMs   Visitor Attraction Managers

WCED   World Commission on Environment and Development

WTTC   World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Tourism with its significant contributions and growth potential, has become a priority for many countries worldwide (Manzoor, Wei & Asif, 2019). In some jurisdictions, tourism is considered a development alternative rather than a complimentary service or industry (Pratt, 2015; Bojanic & Lo, 2016) due to tourism's potential to alleviate poverty, provide sustainable growth; primarily through infrastructural development, revenue generation, and foreign exchange (Deladem, Xiao & Siueia, 2020).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2021), tourism contributed 10.4% to global GDP (UDS 9.2 trillion) and created 334 million jobs across the globe in 2019. It is further estimated that by 2027, travel and tourism will bounce back from the losses experienced from the COVID-19 to create over 380 million jobs and indirect jobs (WTTC, 2021; Deladem, Xiao & Siueia, 2020). For these reasons, governments and states, particularly those in developing countries are working assiduously to promote tourism for development.

Notwithstanding the important role tourism plays in the economies of developed and developing countries, there are also reports of its negative impacts. While tourism is said to contribute positively to the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic frontiers of destinations (Das & Chatterjee, 2015; Hall, Amelung, Cohen, Eijgelaar, Gössling, Higham, & Scott, 2015; Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017; Castela, 2018; Mikayiloy, Mukhtaroy, Mammadov, Azizov, 2019), it is as well reported as having adverse impacts

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on the environment, socio-cultural and economic contexts where it operates (Diedrich & Aswani, 2016; Pan, Gao, Kim, Shah, Pei, & Chiang, 2018; Bella, 2018). For example, overcrowding, congestion of public spaces, traffic congestion, social vices, the commodification of cultures, and acculturation are all negatives attributed to tourism (Bella, 2018; Vardopoulos, Konstantopoulos, & Zorpas, 2019).

Given these negative consequences of tourism, and considering its positive impacts on nations' development, debates about the need to sustain tourism through minimizing the negative consequences have emerged. Largely, these debates are centred around the concept of sustainability and sustainable development which form the central themes of the Brundtland Commission report in 1987 under the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). Accordingly, the concept of sustainability is referred to meeting one's own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). Embedded in the definition of sustainability is the need for social equity, economic development and environmental (natural resource) protection in all human activities. In other words, sustainability revolves around issues of people, planet, and profit, (Isaksson, Garvare & Johnson, 2015). These three components interact with each other to ensure a balance between human activities and the natural environment.

While the concept traces its roots from social justice, conservationism and internationalism, the major debates for sustainability are concerned with the need for people to be mindful of the future in whatever development project that is being undertaken (Birdsall, 2014; DiVito & Bohnsack, 2017).

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Thus, for most people, the issue of sustainability summarizes the future given to subsequent generations. At the end of the twentieth century, proponents of sustainability converge to call for a framework for sustainable development that will harmonize economic, ecological and social development in order to raise living standards of people worldwide. This became a reality through the Brundtland's Commission.

The Brundtland Commission United Nations (1987), defined sustainable development as "*development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". Inherent in this definition is the need to avoid or minimize waste in all developmental activities including tourism, an ideological direction that has guided tourism development projects globally (Sadaf & Jabbar, 2020). Similarly, Jafari (1989, 2001) platforms or perspectives of tourism development relative to its impacts on the environment, socio-cultural and economic dimensions brought to bear certain sustainable ideals. Jafari (1989, 2001) advocated for the adoption of tourism as a development tool in post-World War II (advocacy platform). But then, he cautioned about its negative impacts (cautionary platform) and admonished the need to adapt plausible measures to mitigate the negative impacts (Adaptancy platform) as well as, other scientific measures ('knowledge-based' platform). The above underpinnings are what have led to the idea of sustainable tourism and thus, offer useful context for understanding and measuring the concept.

Accordingly, sustainable tourism is referred to as any tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the

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environment, and host communities (UNWTO, 2015). Invariably, what this definition suggests is the need to improve the quality of life of the host community, ensure visitor satisfaction and maintain the quality of the environment on which both visitors and host communities depend (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005) as well as meeting the interest of tourism businesses (Getz & Timur, 2012).

Also, the definition calls for a more responsible development of tourism that lessens tourism-associated disadvantages while increasing its advantages (Budeanu, Miller, Moscardo & Ooi, 2016). This is said to be one of the ideals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that guide the facilitation, promotion, and development of sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2015). Particularly, target 8.9 of SDG 8 urges nations and governments to formulate and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism which creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (Grilli, Tyllianakis, Luisetti, & Ferrini, 2021; United Nations, 2015).

From above, three dimensions of sustainable tourism are conceptualized. These include; environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions (Tanguay, Rajaonson & Therrien, 2013; Nugraheni, Nurhaeni, & Rahmanto, 2020). To achieve sustainable tourism, all three dimensions need to be considered simultaneously. The environmental dimension looks at the optimal use of environmental resources, the conservation of biodiversity, and heritage (Dibra & Oeflka, 2013). The socio-cultural dimension involves the use, protection, and preservation of both material and living cultural heritage as well as traditional values, contribution to intercultural understanding and tolerance, and generation of a better quality of life (Agyeiwaah, McKercher &

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Suntikul, 2017). Whereas, the economic dimension concentrates on how tourism contributes to revenues, employment, and meeting visitors' satisfaction (Ayeiwah et al., 2017).

Also, as part of the sustainable tourism drive, academics and practitioners are now advocating for a shift from conventional mass tourism to alternative tourism. Many of the negative impacts of tourism are often attributed to mass tourism (Garau-Vadell, Gutierrez-Tano & Diaz-Armas, 2018). To minimize the negative impacts and achieve sustainability, alternative forms of tourism such as soft tourism, low impact tourism, responsible tourism and ecotourism are advocated for (Moyle, Moyle, Ruhanen, Weaver & Hadinejad, 2020). These alternative forms of tourism are believed to have less negative environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts (Prince & Ioannides, 2017; Kuq, Elezaj & Hasanaj, 2020).

Nevertheless, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2017) argued that given time, destinations that market these alternative forms of tourism will turn to mass tourism hubs due to increased tourist numbers. Additionally, Mieczkowski (1995) explains that alternative forms of tourism are negligible in size and directly depend on well-established mass tourism spots. Also, Rasdi, Som, Usolludin and Nordin (2019) indicated that alternative tourism is mainly promoted not purposely for conserving resource but for marketing reasons to diversify mass tourism destinations and to attract more visitors. Whichever way alternative tourism is developed, it does not fully lead to sustainability (Moyle et al., 2020). In most cases, alternative tourism is seen as a marketing ploy to give destinations a competitive edge (Moyle et al., 2020). Therefore, to achieve sustainable tourism is not to develop small-scale tourism in

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undamaged environments but learning how to manage the damages that come with tourism in whichever form (Purnomo, Rahayu, Riani, Suminah & Udin, 2020) and making sure it benefits all stakeholders involved.

Several studies have outlined the benefits of sustainable tourism. For example, Van der Schyff, Meyer and Ferreira (2019) found that sustainable tourism leads to a significant increase in job creation and disposable incomes of locals as well as improving the balance of payment of countries. Also, Jovanovic-Toncev (2014) argued that sustainable tourism maintains the cultural and environmental integrity of host communities, enhances the protection of ecologically sensitive areas, and heritages and contributes to the strengthening of rural and local communities. Consequently, to realize these benefits as well as the success of sustainable tourism development, the role of managers of tourism supply units (attractions, food and beverage, accommodation, transportation, entertainment and ancillary services) cannot be overlooked (Amoako, Obuobisa -Darko & Ohene Marfo, 2021).

Given that visitor attraction managers (VAMS) are an important cohort of the tourism supply unit, they are referred in this context as either an individual or groups who can affect or be affected by tourism development in a destination (Todd, Leask & Ensor, 2017). Visitor attraction managers lead the provision of tourist goods and services. They champion the implementation of projects and policies including those of sustainable tourism (Carr, Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). Visitor attraction managers are regarded as essential in determining the success of sustainable tourism (Taylor, Frost & Laing, 2019). Their businesses (the visitor attractions) are considered the mainstay of tourism (Taylor, 2015; Sánchez-Martín, Gurría-Gascón, &

García-Berzosa, 2020). They specifically design programs and services to meet the needs of tourists (Chang, 2011).

One of such programs is how to ensure the long-term existence of destinations. VAMS do this by employing proper sustainable tourism strategies to mitigate negative impacts, ranging from socio-cultural consequences, environmental degradation to economic inequality (Jovicic, 2014). Hence, the attitude of visitor attraction managers is said to affect the overall long-term existence of attractions. Some managers may not see the need to adopt ST whereas others may implement ST irrespective of its benefits. Also, Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins (2013) argued that some managers may be positive about ST but will avoid its implementation. Hence, visitor attraction managers' attitude and activities whether consciously or unconsciously have implications for sustainable tourism.

According to Eagly & Chaiken, (2007), attitude is referred to as the psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular phenomenon or object with some degree of favour or disfavour. It is also viewed as a tripartite concept consisting of cognitive, affective, and behaviour components (Findler, Vilchinsky & Werner 2007). Where the cognitive component relates to one's beliefs, perceptions, and views about the phenomenon. The affective relates to one's emotions and feelings towards the phenomenon and the behaviour component looks at the overt actions towards the phenomenon where the phenomenon in this context is referred to as sustainable tourism.

Adopting the tripartite component of attitude, this study explores visitor attraction managers' attitude and the strategies they employed towards

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sustainable tourism in the Central Region of Ghana. Importantly, the tourism industry has made significant improvement in the Ghanaian economy after independence; over 400 tourist attractions have been developed across various regions (Siakwah 2018). There are 2,723 licensed hotels (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2019) and since 2016, the number of arrivals and receipts increased from 932,579 ($1, 651.67m) to 969, 156 ($1, 804.56m) in 2017.

Similarly, there was an increase in arrivals and receipts from 956,372 ($2,589.85m) in 2018 to 1,130,307 ($3,312.93m) in 2019 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2019). This growth paints a positive picture for the Ghanaian economy, therefore necessitates sustainability of tourism. Moreover, to sustain tourism, it is imperative to explore the attitude of visitor attraction managers who are prime players in the development of tourism at a destination and the strategies they employ towards sustainable tourism.

Statement of the Problem

The existing literature on sustainable tourism has largely focused on attitudes of tourists, residents, and accommodation managers (Ray & Hossain, 2015; Mohaidin, Wei & Murshid, 2017; Amin, 2017; Liu & Li, 2018; Adongo, Taale & Adam, 2018; Kuscer & Mihalic, 2019), with little attention paid to the attitudes of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism. Specifically, Khairat and Maher (2012) study on operators' attitudes towards sustainable tourism focused on tourism organizations or governmental agencies. Also, Mensah and Dei Mensah (2013) looked at international tourists' environmental attitude towards hotels which is one of the dimensions of sustainable tourism. Cobbinah (2015) considered local residents' attitude towards natural resources management in rural Ghana and Adongo et al.

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(2018) studied tourists' values and emphatic attitudes towards sustainable development in tourism. However, little attention have been dedicated to exploring the attitude and strategies employed by visitor attraction managers pursuing sustainable tourism. As such, questions regarding VAMs' understanding of ST and the barriers faced in pursuing it remains unanswered.

In business contexts, managers can play a formidable role in the initiation of sustainable tourism policies and implementation of practices as they oversee the day-to-day running of their companies. In a stack contrast, some of them could hold anti-sustainability beliefs and attitude making it important to gain insights into the attitudes of attraction managers towards sustainable tourism. More importantly, studies in other domains have affirmed that emotions underlie and as such are precusors of sustainability and tourism engagements (Hosany, Martin & Woodside, 2021). The tourism literature is yet to report how management emotions are connected to their sustainabilility policies, practices and strategies. This knowledge gap potentially constrains how best to use the emotion inducing nudges to influence the sustainability attitude of VAMs.

Given that visitor attractions are the mainstay of tourism at every destination and the fact that their nature and orientation are different from other tourism and hospitality products, dedicated studies are required (Sánchez-Martín, et al., 2020). It has been noted that significant variation exists in the attitudes and strategies employed by managers towards sustainable tourism at attractions. As a result, maybe entirely different from that of other tourism supply units. Therefore, drawing conclusions on the findings from the above studies to motivate sustainable tourism among visitor

attraction managers may be problematic. Hence, the need to explore the attitude and strategies employed by visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism

Objectives and Research Questions

This study explored the attitude of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism in the Central Region of Ghana. The specific objectives were to;

1. Explore visitor attraction managers' understanding of sustainable tourism.

2. Explore visitor attraction managers' emotional connectedness to the practice of sustainable tourism.

3. Assess the strategies employed by visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism.

4. Examine the barriers to pursuing sustainable tourism by visitor attraction managers.

In addressing the research objectives, the research will be guided by the following questions.

1. How do visitor attraction managers understand sustainable tourism?

2. How are visitor attraction managers emotionally connected to the practice of sustainable tourism?

3. What are the strategies employed by visitor attraction managers pursuing sustainable tourism?

4. What are the barriers to the practice of sustainable tourism by visitor attraction managers?

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Significance of the Study

The results of this study on attitude of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism are expected to be significant to both literature and practice. On account of literature, the results of the study will contribute to filling the identified gap by highlighting the understanding, emotional connectedness, strategies towards sustainable tourism as well as barriers encountered by visitor attraction managers in such a way that it will throw light on whether visitor attraction managers understand and practice sustainable tourism as it should and more specifically, within the central region of Ghana. Also, conclusions drawn from the study could be a basis for further research on attitude of visitor attraction managers towards ST in other regions of Ghana or Africa.

About practice, there are three main issues raised. First and foremost, the information from the study will give a clear view of how visitor attraction managers understand the concept of sustainable tourism. This information will thus, help in devising measures that will ensure the re-orientation of visitor attraction managers' understanding towards sustainable tourism especially, when information reveals that visitor attraction managers have a negative understanding of sustainable tourism. This re-orientation of visitor attraction managers will further translate into their attitude towards the concept which will be said to be favourable.

Also, the results of the study will aid in designing strategies that will enable visitor attraction managers to ensure optimal practices towards sustainable tourism if information from the study shows that visitor attraction

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managers undertake insufficient practices towards ensuring tourism's sustainability.

Again, the results of the study will suggest strategies that can be instituted to overcome the barriers visitor attraction managers face in the practice of sustainable tourism.

Definition of Terms

This section captures the operational meaning of keywords that used in the study. The following keywords are explained such that they communicate the actual meaning as used in the study:

Sustainable tourism: Any tourism that considers the current and future economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts, the needs of visitors, the industry, and host communities.

Attitude: The psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating sustainable tourism with some degree of favour or disfavour.

Visitor attraction: is a place with the tendency to draw tourists to see and experience its distinctive attributes.

Visitor Attraction Manager: This is an operator responsible for managing all aspects of a visitor attraction.

Sustainable Practices: the activities employed to protect the quality of the environment, culture, and economy.

Delimitations of the Study

The study focused on visitor attraction managers' attitudes towards sustainable tourism. Geographically, the research was conducted in the Central Region, and also, responses were one-sided. That is because the research sought data only from visitor attraction managers.

In addition, the study was purely qualitative hence, the findings do not have the statistical power for generalization to the larger population and finally, could not capture how organizational policies shape visitor attractions managers' understanding, emotional connectedness, and strategies carried out towards sustainable tourism.

Organization of Study

The study was divided into five distinct chapters. Chapter One is the introductory chapter, which captured the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, the significance of the study, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter Two encompassed a review of related and relevant literature on the concept of tourism, tourism development in Ghana, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, and attitude. Other issues included the understanding of visitor attraction managers of sustainable tourism, emotional connectedness of visitor attraction managers towards the practice of sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism strategies, and barriers to practicing sustainable tourism. Chapter Three focused on the methodological issues of the study. They included the study area, the research philosophy, research design, data sources and types, target population, sampling size and procedures, data collection procedure and instrumentation, fieldwork issues with related challenges as well as data analysis and presentation. Chapter Four captured a comprehensive discussion of the results of the data analysed. Finally, chapter Five summarized the key results of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to attitude of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism. The issues covered in this chapter include the concept of tourism, tourism development in Ghana, the concept of sustainable development, the concept of sustainable tourism, and the concept of attitude. Other issues include the understanding of VAM towards sustainable tourism, emotional attachment of VAMs towards sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism strategies, and barriers to practicing sustainable tourism. The chapter discussed pertinent theories that provide ideological focus to the study. It concludes by presenting the conceptual framework underlying the study.

The Concept of Tourism

According to UNWTO (2015), tourism is defined as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for less than a year for personal, business, or professional purposes. The definition describes those people who embark on such journeys as visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents). Similarly, Dilek & Dilek (2018) argued that tourism involves the temporary movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, as well as their activities during their stay at these destinations. Inherent in these two definitions is the fact that tourism is temporary and involves activities usually personal or business-related. However, the definition by UNTWO gives a

broader outlook to understanding tourism by considering it as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon. This implies tourism's ability to impact (positively or negatively) the social, cultural, and economy of the destination where it occurs.

Largely, tourism has been regarded as a developmental tool far back in the 19th century when many nations were urged to adopt the phenomenon due to its ability to boost the economy. Tourism contributes specifically to the economic development of nations through earnings from both international and domestic visitors (Akinboade & Braimoh, 2010). The increase in jobs (directly, indirectly, or induced), revenue, foreign exchange economic multiplier effect, and infrastructure improvement are largely attributed to tourism (Kumar et al., 2015). Also, Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh & Ismail (2017) attested that improvement in the quality of life of locals is associated with tourism development. This manifests through the provision of social services (transportation, banking, recreational facilities, etc.), preservation of local values, customs, and norms as well as the facilitation of cross-cultural communication and tolerance. Environmentally, tourism preserves and protects natural resources such as endangered species (plants or animals), ecosystems, etc. (García, Vázquez & Macías, 2015).

These positive outcomes of tourism notwithstanding, evidence suggests that tourism development accrues negative impacts (Zhuang, Yao & Li, 2019; Mikayilov et al., 2019; Wang, Huang, Gong & Cao, 2020). Leakage, repatriation of profits, inflation, increased costs of living, the decline in traditional employment, seasonal employment are some associated economic negativities. Also, Mikayilov et al. (2019) argued that degradation

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of the environment is largely attributed to the development of tourism. Examples include pollution through sewage discharge and litter, loss of vegetation and wildlife, overcrowding and, congestion. Moreover, Zhuang et al. (2019) claimed that tourism destroys people, culture as well as heritage environment. These destructions are visible through relocation of communities, increase in crime, prostitution, adoption of western fashion, etc. Nevertheless, tourism is widely used and still used particularly by developing countries to strengthen their economies which Ghana is no exception.

Tourism Development in Ghana

In Ghana, tourism has received considerable attention from national leaders and development partners after independence largely because it influenced economic development (Adu-Ampong, 2019). Accordingly, several national tourism policies or plans have been formulated. The work of the Obuam Committee in 1972 was the first step towards tourism development in Ghana. The committee catalogued the country's potential tourism resources and recommended the need for a comprehensive long-term plan for tourism development. This led to the creation of the first 15-year Master Tourism Plan to guide tourism development between 1975 and 1990. Such a plan was accepted by the government then. However, it was never implemented due to intermittent coups. A return to constitutional rule saw the creation of the Ministry of Tourism to spearhead and coordinate tourism development. Since then, various governments have rolled out comprehensive plans and policies such as the 15-year Tourism Development Plan (1996-2010) and National Tourism Development Plan (2013 – 2027) to guide long-term sustainable development by putting tourism in a broader context of socio-economic

development (Adu-Ampong, 2019). However, these long-term development plans have suffered neglect due to political regime changes leaving their usefulness questionable.

Nevertheless, over 400 tourist attractions have been developed across various regions in Ghana (Siakwah, 2018). These attractions include national parks, water bodies, forts and castles, craft villages, cultural events, museums, and forest reserves. For example, Kakum National Park, Mole National Park, Cape Coast Castle, Lake Bosomtwe, Mountain Afadja, etc. Also, there are about 3,247 licensed hotels as of 2017, out of which 3 are 5-star hotels, 12 (4-star hotels), 40(3-star hotels), 225(2-star hotels), 426(1-star hotels), 167 guest houses, and 2374 budget hotels (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2019). The operation of these tourism-related establishments has both positive and negative impacts on the environment, economy, and socio-cultural fabric of the country with local communities bearing the brunt of most of the negative impacts (Eshun & Tichaawa, 2019).

In terms of positive impacts, the most easily identified is the national economic figures. For instance, international tourism receipts increased from US$879 million in 2007 to US$1,800 million in 2017 (World Bank Group, 2017). It was also projected that by 2027 tourism receipts will have increased to US$ 8.4 billion (World Bank Group, 2017). Total employment created was 231,000 in 2010 yet, projected to rise to 1.4million by 2027. Income generated consisting of direct plus indirect income was USD 194 million in 2010 yet, projected to increase to 438 million by 2027 (Adu-Ampong, 2019). Whether these figures trickle down to local communities where attractions are found is in doubt. The consensus about sustainable tourism is to keep tourism

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resources for the enjoyment of future generations even though, not denying the current generation their benefits. This supposes that managers of tourism attractions and facilities in Ghana ought to adopt sustainable tourism practices to minimize the negative impacts to enhance the positive impacts for the long-term benefit especially, by destination communities. This justifies the need to explore VAMs' attitude towards the concept of ST. Reinforcing this need is the seeming lack of a comprehensive operating national tourism development plan as well as the lack of adequate attention from local government authorities to guide the long-term sustainable tourism development (Alhassan, 2017). However, sustainable tourism cannot be discussed without tracing its roots which is sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development has come of age (Amini & Bienstock, 2014; Birdsall, 2014) and despite gaining global attention; it has still experienced different interpretations resulting in different practices among development agents (Klarin, 2018). This raises concerns about stakeholders' understanding and their ultimate attitude towards the concept.

Sustainable development is fundamentally traced to the Brundtland's Commission under the UN Commission on Environment and Economic Development in 1987. Even though early in the 1970s certain advocacies emerged championing sustainable discourses. The commission's report christened *Our Common Future* was the first to provide conceptual underpinnings and a unified definition of the term (Sachs, 2013). Sustainable development was defined as any "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet*

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their own needs" (Brundtland Commission United Nations, 1987). The concept emerged upon the convergence of economic models and environmentalism policies (Klarin, 2018). When economic models failed to stimulate the needed growth to improve the well-being of people and environments (Liu, 2018; Klarin, 2018). This led to the need for alternative forms of economic development that will take into account the ecological consequences of development as well as the well-being of societies (Sneddon, Howarth & Norgaard, 2006).

Following its emergence, the concept conveys the need for optimal use or management of resources and assets in a way that will not undermine the ability to use those resources in the future (Klarin, 2018). Also, it calls for pragmatic measures to combat problems resulting from development failures (Silvestrea & Țîrcă, 2018). Whiles the underlined idea of sustainable development (being future conscious in terms of resource usage) is broadly accepted, some however are sceptical for varied reasons. Holmberg and Sandbrook (2019) argued that the needs of the future generation may likely be different from the needs of the current generation. Also, Howarth, Norgaard and Sneddon (2006), are of the view that developed and developing countries' understanding and practice of sustainable development varies substantially. They argued further that this may thwart the sustainable development agenda globally, considering that the failures of one country can impact the efforts of another country. Notwithstanding these scepticisms, the concept when it was institutionalized, provided an ideological and practical foundation for reference for most economic activities (Attah, 2010).

According to Garvare, Isaksson and Johnson (2015), sustainable development revolves around issues of the people, planet, and profit. It is also said to hinge on development, needs, and future generation. Where development (socio-economic) must be carried out in line with the ecological constraints of a place. Needs, resources must be distributed to ensure the quality of life for all and the concept of future generations relates to ensuring a possible long-term usage of resources to ensure the necessary quality of life for future generations (Klarin, 2018). According to Birdsall (2014) and DiVito and Bohnsa (2017), the planet refers to the environment, people represent the socio-cultural, and economic relates to profit. A conceptualization, Klarin (2018), termed as the triple bottom line. To Klarin (2018), a balance among these three pillars is required to achieve complete sustainability. A condition he admitted is always difficult to arrive at. In effect, the concept of sustainable development is premised on the idea that in every economic activity while making a profit, efforts must be taken to ensure environments are protected together with the cultures and welfare of people (Bohnsa & DiVito, 2017).

Closely linked to the concept of sustainable development are the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of 2015 by the United Nations which is an extension of the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] that was started in 2000 seeking to address pertinent global issues including poverty, the expansion of primary education, hunger, among other important developmental issues (Yiu & Saner, 2014; Nanda, 2015). Owing to the assumption that sustainability cuts across various dimensions of the growth and development of countries, the UN in 2015 purposely drafted the SDGs to

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guide nations in their policies and programs formulation and implementation in major economic sectors including tourism.

The strength of the above exposition about sustainable development invokes the need to always examine all human activities including tourism to establish a balance among the three pillars. This is because tourism depends largely on a common pool or shared resources (Maxim, 2016) which ought to be managed well in order not to undermine the long-term needs of the people whose lives depend on those resources. Meanwhile, it must be emphasized that sustainable development is not a fixed state harmony but a dynamic process of change, a change that enhances both current and future abilities to meet human needs and aspirations (DiVito & Bohnsack, 2017).

Sustainable Tourism Development

The need for sustainability in tourism development emerged in the late 1980s (Ruhanen, Weiler, Moyle & McLennan, 2015), immediately after the launch of the Brundtland Commission report. When it became apparent that tourism leaves on the environment irreparable footprints and more importantly, those who much needed to benefit from tourism activities were denied those benefits due to structural imbalances (Sharpley, 2020). There was also the need to separate tourism from the broader dialogue on sustainable development because of its over-reliance on delicate communal pool resources (Sharpley, 2020) which required unique sustainable practices to ensure their long-term existence. These and other several factors compelled corporate and world bodies to consider the concept separate but keeping the foundational principles of the broader concept of sustainable development (Ruhanen et al., 2015; Sharpley, 2020).

The UNWTO which is an international body in charge of tourism in 1993 first proposed a definition based on the Brundtland commission report at Euro-Mediterranean Conference on tourism and sustainable development. In this conference, sustainable tourism (ST) was defined as *"development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future"* (Sardianou, Kostakis, Mitoula, Gkaragkani, Lalioti & Theodoropoulou, 2016, p.9). Unfortunately, this definition was met with criticisms. Several scholars (Pulido-Fernández, Andrades-Caldito, & Sánchez-Rivero, 2015; Wall, 2018; Sharpley, 2020) claimed the definition was parochial and sectorial skewed. They claimed that, while sustainable tourism shares some issues with sustainable development, the definition rather placed greater emphasis on growth and retention of business profitability than other stakeholders in the tourism web.

Nevertheless, a revised definition was made in 2005 by UNWTO where sustainable tourism was described as *"any tourism that takes into full account its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communitie*s" (UNWTO, 2005). This has since been adopted and used in many scholarly works and this study is not an exemption. Embodied in the definition are the dimensions of sustainable tourism as well as the stakeholders. These dimensions otherwise known as pillars are; the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects (Birdsall, 2014; DiVito & Bohnsack, 2017; Nugraheni et al., 2020; Tanguay, Rajaonson & Therrien, 2013)

According to Dibra and Oeflka, (2013), the environmental dimension relates to maintaining the quality of the environment which is necessary for conducting tourism activities and the quality of life of people. The socio-cultural dimension talks about the preservation of cultural identity, respect for cultural diversity, race, and religion (Ayeiwah et al., 2017). Whereas the economic dimension concentrates on how tourism contributes in terms of revenues, employment, and meeting visitors' satisfaction (Ayeiwah et al., 2017). Aside from ensuring a fair balance between these three dimensions, ST will be achieved if the level of utilization of various resources does not go beyond the regeneration ability of those resources (Amerta et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, the principal aim of sustainable tourism development inter alia is awareness creation and campaign for active locals' involvement in tourism and so, generally, sustainable tourism is characterized by non-excessive use of both natural and socio-cultural resources, involvement of local communities, enhancing both natural and socio-cultural resources for future generations, training locals to be skilled and professional and doing marketing responsibly (Amerta et al., 2018).

Additionally, sustainable tourism must feature constant monitoring of changes occurring due to tourism development (Amerta et al., 2018). The latter characteristic suggests that sustainable tourism just like sustainable development is not a fixed state harmony but a dynamic process of change (Pulido-Fernandez et al., 2015). Sustainable tourism is concerned with proper management of the negative impacts of tourism whiles enhancing the positive outcomes (Mathew & Thankachan, 2019). In terms of impacts, whether small or mass tourism, Jafari (1989, 2001) in his third platform (Adaptancy

platform) of tourism development calls for the adaptation of tourism development models to appropriately suit ecological contexts to minimize negative impacts. Sustainable tourism is now seen as a normative orientation that seeks to re-direct societal organizations and behaviour on a broad and integrated path toward sustainable development (Bramwell, Higham, Lane & Miller, 2017; Ruhanen et al., 2018). While views about sustainable tourism may differ, several broad trends are identified in the literature.

In contemporary times, sustainable tourism is regarded as relevant for all forms of tourism irrespective of whether it is small-scale or large-scale and involves making trade-offs between differing desirable goals rather than a balance among these goals (Bramwell et al., 2017). It is also seen as adaptable in different contexts and changing conditions (Bui, Jones, Weaver & Le, 2020). There is also an emerging call for sustainable tourism researches to concentrate on understanding and altering the attitudes, behaviours, and choices of individual actors (Bramwell et al., 2017; Hall, 2019). Relatedly, some researchers have pointed out that to scale up the sustainable tourism agenda, stakeholders need to examine and change their everyday social practices, along with societal relations and socio-technical structures (Bui et al., 2020). These trends largely converge under one theme; attitude of stakeholders which is the focus of the study.

Nevertheless, tourism operators or managers are found to embrace the concept of sustainable tourism widely (Hall, 2019). Also, studies report that while many operators found the concept to be important, only a few promote sustainable tourism principles and policies at their respective destinations (Maxim, 2015; Mccool, Butler, Buckley, Weaver & Wheeller, 2013). Granted

that it is a lack of understanding, Farsari, Butler and Szivas (2011), called for the examination of how sustainable tourism policies are being implemented at a tourism destination.

However, Waligo, Clarke, and Hawkins (2013) revealed it is difficult to translate ST policies into practice due to the conflicting interests of stakeholders. It is within these contexts that the study seeks to explore visitor attraction managers (VAMs), who are key stakeholders and lead major initiatives at destinations, their perceptions, and behaviours towards ST.

Importantly, how VAMs have been able to employ the concept in their management styles to help reduce poverty, inequality, and climate change which are the crux of SD as well as the SDGs (UN, 2015). For instance, the 17 SDGs came with their associated targets that facilitate and suggest a practical approach to achieving sustainable development (Rasoolimanesh, Ramakrishna, Hall, Esfandiar & Seyfi, 2020). Thus, the SDGs are presented as a core governance strategy which nations are supposed to abide by it while allowing substantial flexibility for smooth implementation at different contexts of the individual countries and institutions (Biermann et al., 2017; Kanie & Biermann, 2017). Essentially, the SDGs reflect the agenda of making the planet sustainable for the human race (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016).

Tourism is one of the areas the SDGs relied upon to tackle poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change, job creation (UN, 2015). Evidence from the UN and UNDP (2017) indicates that the SDGs are a framework that facilitates the promotion and development of sustainable tourism. For instance, SDG 8, target 9 is reflective of the commitment of the SDGs to sustainable tourism; it draws attention to the need for nations and governments

to formulate and implement policies that will put sustainable tourism in the position to create jobs and promote local culture and products (Grilli, Tyllianakis, Luisetti & Ferrini, 2020; UN, 2015). By extension, SDG 14 also iterates the need for sustainable use of the oceans and marine resources (UNWTO, 2015).

Essentially, the SDGs promote sustainable tourism through effective or optimum monitoring and control over the use of natural resources as well as stimulating conservation and preservation efforts, creating sustainable job opportunities for local communities without relegating the local culture and products (Hall, 2019; UNWTO, 2015). To be able to ascertain the achievement of the overall goals of sustainable tourism, there is the need to establish its measurement indicators.

Indicators of Sustainable Tourism (IST)

Attempts to operationalize sustainable tourism have led to the proliferation of a myriad of indicators (Tanguay et al., 2013). These indicators are essential issues necessary for developing a deeper understanding of the concept (Agyeiwah et al., 2017). IST are considered a more practical and cost-effective measurement tools that may be used as early warning signals in planning and management thus, avoiding irreversible tourism effects (Higham, Font & Wu, 2021).

Again, Agyeiwah et al. (2017) argued unlike other issues or phenomena that have limited indicators, sustainable tourism is rather faced with a replete of indicators (Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias, & Vinzón, 2015). For example, the UNWTO (2005) in its guidebook identified 13 indicators of sustainable tourism. These include; issues of climate change,

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natural resources (water, energy, etc.), seasonality, development control, waste management, tourists' satisfaction, economic leakages, and preservation of cultural heritage. Also, Agyeiwah et al. (2017) identified four central indicators of sustainable tourism which are economic, environmental, social, and cultural indicators with three additional peripheral indicators; political, managerial, and technological indicators. Attainment of an optimal mix among these indicators is a necessity for success in sustainable tourism (Moeller, Dolnicar, & Leisch, 2011).

These indicators are further grouped into three domains namely; environmental, socio-cultural, and economic indicators (Dibra & Oeflka, 2013; Agyeiwah et al., 2017). The environmental indicators define the optimal use of environmental resources, and the conservation of biodiversity, and natural heritage (Dibra & Oeflka, 2013). Such indicators encapsulate issues of waste management, environmental awareness, noise pollution, and energy consumption (Agyeiwa et al., 2017). Also, the environmental indicators of sustainable tourism address how the natural resources are exploited, including waste management processes, energy consumption, air, and water quality, as well as the change in land use or land cover (Agyeiwa et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the socio-cultural indicators of sustainable tourism refer to tourism activities being sensitive to the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, the protection and preservation of both material and living cultural heritage as well as traditional values, contribution to intercultural understanding and tolerance, and generation of a better quality of life (Dibra & Oeflka, 2013). These indicators may include maintenance of sites, loss of

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authenticity, as well as retention of local customs, residents' involvement, safety, and security, wellbeing, and quality of life, education, community satisfaction, among other indicators (Agyeiwah et al., 2017).

The economic indicators of sustainable tourism consist of revenues, employment, visitor satisfaction, local ownership in the business, and expenditure (Agyeiwah et al., 2017). Also, the economic indicators of sustainable tourism may include other factors such as the establishment size, job growth, personal income, employment distribution, cost of underemployment, and revenue generated.

It is worth noting that in choosing any indicator of sustainable tourism, one must consider certain critical features such as relevance, simplicity, availability of data to evaluate them, and the feasibility of comparing results over time (Blancas, González, Lozano-Oyola & Pérez, 2010). Nonetheless, choosing a particular set of indicators is somewhat tied or connected to the stakeholders involved. As indicated earlier, because of the different interests of the various stakeholders, it is often difficult to implement certain sustainable tourism principles (Waligo et al., 2013; Muangasame & McKercher, 2015). As such, examining the various stakeholders and their interests is necessary, hence managers being the focus of the study.

Tourism stakeholders and sustainable Tourism

The role of tourism stakeholders in promoting sustainable tourism in any context is underlined in the literature (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Hunter; Hardy & Pearson, 2018). Though each stakeholder's role differs, all hands are required to achieve success. Tourism stakeholders refer to any group or an individual who has an interest and is or can be affected by the outcome of

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tourism operation (Hardy & Pearson, 2017). Different organizations, institutions, or industries all have key players regarded as stakeholders. The tourism industry is not an exclusion. The involvement of stakeholders in tourism and sustainable tourism to be precise has been highlighted in several studies (Hunter, 2013; Hardy & Pearson, 2017).

Conventionally, stakeholders in tourism have been identified to encapsulate tourists, industry, host community, as well as those in regulatory positions (Hardy & Pearson, 2017). The tourists are those visiting and partaking in tourism activities at the destination. They seek high levels of satisfaction while the industry consists of operators providing tourism facilities and resources that generate business opportunities, jobs, income, and foreign exchange through the provision of a variety of tourism services. Generally, operators are profit-oriented and seek long-term growth of their businesses. The host community are the residents at the destination where tourism is undertaken. They are beneficiaries as well as cost bearers of tourism development. Therefore, they are on the look for their well-being and long-term existence of the resources tourism depends on (Rangus et al., 2018).

Lastly, the government is the public sector tourism development agency or those in regulatory positions who ensure that laid down legislations about sustainable tourism are adhered to. These stakeholder groups share different interests; however, each has a responsibility towards sustainable tourism. For instance, Hatipoglu, Alvarez & Ertuna (2016) disclosed the involvement of stakeholders in promoting sustainable tourism is critical in raising the quality and value of tourism development at destinations.

So, irrespective of the type of stakeholder in question, their role and relevance cannot be underestimated (Alonso & Nyanjom, 2017). This is because the attitudes and perceptions of various stakeholders shape and reinforce their positions as to whether to practice and support sustainable tourism or not. Meanwhile, evidence from the literature suggests that with the appropriate management policies and planning, the negative consequences accompanied by tourism will be minimized significantly to promote sustainable tourism (Jayagoda, 2015). This puts management and for that matter managers of attractions at the centre of the sustainable tourism drive; considering that their attitude which embodied their beliefs and perceptions, and behaviours can largely dictate the sustainable management practices advance in respective destinations and this case, visitor attractions. It is established that to achieve a balance among the three dimensions, there is the need for an institutional perspective to manage, mediate and facilitate growth which still places a greater burden on the managers in the sustainability agenda (Cottrell, Huayhuaca, Gradl & Raadik, 2010).

Attitude of VAMs towards sustainable tourism

Attitude is viewed as an inferred psychological process found within one's self unless evoked by a specific phenomenon or object (Antonak & Livneh, 2000). It is largely a product of socialization and tends to explain an individual's relationship with symbols, objects, or even world views (Gecas, 2017). Attitude is considered a tripartite concept consisting of cognitive, affective, and behaviour components (Antonak & Livneh, 2000; Findler, Vilchinsky & Werner, 2007).

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In the context of this study, the cognitive component relates to VAMs' beliefs and perceptions about sustainable tourism. The affective component explains VAMs' feelings or emotional reactions towards the phenomenon. Whereas the behaviour component explains the practices put towards attaining sustainable tourism. Meanwhile whether cognition, affection, and behaviour, VAMs could exhibit positive and negative or neutral evaluation of the phenomenon and in this case, sustainable tourism (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). It also implies that VAMs' attitude towards an object will determine their support or non-support for the phenomenon. However, attitudes are influenced by perception which is a prerequisite for the development of attitude towards a phenomenon (Petty & Brinol, 2010). Generally, these dimensions of attitude have been largely identified in the literature as multi-faceted, subjective, and individualized constructs (Kashif et.al, 2018).

VAMs' understanding of sustainable tourism

In the context of this study, understanding and perceptions of sustainable tourism are used interchangeably. According to McDonald (2012), perception is defined as an individual or group's distinct way of viewing a phenomenon that involves the processing of stimuli and incorporates memories and experiences in the process of understanding a phenomenon. Three components of perception; sensory awareness or cognition of experience, personal experiences, and comprehension are said to serve as a prism for interpreting a phenomenon (McDonald, 2012). Within the context of sustainable tourism, perceptions or understanding about ST are increasingly becoming core to its development (Amuquanqoh, 2010). Again, the success of the ST is attributed somewhat to the understanding of individuals

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specifically stakeholders (tourists, operators, residents, and government) hold about the concept (Abecasis, Schmidt, Longnecker & Clifton, 2013; Imran, Alam & Beaumont, 2014).

In that regard, a plethora of studies revealed positive or favourable perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism amongst stakeholders (Ozturk, Ozer & Çaliskan, 2015; Blacka & Cobbinah, 2018; Harun, Chiciudean, Sirwan, Arion & Muresan, 2018). Contrastingly, evidence also showed negative or unfavourable perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism (Zhu, Zhan & Li, 2021). Admittedly, the majority of these studies are related to residents, tourists, and regulatory institutions. But Blacka and Cobbinah (2018) study was conducted among management staff. Also, the majority of these studies approach the concept by considering stakeholders' degree of favour or disfavour, and/ support or non-support for the concept within the expanse of the people, planet, and profit principles or pillars.

Some studies (Graci & Vliet, 2020) taking the people (socio-cultural dimension); explore stakeholders' perceptions about whether tourism should contribute towards the following indicators; social welfare and dignity, social inclusion, and minimum standards of human rights. With the planet (environment); they consider perceived environmental quality indicators and with profit (the economic dimension); consider the robustness of the business and employment opportunities etc. through a semi-structured interview with stakeholders. Drawing clues from these studies, the current study will employ this approach to measure VAM perceptions about ST through scrutinizing and selecting ST indicators across the three dimensions vis-a-vis the attractions and contexts under consideration. Also, somehow, favourable perceptions

about sustainable tourism do not necessarily translate into practice or adoption of sustainable practices (Budeanu et al., 2016).

Emotional connectedness of VAMs towards the practice of ST

Visitor attraction managers' support for ST may depend on several factors. Previous studies (Ozturk et al., 2015; Blacka & Cobbinah, 2018; Harun et al., 2018) have shown that stakeholders including VAMs' perception of ST impact greatly their support or non-support. Where VAMs' cognitive appraisal of ST can evoke a certain emotional connectedness towards it (Zheng, Ritchie, Benckendorff, & Bao, 2019). Also, being environmentally sensitive shapes the individual attraction manager support or non-support for sustainable tourism practices (Cheng & Wu, 2015). Thus, the affective characteristics of VAMs to perceive the environment with empathy can shape the measures put in place to protect it.

Emotional connectednesses of stakeholders towards tourism development, in general, have received growing attention among tourism scholars. For instance, Hasani, Hamzah & Moghavvemi (2016), have examined the emotional solidarity of stakeholders' attitudes toward tourism development. Their studies revealed shared beliefs, shared behaviours, and interaction as key predictors of emotional solidarity. Where emotional solidarity means VAMs have a welcoming disposition, emotional attachment, and sympathetic understanding of ST (Hasani et al., 2016). In either of these, VAMs' emotional connectedness towards ST can be positive or negative depending on their appraisal of the trade-offs in ST development (Zheng et al., 2019). Meanwhile, positive emotions can be elicited through VAMs' happiness, joy, and readiness to implement ST practices.

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On the other hand, negative emotions are demonstrated through VAMs' aversion, anger, worry, and unwillingness to practice ST. These opposing emotions can engender stronger or weaker links between management outfits and ST practices (Gursoy, Boğan, Dedeoğlu & Çalışkan, 2019). Additionally, words such as favour, appreciation, respect, inner affection, and concern can be used to convey VAMs' emotions towards ST (Cheng & Wu, 2015). The study assumes that if VAMs show respect, appreciation, concern, and care for the environment, the socio-cultural and economic well-being of destinations, they can be said to be emotionally connected to ST and vice versa. As result, this study explores VAMs' emotional connectedness towards ST since their emotions and understanding together predict their attitude towards ST practices or strategies employed at destinations (Gursoy et al., 2019).

Strategies employed by VAMs pursuing sustainable tourism

The practice of ST has led to the emergence of nomenclatures like community-based tourism (CBT), maintainable tourism, ecotourism, alternative tourism (Barbieri, Sotomayor & Gil Arroyo, 2020) and, many others. These nomenclatures suggest the adoption of measures and/ strategies to help minimize the negative consequences of tourism on the environment, socio-cultural and economic frontiers of host communities (Alonso-Almeida, Rocafort, & Borrajo, 2016). Therefore, sustainable tourism strategies or practices are the responsible activities/actions undertaken at destinations to balance the economic, environmental, and social perspectives of tourism (Agyeiwah et al., 2020). These strategies are said to be integrated into

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management plans concerning how tourism, and for that matter, visitor attractions should be operated.

Several sustainable tourism strategies/ practices have been discussed in the literature. Nevertheless, these discussions converged on two themes; eco-innovative practices and corporate social responsibilities. The most discussed strategy however, is the adoption of eco-innovation practices (Buijtendijk, Blom, Vermeer & Van der Duim, 2018; Wu, Ai & Cheng, 2019). According to Mossalanejad (2011, p.396), the concept of Eco-innovations is defined as "a new series of processes and products that should increase value to customers and businesses but with a significant reduction in the impact on the environment and pollution". Also, it involved the introduction of any new product (goods or services), process, organizational change, or marketing solution that reduces the use of the natural resource (material, energy, water, and land) and that decreases the release of harmful substances across the entire life-cycle (OECD, 2013).

From these definitions, it is conspicuous that eco-innovation is a multidimensional concept permeating the three dimensions of ST. It is said to promote both economic and social growth (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2016). It inures sustainable tourism by promoting sustainability awareness at destinations. Among the eco-innovation practices are the use of renewable energies like solar power at visitor attractions, permitting only biodegradable materials or zero use of plastics within premises of visitor attractions, practicing recycling, and reuse of materials. These according to Alonso-Almeida et al., (2016) contribute to sustainability as well as enhance destination competitiveness.

The other significant theme to sustainable tourism strategy is the rendering of corporate social responsibility [CSR] (Han, Jang, Jo, Kim, Roh, Park & Youn, 2015; Chiang, Downing, Huangthanapan & Kang, 2015) also referred to as the tourism social responsibility [TSR] (Paskova ́& Zelenka, 2016). Tourism social responsibility can take several dimensions including; employing or creating job opportunities for locals, empowering locals with both skills and financial resources to participate in the local tourism economy, provision of social amenities (schools, hospitals, drinking water, roads), promotion of locals' culture as well as conservation of those cultures (Paskova & Zelenka, 2018). Others include environmental awareness creation and the need to protect ecological resources, proper waste management systems, and less waste of energy (Su, Huang & Pearce, 2018). These are said to contribute to ensuring both the sustainability and competitiveness of visitor attractions. Managers of visitor attractions can engage in a series of these practices. By so doing, they are said to be meeting the fundamental requirements of sustainable tourism.

However, there is an established link between the nature of visitor attractions and the sort of sustainable practices employed (Zolfani, Sedaghat, Maknoon & Zavadskas, 2015; Dangi & Jamal, 2016). That is, the type of attraction will determine the kind of sustainable activities or strategies to be instituted at a destination. Whiles ecological attractions like forest reserves and national parks may require strategies that will deal with the fragility of ecosystems and biodiversity, waste disposal, water consumption, land use and physical impact and protection of the atmosphere, noise level and visual impact, heritage attractions such as forts and castles may not need the same

strategies (Lim & McAleer, 2003). This makes it necessary to conceptualize visitor attractions.

Visitor Attractions

A clear conceptualization of what constitutes visitor attraction (VA) and the types of VAs are important in defining a focus for the study. This is because different VAs requires different sustainable practices (Lim & McAleer, 2003; Sharpley, 2007). Meanwhile, an agreed universal definition for VA is relatively scarce in the literature. This is partly due to the evolving nature of the concept as well as contextual issues hence, carving a unified definition has been described as difficult (Akyeampong & Asiedu, 2008; Leask, 2016). Nevertheless, some scholars have been tempted to define it. Notable among them include; Hu and Wall (2005).

According to Hu and Wall (2005, p.619), VA is a "permanent resource, either natural or human-made, which is developed and managed for the primary purpose of attracting visitors. On the other hand, VisitEngland (2015) also posits that VAs are those attractions for which visitors can be charged admission for primarily sightseeing. Common to these two definitions is the pull factor. That is, they both are pointing to the ability of anything to pull people away from home. As such, a visitor attraction can be said to be anything; an object or a phenomenon with unique features that draws people from afar to have experience of those features.

To Lew (2017), almost anything can become an attraction, and that, attractions occur in shapes and sizes which do not often lend to classification. According to Connell, Page and Meyer (2015), visitor attractions are also referred to as tourist attractions and they form a central component of leisure

day visits and tourism trips. However, for anything or a place to become an attraction, it must possess the following attributes; a site to be viewed, an image or marker that makes it significant, and a tourist or visitor (Swarbrooke & Page, 2012). Similarly, Leask (2016) argued that, for a place to be considered as a VA, it must have been permanently established as an excursion destination. So, Frempong, Dayour and Bondzi-Simpson (2015), concluded that an attraction must have sufficient quality, authenticity, and uniqueness.

To this end, VAs comes in different dimensions comprising of the built environment, natural environment, and cultural resources or products - festivals and events (Connell et al., 2015). Where the built environment also referred to as man-made attractions are sub-divided into purpose-built; originally designed to attract visitors and not purpose-built; not originally designed for tourists (Swarbrooke & Page, 2012). Meanwhile, visitor attractions come in different forms and types. Generally, the built environment or man-made attractions may include heritage sites (castles, forts, monuments, historic houses), and festivals, and special events. The natural environment or nature-based attractions may also be in ecological sites (forest reserves, aquariums, farms, safari, and zoos) and theme parks or amusement parks (Connell et al., 2015; Leask, 2016).

Notwithstanding the above classifications, visitor attractions have become more complex and fragmented in terms of their form, location, scale, and style (Lew, 2017) with some tending to benefit from others (organic bunching). Therefore, their management must take cognizance of sustainable practices (Weidenfeld & Leask, 2013).

The Central Region of Ghana is endowed with a diversity of visitor attractions ranging from rich cultural festivals or events, wildlife or ecological attractions, and heritage attractions as shown in Table 1. The region is considered the tourism hub of Ghana (Adu-Ampong, 2018). These attractions draw visitors both international and domestic on daily basis except the cultural festivals or events that occur on yearly rounds. Also, the ecological and heritage attractions are well planned with management bodies who receive and manage visitors frequently compared to the cultural festivals or events. It is expected that since these attractions and visitors' activities directly or indirectly have environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts on various sites in the region, therefore management bodies ought to institute sustainable tourism practices. Considering that cultural festivals or events do not occur or attract visitors frequently compared to that of ecological and heritage attractions, this study pays a particular focus on ecological and heritage attractions with a special interest in understanding managers' attitudes and practices towards sustainable tourism.

Table 1: Popular Visitor Attractions in the Central Region of Ghana

Ecological Attractions	Heritage Attractions
Kakum National Park	Cape Coast Castle
International Stingless Bees Centre	Elmina Castle
Hans Cottage Resort	Assin Manso Ancestral Slave Park
	Fort Amsterdam
	Fort St. Jago
	Fort Good Hope
	The 19th Century Dutch Cemetery
	Posuban Shrine Mankessim

Source: Author's Construct, 2021

Barriers to sustainable tourism

Managers may have a positive or favourable attitude towards sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, in their quest to implement such practices, they may be confronted with challenges that could inhibit their efforts thereof. These challenges are termed barriers. According to Weidenfeld & Leask (2013), barriers are considered anything that hinders the progress of a phenomenon. Like any other development phenomenon, the practice of sustainable tourism is not without certain barriers or challenges. Several studies have highlighted the barriers or challenges faced with the practices of sustainable tourism (Hatipoglu, Alvare & Ertuna, 2016; Pan, Gao, Kim, Shah, Pei & Chiang, 2018). Pan et al. (2018) study on barriers recognized that barriers can emanate from the personal level (individual) or organization level.

Further, they revealed that these barriers can be categorized into internal or external to individual or organizational levels. The internal barriers focus mainly on factors under the control of the individual or organization seeking to practice sustainable tourism while the external barriers are associated with the host government of the tourism destination (Budeanu et al. 2016). Among the organizational barriers included; economic priority or over-commercialization (short term economic focus over long term social and environmental concerns); lack of planning (no sustainable tourism plan); lack of stakeholder involvement; lack of integration with regional and national frameworks and policies; lack of political will; lack of coordination among government institutions (political clash) and conflict between developers and residents (Hatipoglu et al., 2016; Yadav, Sahu, Sahoo & Yadav, 2018). On the

personal level, individual attitudes can be a barrier to sustainable tourism development (Adongo et al., 2018).

Graci & Van Vliet (2020), study on stakeholder perceptions towards sustainable tourism revealed barriers to sustainable tourism such as lack of wastewater infrastructure and sewage system, cost of recycling which were attributed to operators, or tourism organizations. In the same study, it was reported that a lack of governmental support and funding added to the barriers. Similarly, the findings of Bowen, Zubair & Altinay (2017) added a lack of coordinated tourism planning to the barriers to sustainable tourism. A study conducted in Ghana on operators' attitudes towards sustainable tourism (Okeiyi, Okrah, Okeiyi & Bryant, 2005) also identified cost and expertise as key barriers to the successful implementation of sustainable tourism.

Resultantly, Waligo et al. (2013), conclude that these barriers inhibit operators especially visitor attraction managers from undertaking sustainable tourism even if they are willing. Building on the knowledge of the above barriers, this study explored some of the barriers confronting VAMs' quest to practice sustainable tourism in the Central Region particularly among ecological and heritage attraction managers.

Empirical Review of the Impacts of Tourism

Studies about tourism impacts are largely skewed to the destination because destinations are the receiving end of all tourism activities (Postma & Schmuecker, 2017). In terms of the destination, tourism influence the local economy, environment, and local culture (Chang, 2018). Meaning that tourism impacts on destinations are spread across three domains namely; environment, socio-cultural and economic. This empirical review, therefore, is carried out

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along these domains considering the positive and negative impacts accruing from tourism.

Regarding environmental impacts; using the time-varying coefficient and time-varying cointegration approach (TVC), Mikayilov et al., (2019) revealed that tourism has a positive impact on the preservation of ecological species. Similarly, Hsieh & Kung (2013) in a qualitative study revealed tourism contributes to the creation of parks in Malaysia which ensures the protection of endangered species. In contrast, Katircioglu, Gokmenoglu & Eren (2018) revealed in a study of the top 10 most visited islands that tourism induces a negative impact on the environment's quality. Ehigiamusoe (2020) employed Pedroni, Johansen-Fisher, and Westerlund's panel cointegration tests to examine the cointegration relationship between tourism and environmental degradation among 31 African countries. The study revealed tourism, in the long run, causes environmental degradation such as destruction of ecology. Law, Li, Fong & Han (2019) studied Wuyishan National Nature Reserve and revealed tourism activities at parks interfere negatively with the vegetative landscape. Using Environmental Kuznets Curve hypothesis, Akadiri, Akadiri, and Alola (2019) found that international arrivals lead to an increase in CO_2 emission in selected islands in the Caribbean.

With socio-cultural impacts, Castela (2018) through interviews and observation of host-guest interaction at Alfama, Lisbon disclosed a positive impact of guest interactions on host social activities and recommended the need to adjust the city towards tourist demands. Similar results are found by Kidane and Berhe (2017) in a study in Ethiopia. Relatedly, Belew (2017) using a mixed-method approach in a study in Ethiopia disclosed tourism

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contributes to social cohesion, new language, and inter-cultural fusion. Yahaya, Yakubu, Katumi & Abu-jajah (2017) through a mixed-method approach investigated tourism impacts on Wechiau community members in Ghana. The study revealed tourism contributes to the preservation of culture and exchange of cultural values. However, Zhuang, Yao, and Li (2019) through a participatory in-depth interview, revealed tourism severely causes changes in the moral values of locals.

Meanwhile, economically, Yahaya et al. (2017), through a mixed-method approach unearthed tourism leads to an increase in the prices of goods at Wechiau community in the Upper West Region of Ghana. However, Mikayilov et al. (2019) also in a mixed-method approach found that the positive economic impacts of tourism far outweigh the negative impacts. Using a concurrent triangulation mixed-method, Bello (2021) found that tourism provides jobs, improves personal incomes, stimulates the local economy, and improves security in Mangochi, Malawi. Similarly, Yahaya et al., (2017) also found that the development of infrastructure and the increase in employment opportunities are some positive economic impacts of tourism in Wechiau community.

Within these diametrically opposing impacts of tourism, the quest of ST is to minimize the negative impacts and promote the positive impacts for long-term benefits. The reason why this study is set out to explore VAMs' attitude towards the ST practices at selected attractions in Ghana.

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Theoretical Review

Tri-component Attitude Model

The relationship between attitude and behaviour has been explained differently by Tourism scholars. Amongst the most known and basic models devised for the measurement of attitude is the Tri-Component Attitude Model. Thus, this model is adopted for this study mainly because it is embodied with pertinent principles that directly relate to the objectives of the study. The Tri-component Attitude model is also known as the Cognitive-Affective-Conative model (CAC) was propounded by Rosenberg & Hovland (1960). The Tri-Component Attitude Model proposes that attitude can be seen as a tripartite concept encapsulating three main components: cognitive, affective, and conative responses. This model suggests an appropriate structure for the holistic assessment of attitude (Amin, Hashim, Mahadi, Ibrahim & Ismail, 2017; Blackwell, Snyder & Mavriplis, 2009). Moreover, these components are entwined such that if one changes, the possibility of the others changing is a must (Garcia-Santillan, Moreno-Garcia, Carlos-Castro, Zamudio-Abdala & Garduno-Trejo, 2012).

The cognitive component of an attitude captures an individual's knowledge and perceptions (beliefs) about an object or subject and its characteristics. This component is everything information and knowledge an individual has of the object or subject. The cognitive component of an individual's attitude which is the perceptions and knowledge is acquired from the combination of direct experiences with the attitude-object and related information from other sources (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). This cognition usually takes the form of beliefs about the object or subject which makes an

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individual believe that the attitude-object possesses various attributes, and that specific behaviour will lead to specific outcomes. In the context of this study, the cognitive component refers to visitor attraction managers' understanding of sustainable tourism.

The affective component of attitude focuses on an individual's emotions towards a specific object or subject. Simply, how an individual feels about an object or subject whether positive, neutral, or negative reflects the affective component of attitude. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) argued that the affective component is the dominant antecedent that determines the overall assessment of attitude in terms of favourableness rating. That is, it is the most communicated when an individual is asked to express his or her attitude towards a specific object. Moreover, this rating could be like or dislike for a specific object or subject. This component also tends to affect an individual's choice.

The conative component is the last component of the tri-component attitude model. This component refers to the behavioural tendencies towards a specific object or subject. The conative component is usually the visible outcome or evidence of an attitude. Thus, it is extremely characterized by the actions of the individual about an object or subject. These actions are seen because of an individual's cognitive and affective components interacting with a particular object or subject.

The tri-component attitude model assumes that individuals' thoughts, emotions, and actions are intertwined in a way that they feel, think and act in a much-coordinated manner. However, this model has been criticized for the inconsistency of the conative component with the affective and cognitive

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components. Some scholars argued that an individual's behaviour does not always reflect his or her attitude therefore, the affective and cognitive are only evident. Other studies have also established inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviour. Most are of the view that an individual's attitudes and behaviour are not always consistent and may sometimes be unrelated (Ajzen, 2013). Below is a diagrammatic presentation of the tri- component attitude model.
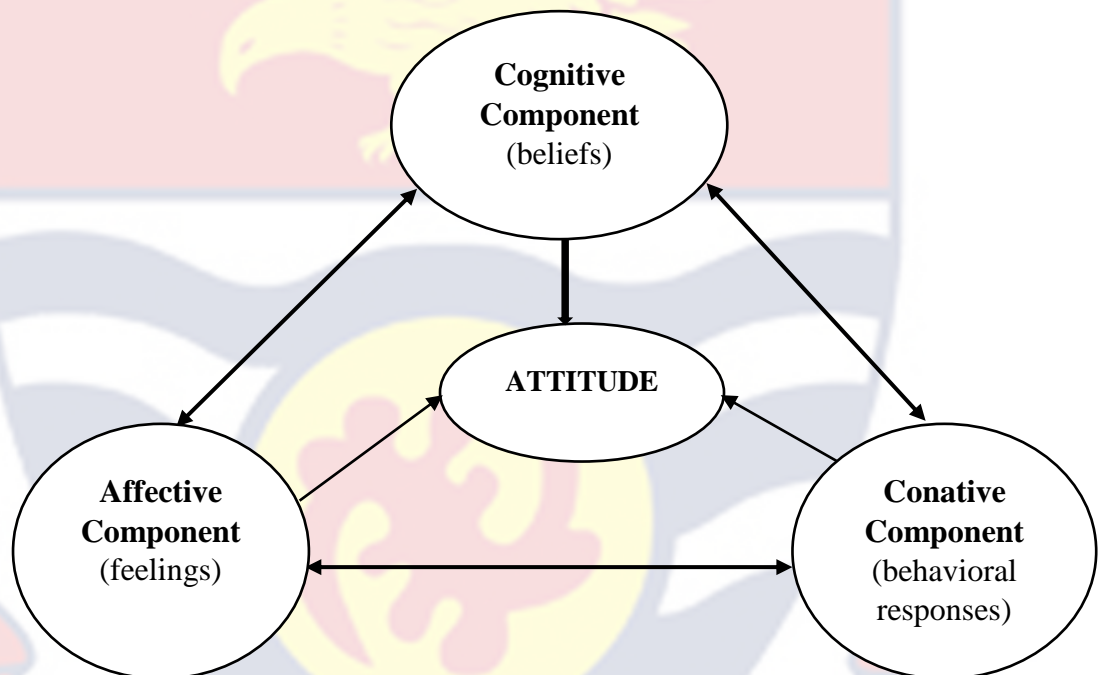
Figure 1: Tri-Component Attitude Model
Source: Shiffman & Kanuk (2004)

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (figure 2) for this study is an adaptation of the Tri-component attitude model by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004). The Tri-component attitude model explains that attitude is measured by considering three components namely; cognitive, affective, and conative. These three components are related such that, the cognitive shape the affective, whereas the affective shape the conative (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).

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From Figure 2, the outcome variable in the framework is the attitude towards Sustainable Tourism. Meanwhile, attitude towards ST is determined by the individual visitor attraction manager's understanding, emotional connectedness, and the strategies employed in pursuing ST. Moreover, the type of attraction (ecological or heritage) that VAMs manage may shape their understanding towards the concept (Zolfani et al., 2015). From the framework, visitor attraction managers' understanding involves their information or knowledge, and direct experiences about ST. These form the basis of VAMs' understanding towards ST which intends shape their emotions. Emotional connectedness captured VAMs' feeling of connection towards ST. This conveys VAMs' likes or dislikes, concern or non-concern for ST which resultantly may reflect in the strategies employed. Strategies, on the other hand, are largely the actual activities or actions carried out by VAMs towards ST. These strategies reveal much evidence of VAMs' attitude towards ST.

Nevertheless, in VAMs' quest to pursue ST, certain barriers may be encountered which can moderate ST strategies. These barriers impede visitor attraction managers' ability to employ strategies to pursue ST. Overall, attitude towards ST is determined by VAMs understanding, emotional connectedness, and the strategies employed to pursue the concept as indicated in the framework.

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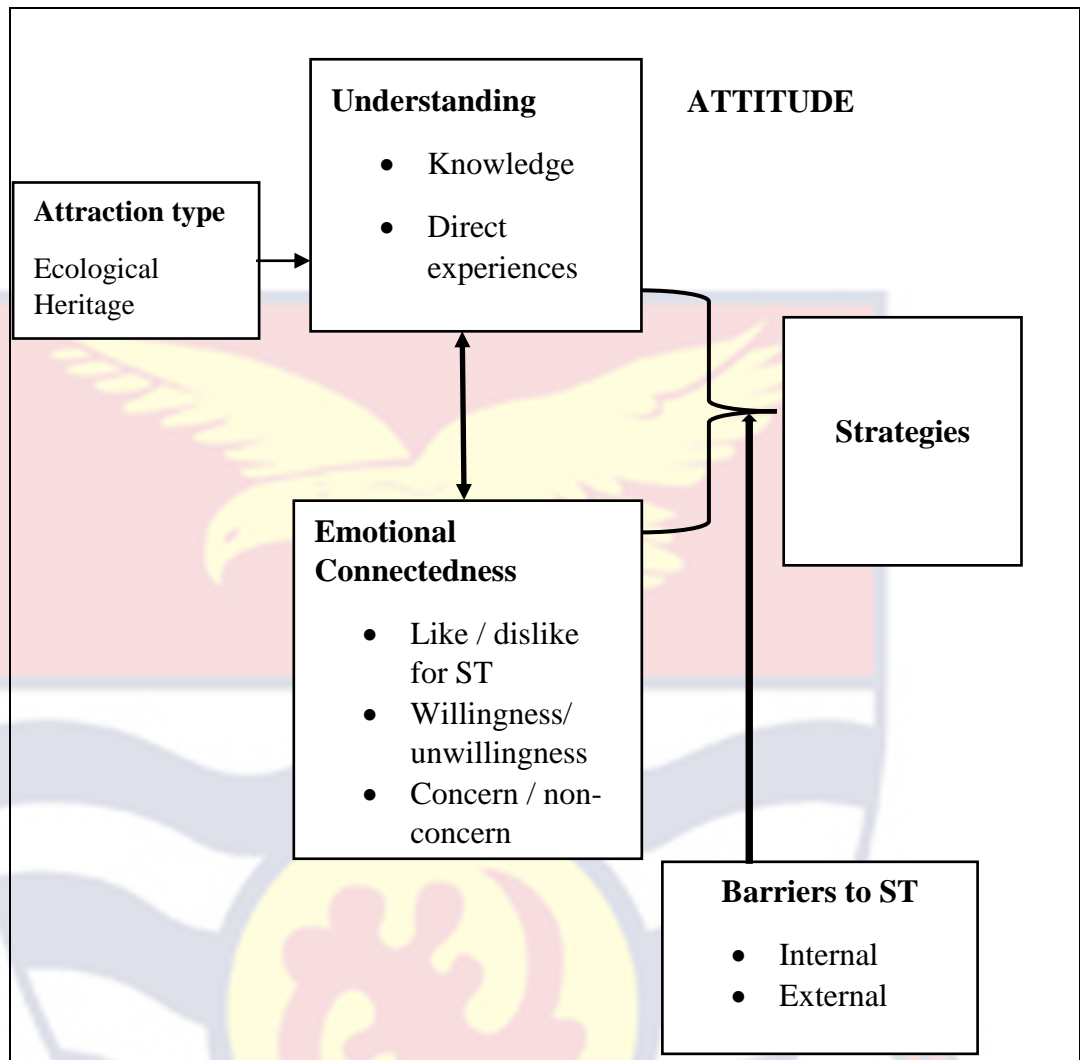
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework
Source: Adapted from Schiffman and Kanuk (2004)

Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed literature related to attitude of VAMs towards sustainable tourism. The issues covered in this chapter included the concept of tourism, tourism development in Ghana, the concept of sustainable development, the concept of sustainable tourism, and the concept of attitude. Other issues included the understanding of VAM towards sustainable tourism, emotional connectedness of VAMs towards sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism strategies, and barriers to practicing sustainable tourism. Again, the chapter discussed pertinent theories that provide ideological focus to the study

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and finally concluded by presenting the conceptual framework underlying the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The chapter presented the research methodology that was adopted for the study. It outlined the following: philosophical issues, research design, study area, target population, sampling, and sampling procedures. It also covered the data sources, research instrument, fieldwork, and data collection, data processing and analysis, and ethical considerations.

Research Philosophy

The study is grounded within the context of Interpretivisim. This philosophy investigates a phenomenon within the context of real life and as such holds that reality is constructed by the individual. The philosophy holds that the best way to arrive at the truth is by paying attention to the individual thoughts or ideas (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). It also added that knowledge is subjective and acquiring it involves exploring the individual experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This philosophical orientation is adopted because its key constructs - attitudes and strategies towards ST are largely a function of the individual's views, beliefs and ideas about a phenomenon (Baškarada, & Koronios, 2018). In other words, visitor attraction managers' views, beliefs, and perceptions of sustainable tourism can influence their attitudes and practices towards the phenomenon.

Research Design

Agreeing with the research philosophy (Interpretivisim) and the qualitative research approach guiding the study, phenomenology was adopted

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in this study. The phenomenology design according to Van Manen (2016) captures and describes lived experiences of individuals concerning a particular phenomenon. It also involves reducing and explaining lived experiences of participants under a common theme. The phenomenology design was considered appropriate because the design enabled the exploration of contextual issues regarding sustainable tourism in the view of visitor attraction managers in the Central Region, Ghana.

Study Area

This study was conducted within the Central Region of Ghana. The region is situated on the coast of Ghana stretching about 168 kilometers along the Gulf of Guinea. With a population of 2,859,821 (GSS, 2021), the region covers 9,826 square kilometers of land and shares borders with Western, Greater Accra, Ashanti, and Eastern regions.

Traditionally, fishing and trading activities are considered important means for those living in the region. Cape Coast is the capital city of the central region. The region is popularly regarded as the hub of tourism in Ghana due to the many attractions and tourist facilities available in the region. Attractions include the famous Kakum National Park, Cape Coast Castle, Elmina Castle, Assin Manso Ancestral Slave Park, Fort Amsterdam, International Stingless Bee Centre, Monkey Forest Resort, Fort St. Jago, Fort Good Hope and others.

Central Region was chosen as the study area because, the region provides a unique study environment for two main reasons: first, it receives the highest influx of tourists to Ghana (GTA, 2019; Adu-Ampong, 2018). Thus, the region tends to be the most visited destination in Ghana. Second, it

is currently named Ghana's tourism hub (Imbeah, & Bujdoso, 2018). That is, the region is home to major tourist attractions including historical, ecological, and cultural attractions. Hence, the region has numerous attractions, implying that there will be several visitor attraction managers as well. It is also, imperative to note that, the sustainability of these attractions is paramount to the success and viability of tourism in the region as well as Ghana. For these reasons, the region was deemed suitable for the study.

Specifically, the study was conducted at the following visitor attractions; Cape Coast Castle, Elmina Castle, Fort Williams, Assin Manso Slave Park, Kakum National Park, International Stingless Bee Centre, and Hans Cottage Resort. These attractions were specifically selected because they are the functional attractions in the region. Out of these attractions, three (3) are ecological attractions while four (4) are heritage attractions. Because of their functionality, it is assumed that these attractions will have sustainable tourism strategies or policies, the reason for their selection.
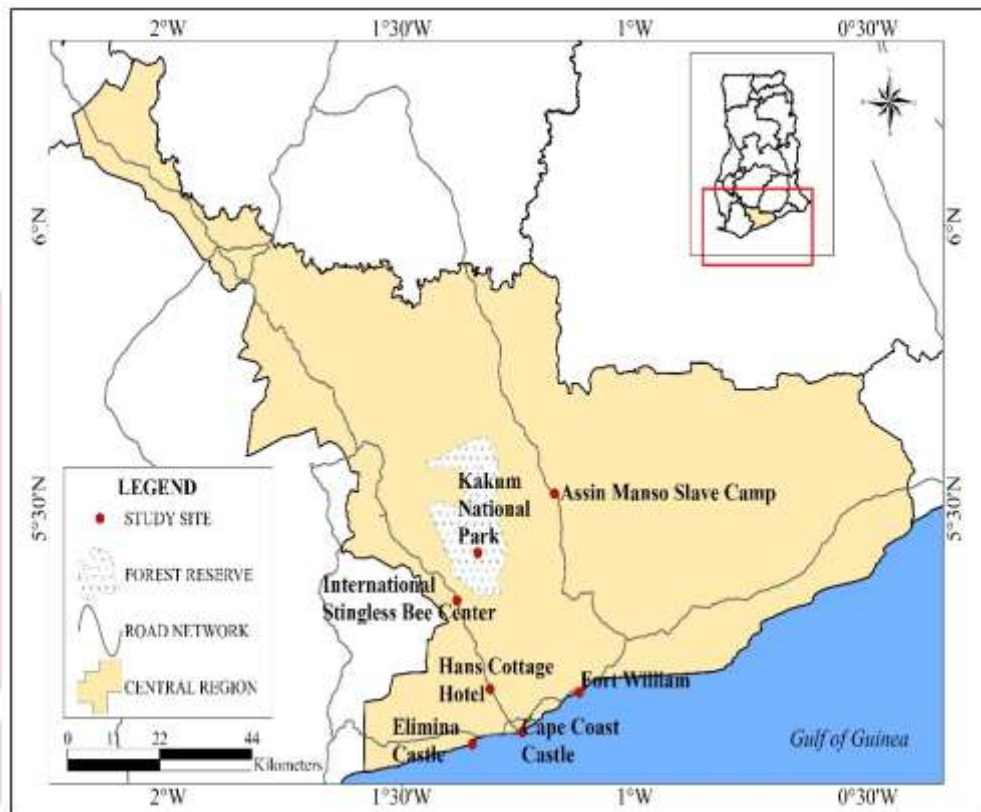
Figure 3: Map of all Attractions involved in the Study
Source: GIS Remote Sensing and Cartography Unit, University of Cape Coast, 2021.

Target Population

The target population are managers of visitor attractions. Managers were selected because they are lead initiators and a part of decision-makers of every activity carried out at the attractions including sustainable measures. Also, they are regarded as gatekeepers of the attractions and implementers of the policy, hence the suitable people to enquire from about the strategies employed towards sustainable tourism. Lastly, their attitude is said to have the potential of influencing all other activities including the practices of sustainable tourism at the attractions.

Sampling Technique and Size

The study adopted the census technique. This sampling technique considers all within the population. The technique is appropriate due to the

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fewness of the target group. An engagement with the Ghana Tourism Authority and Central Regional Coordinating Council revealed that, there are twenty-three (23) visitor attractions in total within the Central Region. However, only seven (7) were functional in terms of operation with proper management at the time of data collection which was stated verbally by an officer at the Central Regional office of the GTA. Moreover, each visitor attraction site had one manager. Therefore, accounting for the use of seven (7) visitor attraction managers as sample size for the study. Attached is a list of all 23 attractions with it corresponding state (functional or non-functional attractions).

Table 2: List of Functions and Non- Functional Attractions

Functional Attractions	Non- Functional Attractions
Kakum National Park	Fort St. Jago
International Stingless Bees Centre	Fort Victoria
Hans Cottage Resort	Fort Vredenburg
Cape Coast Castle	Fort Coenrandburg
Elmina Castle	Fort Amsterdam
Fort Williams	Fort Good Hope
Assin Manso Slave River	Fort Lisdzaamhied
	Eguafo-Dunpow Eco – Heritage Site
	Gold Coast Military Cemetery
	The 19th Century Dutch Cemetery
	Ceremic Pottery
	Posuban Shrine
	The Fisherman's Market
	Ostrich Farm
	Muni-Pomadze Site
	Brenu Beach

Source: Central Regional Coordinating Council and GTA, 2021.

Data Source

Primary data was solely used for this study. Data were obtained from the interviews with visitor attraction managers.

Research Instrument

The study used an in-depth interview guide for data collection. This instrument was in line with the Interpretivisim philosophy, qualitative research approach, and the data collection methods underpinning the study. The instrument was developed based on the aim of the study as well as its research questions. The interview guide was designed and administered in English.

This guide was segmented into five modules. Module 1 focused on the background characteristics of the participants (socio-demographic characteristics) and attraction characteristics. Module 2 solicited visitor attraction managers' perceptions about sustainable tourism. Module 3 was concerned with visitor attraction managers' emotional attachment towards sustainable tourism. Module 4 captured sustainable tourism practices undertaken by visitor attraction managers. The last Module focused on the barriers to the practice of sustainable tourism by visitor attraction managers. This instrument was appropriate for usage as it allows open-ended responses from participants for more in-depth information. Again, the instrument encouraged two-way communication which allowed participants to open up and contribute freely to issues under discussion.

Expert Review of Instrument

An expert review of the instrument was carried out on the 29th and 30th of June, 2021 using three Tourism experts specifically two from academia and one from the industry. The instrument was critically reviewed to ensure clarity

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of questions as well as content validity before it was sent to the field. For instance, it was realized that certain questions were unclear and could not solicit the needed information to achieve the study's objective. Those questions were rephrased. Also, some questions were added to ensure that the instrument was comprehensive to enable the study to achieve its aim.

Fieldwork / Data Collection Procedure

The data collection commenced from July 12th to August 13th, 2021. Letters of permission to conduct the study were sent to the attractions. Thereafter, phone calls were placed to book an appointment with managers. The objective of the study was explained to every interviewee. The researcher sought each interviewee's verbal consent and a time mutually fixed for the actual interview. The instrument guided the conversation with managers. All conversations were audio-recorded with a tape recorder. The researcher also recorded personal observation in a notepad. These included significant gestures and cues made by the participants. Also, the researcher guided the conversation to avoid going off the themes being explored. Each interview lasted a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of 70 minutes. There were no refusals or dropouts from the study.

Data processing and Data analysis

The data processing began right after every interview ended. The study analysed the data manually because this method of analysis allows the researcher to capture certain contextual and non-verbal communication cues (Sarantakos, 2012). Specifically, the researcher used both deductive and inductive content techniques in analysing the data. The inductive technique allowed themes to emerge from the data and was applied in the case of

objectives 1, 2, and 4. The deductive technique on the other hand allowed the formation of themes based on previous studies or theory and was also applied in the case of objective 3.

The data was transcribed verbatim. The researcher went over the recorded audio several times before printing out the transcripts to eliminate errors and to guarantee the authenticity of the transcripts. The researcher read through the transcripts thrice to familiarize herself with the data before proceeding to code. A three-way coding format; open coding, creating categories, and creating themes as laid by Elo and Kyngas (2007) was adopted. At the open coding stage, the researcher generated codes by assigning labels or phrases to texts/statements that were of interest to the anchor variable (objective). A list of these codes was later collected and regrouped under higher-order headings (categories) based on similarities and dissimilarities. Lastly, the researcher synthesized these categories and formed themes based on the content characteristics of various elements under each category.

The inter-coding technique was adopted to check the validity of codes. Here one code from one transcript was compared to another code from another transcript on the same theme to check whether participants were talking about something similar or not. Under each objective, an iterative coding was conducted to also ensure the validity of codes. The iterative coding process for objective 1 produced 50 codes which were further categorized into 7 sub-themes. Out of these sub-themes, yielded 2 themes namely; understanding of ST and source of knowledge about ST. Under objective 2, 46 codes emerged which were grouped into 2 themes precisely; personal level and business level.

Objective 3 brought forth 92 codes after the iterative coding. These codes were then categorized under 9 sub-themes and finally emerged 3 themes; economic, environmental, and socio-cultural strategies. Lastly, under objective 3, 35 codes were grouped into 2 themes; internal and external barriers.

Ethical issues

The researcher ensured that all participants were informed about the objectives of the research for them to make an informed choice to voluntarily participate in the study. Also, participants were guaranteed that they have the right to decide to not partake or refuse to answer certain questions although they were encouraged to be participatory.

Furthermore, the researcher also ensured that the real names of the participants do not appear in any of the documents. Additionally, the recorded audio data was encrypted with a password as a means of eliminating the potential of unauthorized access to the data and also protecting the anonymity of the participants. The confidentiality of all participants was also duly assured in this study.

Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the research methodology deployed for the study. Issues discussed included the study area in terms of its importance to the study. The target population as well as the sample size for the study and the sampling technique that was used in getting respondents were also discussed. The research instrument that guided the study, was also described. The ending part of the chapter looked at data processing and analysis techniques together with ethical considerations.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussions of the study. The main issues covered are the background characteristics of participants, perceptions, and emotional attachment of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism. Finally, the chapter looked at visitor attraction managers' sustainable tourism practices and the barriers they are faced with.

Background Characteristics of Participants

Table 3 represents the background characteristics of Visitor Attraction Managers (VAMs) who participated in the study. They were seven in all and the background features that were captured included gender, age, level of education, and work experience. Six of the managers were males and one was a female.

Also, five of the VAMs had master's degrees whereas two had first degrees. Lastly, three of the VAMs were within the age range of 31-40 and two in the age range of 41-50. One person fell within the age group 30 and below, and 50 and above respectively. This indicates that almost all the VAMs were in their youth and mid ages. In addition, five of the participants had less than 5 years of managerial work experience while the remaining two had 5 and 10-years' work experience, respectively. Their years of managerial experience may have a reflection on the sort of ST programmes and strategies put in place by such managers.

Table 3: Background Characteristics of Participants

Socio-demographic	Frequency
Gender	
Male	6
Female	1
Age	
≤ 30	1
31-40	3
41-50	2
51+	1
Level of Education	
First degree	2
Masters	5
Managerial Work Experience	
Less than 5years	5
More than 5years	1
10+	1

Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Characteristics of Attractions involved in the Study

There were seven attractions in all for the study. Three were ecological attractions while four were heritage attractions. Accordingly, ecological and heritage attractions are the two major types of attractions in the central region with each having a unique setting and resource used as attraction. The ecological attractions constituted forest reserves and water bodies while the heritage attractions were mostly castles and forts. Moreover, the unique characteristics of these attractions may shape how the various VAMs understand the concept of sustainable tourism as well as their emotional connectedness to the practice of sustainable tourism.

Understanding of VAMs towards Sustainable Tourism

The in-depth interviews revealed contextual opinions regarding how visitor attraction managers of both ecological and heritage attractions understood sustainable tourism. Their opinions were categorized into two. First, VAMs' views about ST and secondly, VAMs' source of knowledge about ST. VAMs' views painted a picture of their appreciation of the concept of sustainable tourism (ST) while the source of knowledge conveyed what influence their views and/ understanding about ST.

VAMs' Views about Sustainable Tourism

Participants were asked to explain their views about the concept of ST. Their definitions revealed that they conceptualized ST around four key themes namely; business continuity, protection of the environment, cultural preservation, and community benefits. These themes are presented as:

Business continuity

The first theme that emerged from the definitions was that of business continuity. As the ensuing narratives demonstrate, the VAMs viewed ST as a way of ensuring the continuity of the sites they operate. According to them, this is achieved through the policies and plans that are put in place. Generally, there were three dimensions to this; ensuring site relevance, growth, and benefit to people as captured in the following quotes.

> *Sustainable tourism involves the policies and activities that*
> *are put in place to make sure a tourist site stays relevant,*
> *continues to grow, and stays dynamic so that people can still*
> *benefit from it being available. For instance, the things we do*
> *and the policies we put in place here are what make our*

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attraction site continue to grow for these past 26 years. So,

for me, sustainable tourism is about continuation, progress,

and movement in the right direction; positively not being

stagnant, making sure that you have policies that don't make

you fade out so that you are always relevant in an industry…

Without sustainability, there will be no attraction site in the

long run for people to benefit from.

[A 34year-old- male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

…if we don't sustain the site, then we will be out of business.

So, sustainable tourism means making the tourism business

exist, grow, employ, make an impact in the community and to

the benefit of the organization (business) itself.

[A 45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years' experience]

The above quotes convey the views of VAMs on sustainable tourism. As explicitly stated, VAMs described sustainable tourism to mean staying relevant as a tourism business, growing as a business, and particularly, being beneficial to the organization (management) and the immediate community where the business (attraction) is located. Where 'beneficial to the organization and the immediate community suggest profit and income generation as well as job. To achieve these, however, VAMs explained that there must be conscious policies, plans, and practices relative to sustainability. Meaning that before an attraction can be sustained for a long period, VAMs have to institute certain policies and strategies. These views of VAMs portray they have some knowledge about the concept of sustainability. For example, Edgell (2019) highlighted the important role of policy in sustainable tourism

drive and how a policy from both national and organizational levels could push ST initiatives

Protection of the environment

VAMs further viewed sustainable tourism as having to do with protecting the environment which is somewhat right. One of the dimensions of sustainable tourism is the environmental dimension (Amerta & Bagiada, 2018) and VAMs of both ecological and heritage attractions narrated that, almost everything concerning tourism is environment-related. They added that for the attractions to exist, it is essential to protect the environment. Thus, sustainable tourism reinforces environmental protection. This is captured in the following statements;

> *Sustainable tourism and the environment work hand in hand. Everything with tourism is also environmentally related. Most of the attraction sites depend on the environment. So, to sustain tourism, we must sustain the environment. My Park for instance without it doing what it does, would have had a very adverse effect on the environment. I can say my Park is recording the highest rainfall because of the forest being available. Now, if we were not sustaining the resources we have, then this rainfall pattern wouldn't have happened. So, we are looking at sustainable tourism coming into play to reinforce the environment. Then again, our core mandate of protection and conservation will not cease.*

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

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> *Tourism itself protects the environment so practicing tourism sustainably implies creating more room to protect the environment. We deal with the natural environment as our prime attraction. So, for our activity to exist we need to protect the environment. This place has been here since 1992 with this same water body. Regardless of our experiences of dry seasons, we are still rearing crocodiles here. One will think how do these creatures survive? Or even think that after so many years the crocodiles should have been dead. But because they are essential to our business, we take every step to make sure the water body exists. Hence, their survival.*
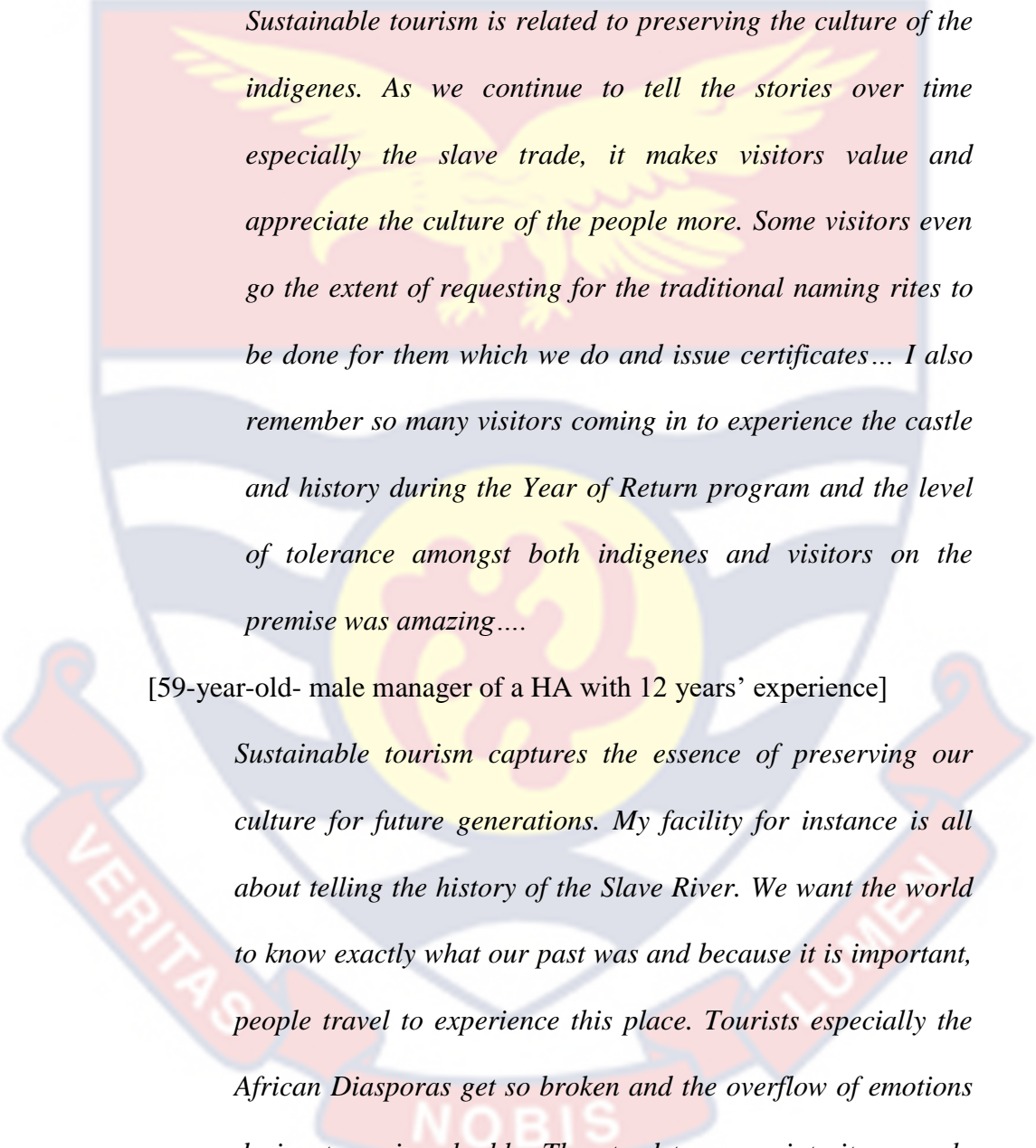
[34-year-old female of an EA with 7 years' experience]

Explicit in the above quotes is an appreciable view about ST by the VAMs. A critical examination of the quotes indicates that VAMs understand and appreciate the relationship between ST and the environment. Judging from the fact that they claimed tourism moves hand-in-hand with the environment which is fairly true (Sudini, & Sujana, 2019). This indeed could be a starting point to pursuing sustainable tourism strategies that are environmentally inclined.

Cultural preservation

Some VAMs expressed their views about ST in the light of cultural preservation. One important dimension of sustainable tourism is the culture dimension (Nugraheni et al., 2020). Thus, tourism activities at the destination should contribute to preserving and conserving the culture of the people. In seeking VAMs' views about ST from the interviews, they explained that if

they maintain their operations particularly in respect to heritage attractions over time thus, as the stories are being told about the historical past of the people, it will make visitors come to value the culture of the indigenes. This is captured in the quote below.

> *Sustainable tourism is related to preserving the culture of the indigenes. As we continue to tell the stories over time especially the slave trade, it makes visitors value and appreciate the culture of the people more. Some visitors even go the extent of requesting for the traditional naming rites to be done for them which we do and issue certificates… I also remember so many visitors coming in to experience the castle and history during the Year of Return program and the level of tolerance amongst both indigenes and visitors on the premise was amazing….*

[59-year-old- male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

> *Sustainable tourism captures the essence of preserving our culture for future generations. My facility for instance is all about telling the history of the Slave River. We want the world to know exactly what our past was and because it is important, people travel to experience this place. Tourists especially the African Diasporas get so broken and the overflow of emotions during tours is valuable. They tend to appreciate it so much. Some pray, do rituals….*

[34-year-old-male manager of a HA with 4 years' experience]

Community benefit

Sustainable tourism has three pillars as its foundational guidelines in terms of its practice (Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas, & Simanavicius, 2021). One of such pillars is tourism businesses being people-centred. Interestingly, from the interaction with VAMs, they seem to share this view and even went further to cite theoretical and practical examples. They described that offering support to the immediate communities and creating opportunities for them to benefit from the attractions contribute to the existence of the attractions. The general view was that communities form an integral part of their operations by way of contributing to the protection of the attractions and therefore need to enjoy some benefits as captured in the quote below.

> *Most tourism attractions have a link with the communities where they operate. Sustainable tourism as I explained suggests we make sure these communities benefit from our operations. If we talk about economic activities, people try to station their operations closer to our tourism facilities and it is realized that most economic activities happen around tourism facilities. Then again, we give support to these communities through social interventions which is the right thing to do. This makes the communities feel responsible for protecting the attraction.*

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

> *Sustainable tourism has to do with the community benefiting from the operation of the attractions. For example, the Elmina*

Township benefits from this site as they are allowed to sell around the facility to earn a living. Also, the chiefs are given some monies from what we generate here which normally are used to construct facilities such as a library and also engage in other activities for the community. This makes the community see the value and need to keep the site in place. Now, the community is even helping to prevent sand winning and defecating around the castle area.

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

The above quotes clearly explain the views of VAMs towards ST. These quotes reflect that VAMs have a clear view of the concept of sustainable tourism based on the fact that VAMs of both heritage and ecological attractions think allowing community members to sell closer to attractions and supporting through social interventions is the right thing to do. Overall, it can be described that VAMs views about ST are clear considering the convergence of their views as a phenomenon that is linked to business continuity, protection of the environment, cultural preservation, and community benefits. These views of VAMs are in line with the universal definition of ST given by the UNWTO (2005) as *"any tourism that takes into full account its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communitie*s".

Source of knowledge about sustainable tourism

The study also sought to find out the participants' source of knowledge on ST. This was necessary because according to Niedenthal & Showers

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(2020), the knowledge or information source can influence one's view about a phenomenon. Participants were asked how they came to know about ST and results show that VAMS derived their knowledge about the subject from three key sources including; formal and informal sources, and experience from the practice of ST. It was realized that these sources impacted VAMs' understanding of ST hence, their fair appreciation of the concept.

Formal source

It was revealed that VAMs have obtained knowledge/information about sustainable tourism from formal education, training, workshops, and seminars which may have contributed to the observed view held about ST. This is embedded in the following quotes

I read tourism management at the University and issues of sustainable tourism were taught….

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

…. I was at a forum three months ago with different people from all over the world. People came in with lots of papers and documents to talk about sustainable tourism, which was the key issue. There were even government officials and chiefs from these communities where tourism takes place and for me, it went well….

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3years' experience]

Recently, we had this short training course at UCC organized by the French embassy and it was about sustainable tourism.

[34-year-male manager of a HA with 4years' experience]

Judging from the above quotes, it could be said that VAMs of both attractions are somewhat informed about sustainable tourism considering the sources from which they got to know about ST. The above quotes may have contributed to the VAMs' conceptual explanation of ST as observed earlier. This suggests they have a clear view as far as sustainable tourism is concerned.

Informal knowledge

Unlike formal knowledge, informal knowledge is not acquired from formal institutions and may not exist in written forms (Tisza et al., 2020). Informal knowledge is largely self-learned from diverse platforms including feedbacks, social media (Nisar, Prabhakar, & Strakova, 2019). As a result, participants also revealed through the in-depth interviews that they obtained informal knowledge about ST through and personal reading from websites, journals, and social media platforms as captured in the following statements.

> *I read a lot from journals and UNWTO's website. The UNWTO*
>
> *has mentioned over and over the agenda of being sustainable.*

[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years of experience]

> *I read a lot personally from Twitter and Instagram and tour*
>
> *sites too. Also, I am on a platform with colleagues who are*
>
> *tourism practitioners in Kenya, South Africa where we interact*
>
> *or share ideas on issues of sustainability.*

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years of experience]

The above quotes signify that VAMs did not only learn about ST at school, they also undertake personal research about the concept including peer influence. Thus, they learn from what is done elsewhere by colleague

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managers regarding sustainable tourism. The fact that VAMs take personal efforts to read about the ST means they appreciate the concept of sustainable tourism. This together with the formal knowledge undoubtedly show, VAMs have a clear view of the concept.

Experiences from practicing sustainable tourism

Lastly, on the source of knowledge about ST, participants disclosed that through the practice of ST, they have appreciated it better and therefore hold a clearer view about it. This is explained in the quote below.

I guess by virtue of working with this facility. Being in this industry has opened up a better understanding and appreciation of the sustainable tourism. My site is an ecological site so practicing tourism sustainably is prime.

[34-year-old female manager of an EA with 7years experience]

The above quote explains the link between experience and understanding and how practicing sustainable tourism has influenced how VAMs view the concept. Considering the views of VAMs which reflected the different dimensions of sustainable tourism and their sources of knowledge as presented above, it suffices to say that VAMs have some understanding of sustainable tourism. VAMs general view was that sustainable tourism is an important concept that is relevant to the survival of attractions, environment, culture and communities were tourism exist. Moreover, these understanding of VAMs across the different attraction types were similar. In order words, the understanding of sustainable tourism did not differ regardless of the attraction type of VAMs. It was also learned that the concept is viewed as a shared responsibility that can be achieved especially when attraction managements

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and regulatory bodies put in place measures and see to its enforcement. Nonetheless, this understanding may not translate into strategies to pursuing the concept at the various attraction sites.

Emotional Connectedness of VAMs to the practice of ST

The study also sought to find out VAMs' emotional connectedness to the practice of sustainable tourism. This is important because being emotionally connected to a phenomenon can influence one's willingness to put in place measures to pursue that phenomenon (Cheng & Wu, 2015). Accordingly, emotional connectedness is operationalised as an individual feeling a connection towards a phenomenon (Restall, & Conrad, 2015). From the interviews participants revealed that they were emotionally connected to ST at two levels. First, at the personal level and secondly, at the business level.

Personal level

Some individuals have personal values and habits that naturally draw them towards the ideals of ST such as keeping the environment clean. Some of the managers expressed personal interest and what they do at the personal level to promote sustainable tourism from environmental and community wellbeing perspectives. These are embedded in the following statements.

I can say I am an environmentalist. I love nature a lot. Sometimes, I go around picking rubbers when I come in the morning and put them in the bin. But, whenever some of my subordinates see me do this, they offer to do it but I decline. I do this because I am interested in the environment and I love seeing the place clean. It is part of my life and even at home, I do not allow the children to litter. I practice it everywhere.

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[59-year-old male manager of an HA with 12 years of experience]

Another participant who expressed a personal level attachment had this to say in response to the question.

> *I love contributing to the welfare of the community. When I started working here for the past 5 years, I realized that the company has done nothing in terms of CSR for the community which I got to know from the community youth. From our conversations, I could understand their grievances and appreciate how they feel so I started to help in the little way I can. I asked for help which I had and first offered educational supplies to a school and proceeded to the hospital's maternity ward with fans. I have even established a cultural troop for the girls to engage them after school because I realized that the level of teenage pregnancy is high in this community. For me, I do the little I can so I can be remembered for it….*

[34-year-old male manager of a HA with 4 years of experience]

These statements explicitly portray VAMs' emotional dispositions towards sustainable tourism. Phrases such as 'I love', 'I am concerned', and 'I am environmentalist' communicate positive emotional connection and favourable personal lifestyles towards sustainable tourism (Cheng & Wu, 2015). These emotions can engender stronger links between VAMs outfits and ST strategies (Gursoy et al., 2019). In other words, there is a likelihood that VAMs will adopt strategies to pursue ST at their respective attraction sites due to their emotional connectedness to the concept. From the statements, it can be deduced that some VAMs are environmentally sensitive and

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community wellbeing-centred and according to Luu (2019), these personality traits can influence or shape VAMs' outfits towards employing strategies to pursue the concept.

It is important to point out that, an individual's understanding also influences their emotions (Lee, 2018). Thus, VAMs emotional connectedness to the practice of ST may be because they have some understanding of ST as found earlier in this chapter.

Business level

The study also found that the survivability of their businesses makes VAMs connected to the practice of the ST. In other words, they are willing to employ strategies to pursue sustainable tourism because of the need to sustain the attractions and importantly, the profitability of their operations (Ribes & Baidal, 2018). Concerns of not fading out of business, sustaining and creating more jobs were the centre of interest as captured in the statements below:

> *I am concerned about the development of sustainable tourism because of the continuity of my attraction. Again, if I don't sustain this attraction, the bees wouldn't find the environment conducive and might fly out. This can lead to the collapse of the attraction and the jobs it has created. These bees are my prime resource and their produce such as honey also brings in revenue. So, if I don't have bees, I don't have a business. This makes me willing to put measures in place to sustain this place.*

[27-year-old male manager of an EA with 4 years of experience]

> *Sustainable tourism is a concern to me because without sustaining the tourism business then we will be out of business*

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and more jobs cannot be created in that regard. The focus is to

sustain the tourism business so that the other aspects can come

in. For instance, if the business is to fold up now, people might

go back to littering the environment. Then, sanitation becomes

a challenge. However, my business is educating the locals not

to litter. From this, the environment is benefiting and the

people's attitudes are also being changed.

[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years' experience]

These statements throw more light on the fact, that VAMs due to the attractions (businesses) placed much premium on sustainable tourism. It seems ST is a popular strategy among the attractions. Considering the statements above, ST principles appear to be deployed largely in areas of economic concerns of the attractions. Thus, the economic dimension of ST is at the heart of VAMs and perhaps the environmental dimension as compared to the socio-cultural dimension. This suggests that VAMs are emotionally connected to ST mainly for economic reasons and the environment than socio-cultural reasons. This further implies that VAMs are most likely to consider the strategies to pursue economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism at their respective attractions to the neglect of socio-cultural dimension. Moreover, they may only institute strategies that will promote the generation of revenue and by extension, the protection of the environment on which they operate with little or no attention on surrounding communities.

VAMs' emotional connectedness towards pursuing the economic and environmental dimensions of ST are understandable, partly because of two

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reasons; the profit or revenue generation motives of the attractions and the fact that most of the attractions (businesses) depend on the environment.

Overall, it can be concluded that VAMs of both attractions are emotionally connected to the practice of sustainable tourism for two reasons. First, for their personal reasons of keeping the environment clean and being naturally interested in the welfare of others. Second, for the economic and environmental benefits of their businesses. According to Gursoy et al., (2019), the emotional connectedness of VAMs can influence the strategies that will be instituted to pursue ST. Also, the conceptual framework underpinning the study linked emotional connectedness to ST strategies. It explains that emotional connectedness can affect VAMs' like or dislike, concern or non-concern, willingness or unwillingness to pursue ST. Given that VAMs are emotionally connected to the practice of ST at various levels, they are likely to champion and implement strategies to pursue it.

Strategies employed by VAMs towards Sustainable Tourism

The findings reflected a myriad of strategies being undertaken by VAMs. These strategies were discussed under the three conventional dimensions of ST namely; economic, environmental, and socio-cultural. It was observed that differences and similarities exist in the strategies across both ecological and heritage attractions. This could have been resulting from the unique settings and resources used at various attractions.

Economic strategies

VAMs employed strategies that were geared towards meeting the economic dimension of sustainable tourism. This dimension chiefly concentrates on the attraction's ability to generate revenue, create

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employment, and meet visitors' satisfaction (Agyeiwah et al., 2017). From the interviews, it was found that these strategies were similar across both ecological and heritage attractions. These strategies were further grouped into direct and indirect strategies

Direct economic strategies

These strategies directly benefited both attraction management and members of the communities. Even though these strategies are regarded as the core business of the attractions, their sustainability may invariably affect other dimensions of ST. This is because almost all ST strategies require funding.

There were two main strategies undertaken namely; revenue generation and employment of community members as workers at the attractions. It was stated by VAMs that they generate revenues to sustain their operations. They added that they also allocated a certain percentage of employment opportunities to community members as revealed in the statements below.

The tours are the main activities undertaken to generate monies for the site. These monies are used to undertake activities that sustain the operations of the attraction and it is definitely why we set up and seek the sustenance of the site.

[27-year-old male manager of an EA with 4 years' experience]

At least about 60% of our employees are from surrounding communities. We try to alleviate poverty by employing and getting them to support what we do. Although, we have some challenges with them being below the standard. We keep up with training and allocate fieldwork duties to them.

[34-year-old female manager of an EA with 7 years' experience]

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The above statements indicate that visitor attractions just like every other business is profit-oriented (Okpo, 2018). Revenue generation is necessary to keep the attractions running and its sustenance. Also, raising revenue could be the reason why the attractions are developed. It is significant to note that most of the strategies instituted to pursue the other dimensions of ST also require money, thus, VAMs employed revenue generation as an economic strategy to see to the implementation of the other dimensions of ST as well as the existence and growth of their operations.

Also, most of the resources used as attractions are often communal pool resources, therefore, it is much expected that community members benefit from the operations of the attractions (Kamoto et al., 2013). Contributing to the welfare and/ quality of life of the immediate communities surrounding the attractions is essential to the survival of those attractions (Yu et al., 2018). Hence, offering employment as captured in the quotes is one of the ways VAMs contribute to the welfare of the communities. In so doing, community members are likely to support the operation and/ activities of the attractions hence, promoting the long-term existence of those attractions. However, most of the direct employment opportunities available at these sites are entry jobs, implying low salaries (Chong & Balasingam, 2019).

Indirect economic strategies

On the other hand, strategies that economically benefited community members and management of the attractions but not as a result of direct tourism investment represented indirect economic strategies. Some of these strategies included offering livelihood empowerment projects and renting out shops to locals to engage in business activities not only targeted at tourists.

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We engage in livelihood projects where people are selected from neighbouring communities. We then source them to go into grasscutter rearing, rabbitry, beekeeping, mushroom farming, and others that they are interested in and feel will be of economic importance to them. All these are done through dialogues with leaders of the communities. These livelihood projects are funded with the attraction's endowment fund and sometimes NGOs. In 2018, we worked with Beyond AID on a bamboo project where we trained people to be able to use bamboo to make bamboo artefacts such as bamboo fans, hats, toothpicks, and others. Then, again, we look at these livelihood projects as preventive mechanisms to ward off people from encroaching the forest to harvest tree species or hunt down animals

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

There are restaurant areas and craft shops which are rented to the indigenes so they see the benefits of our operations to them. But we make them pay something minimal to enable them feel committed to doing the best or offering the best services.

[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 3 years' experience]

Engagement in grasscutter rearing, mushroom farming, and renting out shops can boost the economic conditions of community members. These activities do not fall within the domain of operation of the attractions. According to Chong and Balasingam (2019), such activities are described as indirect benefits of tourism. It is worthwhile to see VAMs make strenuous

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efforts to go beyond what the attractions can provide economically to source for funds to create alternative opportunities for community members. Even though, VAMs use this strategy as a means of preventing community members from encroaching their attractions as well as engender community support and consequently, the long-term survival of the attractions (Mpungose, 2018).

Again, offering livelihood empowerment projects was reinforced by the decision to engage closely with community leaders. If the community leaders receive the buy-in of these livelihood projects, they would most certainly support the management of the attractions to succeed, hence, the existence of the attractions' operations. Complementing the livelihood projects, VAMs provided restaurants and shops at affordable prices for locals. Again, this initiative can be said to be beneficial to the attraction as the provision of shops and restaurants are supporting facilities that enable attractions to carry out their core function of sightseeing. However, this initiative is mainly to let community members see the benefits of the attractions in order to engender their support which will also lead to the survival of the attractions. According to Yu et al., (2018) attractions can exist and operate fully if community members support the attraction's operations and can attest to its benefits. This could be why VAMs employ these economic strategies as ways of seeking community support and consequently the existence of their operations.

Figure 4: Shops Rented to Locals
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Environmental strategies

From the interviews, three major strategies were employed by VAMs to pursue the environmental dimension of ST. These included waste management, conservation, and maintenance strategies. While some of these strategies differed, some were common across both ecological and heritage attractions. Waste management, and conservation strategies were common across both attractions. But maintenance strategies were extremely different amongst both categories of attractions.

Waste management strategies

Participants disclosed that they have instituted waste management strategies such as placing bins at vantage points, mounting cautionary signages, and sensitizing visitors to comply with waste disposal measures. Additionally, employees also mounted strict monitoring to ensure waste is properly disposed of by visitors. This is captured in the quotes below:

> *I have a lot of bins which I make available at vantage points.*
>
> *There are signages cautioning visitors not to litter. Also, some*

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of the cleaning staff go around making sure that visitors are disposing of waste properly. In terms of managing the waste, I struck a deal with zoom lion weeks ago to do that. All these are put in place to keep the environment neat and welcoming for visitors. Our business particularly cannot thrive in a dirt environment because it is dependent on clean environment.

[34-year-old male manage of an EA with 3 years' experience]

We educate visitors on issues of littering before conducting the tour. I take this seriously because when they come in their numbers especially the fun clubs and tertiary students, they litter a lot which is terrible. But, sensitizing visitors before the tour helps reduce litter and also keep the place neat.

 [59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

It is conspicuous from the statements that VAMs have employed a well-designed waste management strategy considering the processes outlined. Situating dust bins at vantage points, signposts cautioning visitors as well as sensitizing visitors imply that waste created by visitors will not be thrown away haphazardly. Therefore, contributing to the environmental cleanliness and sustainability of the attractions as indicated in the above quotes. Below are shreds of evidence to support this claim.

Figure 5: Dust Bins at EA   *Figure 6:* Dust Bins at HA
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)   Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Conservation strategies

One other strategy that emerged from the interviews was conservation strategies. These strategies sought to protect and/ ensure the wise use of resources at the attractions. From the findings, three perspectives of conservation namely: water, energy, and habitat conservation emerged.

Concerning water conservation, VAMs ensured that taps were always closed properly after usage and assigned some cleaners to double-check if taps were closed properly. This was a common strategy across all the attractions. This was instituted partly because the majority of the attractions get water from the Ghana Water Company (GWC) which comes at a cost. Even though some attractions built their water systems, they still resorted to this strategy to avoid wastage as captured in the following statements.

We depend on Ghana Water Company for water supply and it is used for the washrooms only. Luckily, the water closets regulate the amount of water used and we do our bit of putting off the taps after usage. But then, we get few visitors who mistakenly leave the taps on after usage and even with that, my cleaners double-check and do the needful. We do these to avoid wasting the water and spending so much…

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[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years' experience]

> *We have our water system. There are constructed wells and boreholes mainly to supply the washrooms with water which is used as and when needed. There is more than enough water all year. But we still ensure that taps are always closed properly after usage. We always want to have enough water reserved and not rely on GWC. The cleaners also see to it that taps are properly closed as well as keeping the place clean.*

[34-year-old-male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

The quotes demonstrate that VAMs appreciated the importance of sustainability. Regardless of the supply source, they were wary of the implications of waste on the management of the attractions. Therefore, instituted strategies to guard against water wastage and ensure its reservation as indicated above. One can perceive that VAMs' intentions were to avoid paying heavy water bills particularly those connected with GWC which comes as a burden on the revenues generated, the reason they put in place those measures. It was however observed that VAMs of ecological attractions relied heavily on alternative supply sources such as wells and boreholes to also avoid paying water bills. Moreover, the location and physical properties of the environment of the ecological sites made it easy to build those water systems compared to the heritage attractions which were located on stony grounds and amid settlements. This could imply that VAMs of ecological attractions were able to retain more of their revenues than their counterparts at heritage attractions since they did not spend on the water.

With energy conservation, VAMs instituted measures such as the use of energy-saving bulbs, solar lamps, and switching off gadgets not in use to avoid electricity wastage. These strategies were similar amongst all the attractions. Energy in the form of electricity has become costly in Ghana. As such, its conservation was essential especially in VAMs' quest to reduce waste and administrative expense. VAMs revealed that apart from the office-related activities, the field related activities at the attractions do not require electricity. Therefore, electricity was used to power fans, fridges, printers, and bulbs. The below quotes captured these views of VAMs.

> *We use energy-saving bulbs and few solar lamps but the whole attraction is not on solar yet. Also, switching off all gadgets not in use is the norm. The prepaid is very expensive regardless of our efforts to conserve it. We have plans of using solar panels. Even though the initial cost is expensive, it is better off in the long run than depending on Electricity Company of Ghana.*

[34-year-old female of an EA with 7 years' experience]

> *… when I took over, the post-paid meters were changed to pre-paid meters so, the bill became overly expensive. I quickly, authorized the use of energy-saving bulbs and enforced switching off every electrical gadget before leaving the building or when not in use. Also, I stated categorically that they are to double-check if everything is off before leaving because the pre-paid is expensive. We do this to conserve electricity as much as possible to prolong its usage and cut down on cost.*

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

It is conspicuous that VAMs instituted strategies to conserve energy but at the heart of those strategies is the desire to protect the economic gains of the attractions. Spending money on electricity would have a toll on the revenues generated. Thus, those strategies are introduced to help reduce waste and minimize spending. This is affirmed by the fact that VAMs had expressed interest in switching to solar energy in the future to avoid high cost associated with prepaid. Solar energy is one of the eco-innovative practices discussed in the literature (García-Pozo et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2020) which increase business value and have minimal impact on the environment. Nevertheless, it is expensive to install.

The final conservation activity carried out by VAMs was habitat conservation. This activity was common among the ecological attractions than the heritage attractions. This may have been because of the vegetative characteristics of the ecological attractions. From the interviews, VAMs recounted the use of anti-poaching teams, afforestation projects and the use of marked out walkways as ways to conserve the attractions and their habitats. This was captured in the following statements:

> Looking at protecting the plants and wildlife, we have forest guards, normally called the anti-poaching team. Their role is to be patrolling the forests, making sure that the locals don't go into the forests to poach.
>
> In terms of protecting the vegetative cover, we have clear-cut routes within the forests called the hiking trails. This directs

the movement of visitors, therefore preventing them from walking on the vegetative cover.

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

We plant trees to add to the natural habitat and to make available lots of food for the bees to make honey. By doing that, the environment gets beautified and the species in there don't also lose their homes.

[27-year-old male manager of an EA with 4 years' experience]

Given the indispensable attributes of natural habitats to ecological attractions, it is unsurprising that VAMs set up Special Forces in charge of protecting the habitat. According to Marczak and Borzyszkowski (2020), natural habitats are the main attractions for ecological sites and without them, there may be nothing like ecological attraction. Deducing from the statements above, the strategies put in place contribute to the sustainability of the attractions. For example, the use of anti-poaching team prevents the degrading of the forests, the hiking trails prevents visitors from trampling on lawns and/ vegetative covers and the afforestation project adds the attractiveness of most ecological attractions. Ultimately, these strategies lead to keeping the attractions functional and attractive thus, sustainable.

Maintenance strategies

The final environmental strategy was maintenance strategies. These strategies were extremely different across the attractions and even under the same category, variations were seen. This may have been arising from the uniqueness in terms of the design of each of the attractions and the different resources used as attractions. These maintenance strategies sought to keep the

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attractions fit-for-purpose and prevent accidents or ensure safety. Moreover, the strategies were carried out daily, periodically and in some cases, situation determined.

In terms of the strategies that were carried out on daily basis, VAMs mentioned sweeping, cleaning of artefacts, and others as activities to keep the attractions functioning on daily basis. Periodical strategies included painting, changing of ropes, oiling of metals, treating and polishing of wooden structures. These were carried out quarterly, half a year, annually, and biennially. Whereas emergencies that called for maintenance were classified as situation determined. These are embedded in the following statements;

> *We do the regular sweeping, cleaning and clearing of spider webs off the beehives to avoid the bees from getting trapped while flying. We also set beetle traps at vantage points as well as put dirty oil on the base of the hives stands to prevent the ants from attacking the bees. We do these to create a conducive environment for the bees to survive and multiple so we can gain more benefits from the operations.*

[27-year-old male manager of an EA with 4 years' experience]

> *We have 6 months-scheduled maintenance which involves major activities. Oiling of the metal parts of the walkway to prevent rust. Then, changing of ropes and nets to reinforce the safety of the walkway and avoid accidents on the walkway. Again, almost all or 99% of the structures in the facility are wooden so we treat them with chemicals and do polishing of*

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the floors every quarter to enhance its attractiveness and prevent termites from eating the structures.

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

Fumigation is carried out every year and every two years, we do paint the whole facility to add to the attractiveness of the facility but it is expensive...

[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years' experience]

.... Occasionally when we notice an unstable wood implying corrosion, we do the necessary nailing. Also, if there are cracks in the wall, the appropriate cement works are quickly done to prevent further damage. Fixing of broken windows, oiling of metallic locks, electrical works, weeding are all taken care of when needed.

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

In line with the tourist area life cycle by Butler (1980), attractions have a stage during which they begin to degenerate. This stage is called the decline stage. Conceptually, this stage goes beyond physical deterioration to activities/service monotony (Butler, 1980) and one of the activities carried out to correct the degeneration is maintenance work (Kebete & Wondirad, 2019). From the above quotes, it is obvious that VAMs instituted those maintenance routines purposely to sustain and enhance the competitiveness of attractions.

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It is important to point out that these maintenance strategies were unique to various attractions and occur at different times. While painting and fumigation emerged common to heritage attractions, changing of ropes and nets, chemical treatment and polishing of wooden structures were pertinent to ecological attractions. Below are some pictorial representations of some of the periodic activities mentioned by VAMs.

Figure 7: Painting at HA
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Figure 8: Maintenance Activity at EA
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Additionally, the researcher observed that most of the heritage attractions had paintings from the walls peeled off making them unattractive to behold as demonstrated by Figure 9.

Figure 9: The Paint of a HA Peel off
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Socio-cultural practices

VAMs also employed strategies that were in line with the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism. These strategies were targeted at the welfare of the communities where these attractions are located as well as projecting the cultural identity of the communities. From the interviews, there were three perspectives; promotion and preservation of culture, provision of social amenities, and donations. Specifically, preservation of culture and donations were unique to heritage attractions while the provision of social amenities was to ecological attractions.

Promotion and preservation of culture

According to some of the VAMs particularly those of heritage attraction, the recounting of stories to visitors, cultural display, pouring libation, and naming ceremony ostensibly promote and preserve the culture of the communities in which these attractions are situated. Some VAMs had the following to say:

Culture is the product on sale here. However, there is an intention to promote and preserve the local culture. We tell extensively the story of the Trans – Atlantic slave trade while taking visitors through the dungeons. Also, the castle's museum gives a better overview of the community's rich history in pictures, videos, and writings. These give the visitors a better description, understanding and appreciation for the local culture. All these are ways used to ensure the continuity of the local culture.

[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years' experience]

Cultural drumming and dancing are mostly performed when requested by Visitors especially the African- Americans but at a fee. Often, the cultural troops from the communities are invited to display beautiful Ghanaian dances to visitors. These beautiful cultural performances held on the premises add to the promotion of the local culture as well as its preservation. It always feels good to see visitors especially foreigners enjoy, admire and even imitate the beautiful dances displayed.

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

Tourism no doubt is a medium through which culture and heritage are preserved and promoted. Tourism promotes culture through the exportation of cultural artifacts (Grobar, 2019), promotes community resilience through retelling the intangible heritage (Moretti & Klijs, 2021), and transforms intangible culture into the tangible craft (Yang et al., 2018). Embedded in the quotes are these important roles of tourism to the respective communities. VAMs were very conscious about promoting and preserving the cultures of the local communities which is key in sustaining tourism. Given that community cultural troops were often invited to perform before visitors as captured in the quotes.

Nonetheless, these activities of VAMs had revenue-generating intentions as captured in the quotes. Thus, linking revenue generation to cultural promotion. But that has adverse effects on cultures. It can lead to the commodification of the cultures (Young & Markham, 2020) and the profanity of sacred artefacts.

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Provision of Social amenities

Another sustainable tourism practice that was socio-cultural was the provision of social amenities to local communities. This practice was particularly common among the ecological attractions and was directed at improving the general social life of local communities. These activities fell within the domain of education and health. Specifically, activities undertaken included: building and/ renovating schools, dining halls, ICT facilities, community centres, and hospitals as well as making available hospital supplies. Some managers disclosed through the following statements:

We have constructed boreholes, ICT facilities, dining halls, and more than 10 school buildings for communities within the catchment area. With some of the schools, we help with maintenance or renovations. There are also hospitals that we renovate and give supplies to at their request. Importantly, we talk to the chiefs who are the main stakeholders within the communities and get their behinds before any community development happens. Currently, we are working on community centres. Once, that is completed, we will go in there and have conversations with the whole community by educating them on the protection of the forests. In doing this we are indirectly getting these community members to pay close attention to what we do.

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

Conspicuously, the intention of VAMs in undertaking the above initiatives is to gain the support of the locals since, without their support, the

attraction may not exist or operate successfully. These social amenities somewhat are of immense benefit to local communities and can draw the attention of community members toward the operations of the attractions. Once the locals feel they are benefiting from the operations of the attractions, they will get emotionally attached, become concerned, and will protect the attractions as asserted by the social exchange theory (Nunkoo, 2016). Ultimately, that will contribute to the sustainability of the attractions.

Supporting this finding, studies (Gursoy et al., 2019; Paskova & Zelenka, 2018) have shown that the provision of social amenities like building schools, hospitals, roads, and providing drinking water by tourism enterprises often contribute to gaining residents' support which is a catalyst to sustainability. Figure 10 is a dining hall facility constructed by an ecological attraction for a community school.

Figure 10: Dining Hall Facility for Assin Nyankumase Community
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021).

However, it is was disappointing to learn that VAMs of heritage attractions have not undertaken any activity of this kind to improve community welfare. Considering that their attractions thrive largely on the

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culture of the people. It could be expected of VAMs of heritage attractions to engage in such activities.

Donations

Unlike the provision of social amenities, VAMs of heritage attractions made donations. This they undertook which contributed to the well-being of the community members. VAMs of heritage attractions donated in the form of cash and logistics to communities during festivals. This is embedded in the quote below;

> *This community celebrates the emancipation festival every 1ˢᵗ of August so we donate cash which covers the majority of the festival's budget. The cash donation really excites the chief and elders so they go all out to support every course of this attraction. The festival is even hosted here which is good for the attraction because it gathers lots of visitors. Sometimes, we give some books, stationery, and laptops to help the education of the children of this community. We do these with an intent of running the operation smoothly without interferences from the community since they are benefiting….*

[34-year-old male manager of a HA with 4 years' experience]

What is unclear from the above quote is whether these donations contribute to the overall wellbeing of the community. Most of these events to which the donations are made are one-time events and often, the donation particularly the cash goes to the chiefs and or organizers of these events. So, there is doubt about the impact of donations on improving the wellbeing of all locals. Nevertheless, such gestures can attract community support which

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contributes to the smooth running of the attractions hence, sustainability as mentioned. Evident in figure 11 is the donation of educational materials.

Figure 2: Books Donated to School Children
Source: Fieldwork, Koufie (2021)

Given the above evidence, it is worth concluding that the ST strategies carried out by VAMs were centred around the three dimensions namely; economic, environmental, and socio-cultural. These ST strategies seek to balance negative and positive consequences accruing from economic, environmental, and social aspects of tourism (Agyeiwaah, Iaquinto, Pratt, & Suntikul, 2020; Simanavicius, Streimikiene, Svagzdiene & Jasinskas, 2021). These strategies are usually part of management plans and provide a holistic guide in terms of managing relationships with host communities, the environment, and the commercial prospect of attractions.

However, VAMs appeared to have attached much more premium to the economic and environmental dimensions than the socio-cultural dimension. This was because those strategies somewhat directly benefited the attractions and perhaps, linked to the survival and or sustainability of their operations than what will benefit the local communities. Lastly, it was

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observed that the ST strategies undertaken by VAMs were somewhat influenced by board decisions/ company policy. Thus, attractions whose board decisions were not in support of ST or have partners whose activities were in line with the principles of ST did not strategize the concept as expected. Therefore, these findings intersect with the assumptions made by the conceptual framework underpinning the study. According to the framework, VAMs' understanding and emotional connectedness to the practice of ST can influence whether they will put in place ST strategies or not. As discussed herein, VAMs seem to have engaged in a couple of activities that are geared toward contributing to ST partly because of their understanding and emotional connectedness to the practice of the concept.

Barriers to Pursuing Sustainable Tourism by VAMS

Challenges faced with sustainable tourism is contextual (Agyeiwaah et al., 2017; Pan et al., 2018). Accordingly, this section explored the challenges from a developing country perspective. From the in-depth interviews conducted, the VAMs disclosed a series of barriers confronting their efforts in practicing sustainable tourism. These barriers were grouped and discussed under two categories. Thus, internal and external barriers.

Internal barriers

Internal barriers are those factors that emanate from the operational setting of the attractions which inhibit VAMs operations toward achieving the concept of sustainable tourism. From the interviews, three domains of internal barriers were found. They included insufficient funds, bureaucracy, and lack of qualified employees

Insufficient funds

One of the main issues VAMs disclosed which was a major challenge to them in practicing ST was funding. VAMs indicated they barely have funds for running the operations of the attractions. As a result, they are unable to pursue certain sustainable practices to the fullest. Some of them claimed they resort to using their own private money to support the execution of certain activities. Others resort to the use of sub-standard materials due to the lack of funds to procure quality materials for maintenance activities at the attractions. These claims are captured in the following statements;

> *Money is a huge challenge. We don't have enough to do anything and even what is generated is relatively small to cover operational expenses. However, majority of these monies are sent to the central government because the attraction is government owned. It's really not easy; sometimes I help from my pocket before certain maintenance activities are even carried out because the monies allocated to fund maintenance activities is nothing to write home about…*

[45-year-old male manager of a HA with 2 years' experience]

> *The funds released are not sufficient at all. We often resort to using alternative cheap materials for maintenance works. For instance, whitewash is used for the painting instead of marine paint which is the quality and appropriate paint to use. It saddens me because when it rains, almost everything comes off the building. But truly that is what we can afford. Also, we are incapable of conducting training as a firm especially on issues*

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of sustainability. We always have to depend on outside sources

which rarely takes place.

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

We have some funds but it's never enough. Almost everything

is costly; the logistics required and the activities to be carried

out.   It makes us incapable of doing much as we want

especially in terms of environmental practices and social

interventions.

[34-year-old male manager of an EA with 3 years' experience]

The above expressions suggest two things. First, how inadequate funding is hampering sustainable tourism activities, and secondly, a lack of strategic plan towards sustainable tourism practices amongst the attractions. With the latter, if there was a strategic plan, issues of funding would have been dealt with. The antecedent to this situation could be that VAMs have not given sustainable tourism adequate thought and planning, the reason they are unable to raise funds. This is reflected in why revenues generated are sent to the central government without any arrangement to retain a percentage for ST and related activities in some of the attractions as indicated in one of the quotes. This funding challenge could also mean that the attractions generally do not make much revenue to oversee the operations of the attractions.

Bureaucracy

One other barrier faced by VAMs in undertaking ST activities was bureaucracy. Bureaucracy in this context refers to an organizational structure characterized by complexities, division of labour, hierarchical coordination and control, strict chain of command, and legal authority (Kanter, 2019). This

system according to some of the VAMs especially that of heritage attractions is discouraging some of their initiatives as disclosed in the following statements;

> *I think it's more of bureaucracy; that very long process is what is killing us. Just imagine, the emancipation festival is in a week time but painting works haven't been done. Meanwhile, I sent the proposal months ago because I knew it will take a while but it's still taking forever. The sad part is when I follow up, I'm told it hasn't been approved because this person has to have a look before the next and next so, nothing gets done on time.*

[34-year-old male manager of a HA with 3 years' experience]

> *Our immediate management is nothing to write home about. The top management specifically is resistant to change. They hate innovation; always sticking to the old ways of managing the place. Again, the system is one of a top-down management approach so, they always pass whatever they think needs to be implemented and that is it. I'm a manager but very powerless especially when it comes to what needs to be done here. I write lots of proposals and at the end of the day, nothing gets done. It's very frustrating.*

[59-year-old male manager of a HA with 12 years' experience]

These statements indicate that most of the attractions' administrative setups are multiple layered, procedural, and rigorous. This administrative arrangement according to the VAMs is slowing the decision-making process

and operational efficiency. Once VAMs initiatives about ST are not approved or are delayed due to internal rigidities, they may become frustrated and unable to pursue such initiatives again. Bureaucracy is associated with slowing down operations and productivity, breeding of conflict of interest, and reducing employee morale (Selase, 2018) as having played out in some of the attractions. It is also characterized by a top-down management approach (Kanter, 2019). So, once the decision to pursue ST is not from top-level management like the board, it may likely not be done. This phenomenon suppresses creativity and innovation in organizations as highlighted in the quotes.

Unqualified employees

Lastly, the VAMs disclosed that most of the employees recruited from the communities in which the attractions operate, do not have the requisite skill and knowledge to practice sustainable tourism. VAMs expressed worry as more efforts are put in training these employees yet; some are not living up to expectations which are affecting the practice of ST. The quotes below capture this narrative.

> *Employing the locals is a huge challenge. They are mostly sub-standard: no education or skill so they come in making things worse. We constantly have to train, re-train and repeat things more than necessary but it is what it is. Dealing with these local is very difficult. It would have been much better if a locally employed tour guide gets the concept of sustaining the environment and sensitizing tourists on how to go about their activities in two training sessions. But it's never the case, we*

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have to go over it over and over again and they still do opposite, it becomes very frustrating and tends to impede the initiatives towards sustainable practices.

[34-year-old female manager of an EA with 7 years' experience]

The employees too are a challenge, sometimes they do otherwise from what they are being told in terms of sustaining the attraction.

[27-year-old male manager of a HA with 4 years' experience]

It is noted from above that employees are prime in carrying out certain operational activities needed to achieve the development of sustainable tourism. However, the low or no educational background and skills of employees especially those from neighbouring communities disrupt some of the practices of ST even after consistent training is offered. Despite employing community members being a socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism, VAMs seem to have no trust in recruiting them partly because of the contribution they bring on board. This finding suggests that VAMs will prefer community members with some level of formal education over those with no formal education.

External barriers

The external barriers unlike the internal ones are those factors that are not within the domain of operations of the attractions but affect the ST drives of the managers. The interactions unearthed two main external barriers including lack of national sustainable tourism policy and perceived lack of commitment by the government.

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Lack of national sustainable tourism policy

The first external factor that inhibited the progress of VAMs towards effectively practicing sustainable tourism was the absence of a sustainable tourism policy. VAMs stated categorically that they were unaware of any sustainable tourism policy and to talk of its enforcement as captured in the quote below.

> *Till now I don't know of any government policies on sustainable tourism. No government stakeholder has ever come here to ask or check on how we are even sustaining the attraction. If these policies were to be available and enforced to the latter, I would have been aware and forced to practice them fully. The government has not helped in this regard at all; if the government takes sustainable tourism seriously, we will too.*

[27-year-old male manager of an EA with 4 years' experience]

The above quote suggests that VAMs are on their own in the pursuit of sustainable tourism development. In other words, whatever ST practices VAMs undertake, it is based on their caprices and whims, given that there is no national policy to guide their activities. This is reflected in why some communities where attractions are found are not benefiting from the operations of such attractions and nothing is done about it. Since there is no national policy or law, enforcement cannot even be mentioned. Meaning that VAMs will be operating based on their moral conscience not what is ideal. Even though sections of the Tourism Act (2011), Act 817 capture the need to

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ensure the sustainable development of tourism both internationally and within the country, this should be driven by a well-drawn national policy.

Perceived lack of commitment

Complimenting lack of sustainable policy was perceived lack of commitment from government. From the interviews, VAMs expressed bitterly how they think tourism state officials are not committed to carrying out activities to ensure the development of sustainable tourism in the country. These were embedded in the following statements:

I don't think that the regulatory bodies care so much about sustainability with my experience here. The Environmental Protection Agency and Ghana Tourism Authority come around when it's money-related. Aside from that, they don't do anything to enforce the sustainability of the attraction.

[34-year-old female manager of an EA with 7 years' experience]

My problem is with the people employed in governmental positions to champion the affairs of tourism. Most of them have no background in tourism so the understanding of tourism development is zero to even extend it to sustaining it. They don't care about tourism but rather the revenue generated. These people are our biggest threat. They sit for foreign organizations to organize workshops for us on how to sustain our attractions. It's heart-breaking. Again, they travel for all workshops aboard and learn so much but nothing to show. It tells us that they are not passionate about tourism development, talk of sustaining it.

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[34-year-old male manager of a HA with 4 years' experience]

The above statements imply that commitment from tourism state officials (both local and central government) towards the development of sustainable tourism is missing from the perspective of VAMs. The statements may also indicate how the government has focused so much on revenue generation of the attractions to the neglect of how to sustain attractions. Meanwhile, it is only when the tourism resources are sustained that much economic fortunes can be made.

Worth noting is that, despite the above challenges, VAMs in their outfits adopted some measures to counterbalance the challenges. These included; writing proposals to NGOs for financial assistance, self-supporting financially, giving recommendations in reports to top management, and recruiting community members with some education and skills.

Chapter Summary

This chapter analysed and discussed the findings of the study. The analysis was done based on the questions and objectives of the study. The chapter commenced with some demographic characteristics of VAMs. It proceeded to explore VAMs' understanding of ST where it was revealed that VAMs have some understanding of ST. The emotional connectedness of VAMs towards the practice of ST was explored and it was found that VAMs are emotionally connected to the practice of ST from personal and business perspectives. The chapter revealed that VAMs employed strategies across the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions of ST. Finally, the study realized two domains of barriers to practicing ST namely; internal and external barriers.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the entire study. The chapter focused on the summary of the research process, main findings, conclusions drawn, and recommendations made towards improving sustainable tourism practices at visitor attractions in Ghana.

Summary of the Research Process

Given that visitor attraction managers' consciousness of the concept of sustainable tourism and attitude have significant implications for tourism's sustainability, and importantly the fact that little attention has been paid to exploring the attitude of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism in Ghana, made the study necessary.

The main objective of the study was to explore the attitude of visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism in the Central Region of Ghana. The specific objectives were to;

- Explore visitor attraction managers' understanding of sustainable tourism.

- Explore visitor attraction managers' emotional connectedness to the practice of sustainable tourism.

- Assess the strategies employed by visitor attraction managers towards sustainable tourism.

- Examine the barriers to pursuing sustainable tourism by visitor attraction managers.

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The study adapted the Tri-component attitude model by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004). The adapted conceptual framework captured four main issues which inspired the objectives of the study such as VAMs' understanding of ST, emotional connectedness to the practice of ST, strategies employed, and barriers to pursuing ST. The qualitative approach and phenomenology design were adopted for the study. Data was collected using an interview guide. Seven visitor attraction managers were involved in the study. The data were analysed using the deductive and inductive content analytical technique via a three-way coding format; open coding (assigning labels), creating categories (sorting), and creating themes (synthesizing and abstraction).

Main Findings

- The study found that visitor attraction managers had some understanding of sustainable tourism. Their understanding was premised on their views and source of knowledge about sustainable tourism. In terms of the views, VAMs explain sustainable tourism to mean business continuity, protection of the environment, cultural preservation, and community benefits. Whereas the sources of knowledge about ST came from formal and informal sources as well as experiences gathered from the practice of ST.

- The study also found that VAMs were emotionally connected to the practice of ST from different levels. First, on the personal level, and secondly, at the business level. At the personal level, some VAMs had values and habits that naturally made them concern and willing to practice ST. Meanwhile, other VAMs showed much concern and

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willingness to practice ST because of the survival and continuity of their businesses (attractions).

- Further, the study revealed some strategies employed by VAMs of both ecological and heritage attractions towards ST. These strategies were in line with the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions of ST. The economic strategies which included revenue generation, employment creation, livelihood empowerment project and shop rentals were common among ecological and heritage attractions. Environmental strategies such as waste management and conservation were common while maintenance strategies were somewhat different among the two categories of attractions. Meanwhile, the socio-cultural strategies were mixed. While strategies such as promotion and preservation of culture, and donations were popular among heritage attractions, the provision of social amenities like constructing health facilities was unique to ecological attractions. However, VAMs of both attractions employed more environmental and economic strategies than socio-cultural strategies.

- Finally, the study found two forms of barriers to pursuing ST by VAMs of both ecological and heritage attractions who employed ST strategies namely; internal and external barriers. The internal barriers included insufficient funds, bureaucracy, and lack of qualified employees. Whereas, the external barriers were lack of national sustainable tourism policy and perceived lack of commitment from government officials, both local and central.

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Conclusions

Based on the above findings, the following conclusions are drawn.

- Firstly, VAMs had some understanding of sustainable tourism regardless of the type of attraction they managed. This observed understanding was because their responses were reflecting the different dimensions of sustainable tourism and by extension situated within the universal definition of ST. Moreover, their sources of information/knowledge about the concept were reliable.

- Secondly, VAMs are emotionally connected to the practice of sustainable tourism for personal and more importantly economic and environmental reasons than socio – cultural. As some indicated they are concerned and willing to practice ST which is a precursor to the survival and continuity of their businesses (attractions).

- Thirdly, VAMs employed three main strategies namely; economic, environmental, and socio-cultural strategies to pursue sustainable tourism. However, strategies were not carried out exclusively: the economic strategies were common to both attractions, the other two strategies varied based on the categories of attractions which is consistent with the literature.

- Lastly, the barriers to pursuing sustainable tourism at the attractions were both internal and external. The internal barriers emanated from the management of visitor attractions and as such can somewhat be controlled by VAMs. But the external barriers were outside the control of VAMs.

- On the whole, VAMs appear favourably disposed to the concept and practice of sustainable tourism because they had some understanding of ST which reflected in their emotional connectedness to the practice of the concept and the strategies employed towards the concept regardless of the barriers encountered.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made.

- There is a need for the management of visitor attractions to provide VAMs with continuous education and training on ST irrespective of their general understanding of ST. This will ensure that VAMs stay up-to-date on the concept of ST, the best practices and enable the implementation of ST strategies effectively.

- The already formed emotional connectedness of VAMs to the practice of ST should be sustained through regulators' initiatives to enable the continuous practice of ST irrespective of the challenges that maybe encountered.

- VAMs should implement variety of strategies to pursue the different dimensions of ST while emphasising on the socio-cultural aspects. This can improve the overall sustainability of the attraction.

- Finally, VAMs need to design attraction-specific strategic plans for sustainable tourism. Such plans will elaborate on the sources of funding for sustainable tourism strategies and related expenditures to avert some of the challenges identified in the study. More also, the central government needs to draft a national sustainable tourism policy.

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Such a policy will provide the nuances to which various categories of attractions can pursue the concept. Importantly, it will provide the criteria for monitoring and evaluation together with specified sanctions for defaulters.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Given the limitations of the study, future research should look into how organizational policies shape visitor attraction managers' attitudes and strategies employed towards pursuing sustainable tourism. Also, further research can compare ST practices across different types of visitor attractions to identify similarities, differences, and best practices. Further research can track the implementation and outcomes of ST practices over time to assess their long-term impact on the sustainability of visitor attractions.

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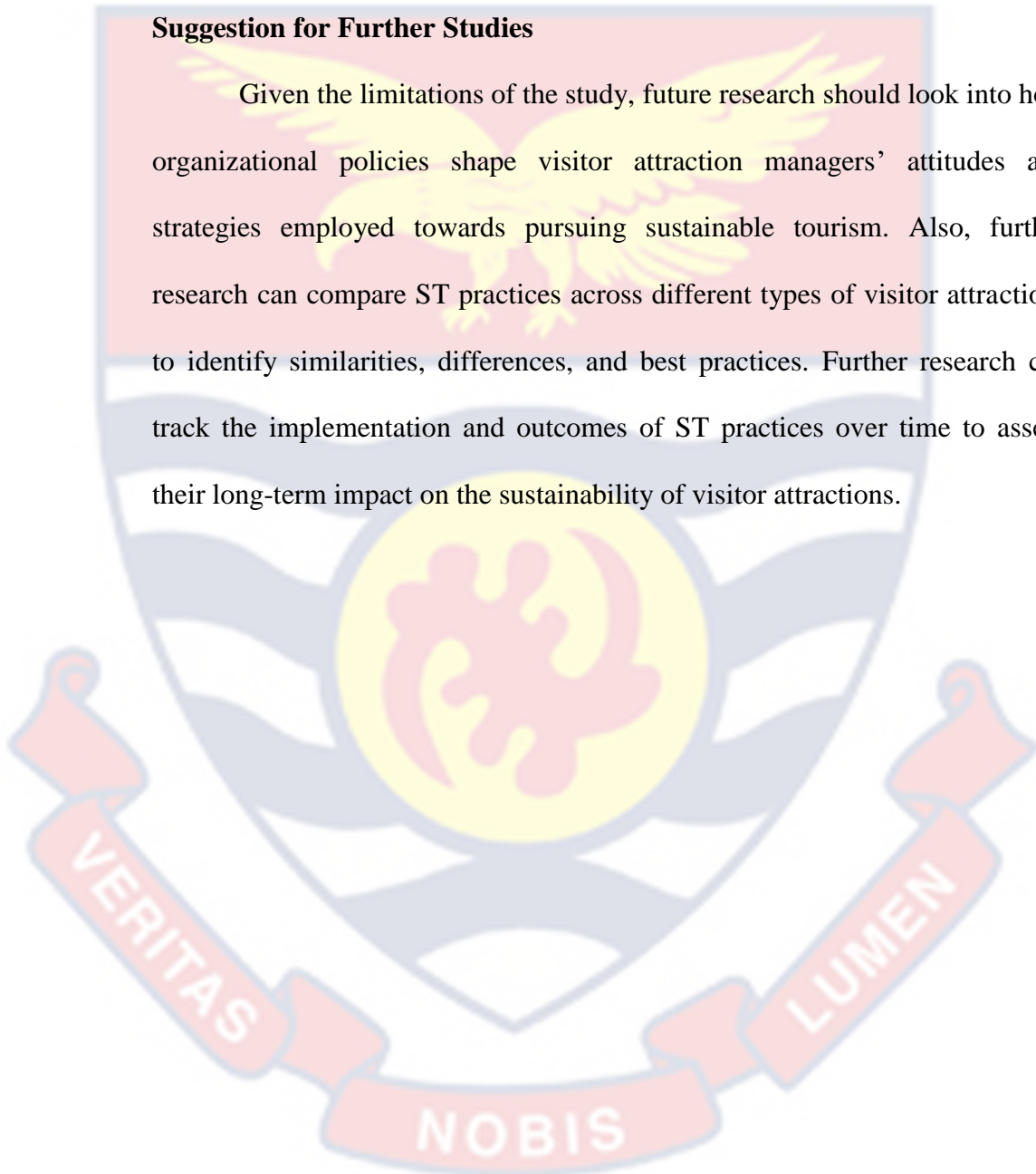
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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear participant,

This interview guide is designed to collect needed information on the topic "**Attitude and strategies employed by visitor attraction managers pursuing sustainable tourism in the central region of Ghana**". This study is being undertaken by a candidate in the fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Masters' degree in tourism management at the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The results of the study would be used exclusively for academic purposes. Therefore, it will be much appreciated if you granted me this interview. Your confidentiality and anonymity are fully assured.

Thank you.

Back Ground Characteristics

Status of Interview				
Code of interviewee	Date of interview	Place of interview	Start time of interview	End time of interview

Biodata of Interviewee				
Gender	Age	Level of education	Religion	Years in current occupation

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Attraction Characteristics	
Attraction type	Ownership of attraction

MODU LE 1: Understanding of Sustainable Tourism

1. What is sustainability in your view?

2. Do you think it is relevant to tourism?

3. How do you know sustainable tourism? (Probe for environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions of sustainable tourism).

4. How did you come to know sustainable tourism?

5. How achievable is sustainable tourism to you?

MODULE 2: VAMs' emotional connectedness to the practice of Sustainable Tourism

1. Do you think sustainable tourism is important or not and why? (Probe the importance they attach to ST in their operation).

2. How do you feel towards the development of sustainable tourism and why? (Probe for emotional states: likeness, concern, worry etc.).

3. Are you willing to implement sustainability in your business? (Why and why not).

4. How often do talk or advocate for sustainable tourism?

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MODULE 3: Strategies employed by VAMs pursuing Sustainable Tourism

1. What sustainability strategies do you engage in? (Probe for environmental, socio-cultural and economic practices) If none, why?

2. What led to the decision of employing strategies towards sustainable tourism or not? (Probe for the influence from board decisions, tourists demand, government policies, community advocacy and NGOs).

3. How have employing these sustainable strategies impacted your operations?

MODULE 4: Barriers to Pursing Sustainable Tourism

1. What are some difficulties encountered in your effort to implementing the strategies towards sustainable tourism (Probe for individual-level, institutional or organizational level, and policy level challenges)?

2. How have you tried to overcome these difficulties?

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