

Lack of trained professionals hampering tourism development in Ghana

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20 Jun 2017

According to recent figures from the Hospitality Report Africa released by Jumia Travel, a total of 365 hotel chain development pipelines were reported in Africa in 2016, with 64,231 rooms. This is a 29% increase, from the 2015 figure. This implies that more and more hotels and hospitality enterprises are trooping into the continent making this industry very competitive and profitable at the same time. In Africa, foreign visitor spending stood at 36.3% in 2016 (\$40.7 bn), and is expected to grow by 5.3% in 2017 to \$42.9bn, and then by 5.9% pa to \$76.0bn in 2027.



©Sura Nualpradid via [123RF](#) - Ghanaian rower taking tourists to see jungle

In order to derive great benefits from this massive wave, it is imperative that the Ghanaian industry takes a much closer look at one aspect that draws us back. Lack of trained professionals or professionalism is hampering the growth and development of Tourism and hospitality in Ghana.

Breeding bad customer service

The lack of professionalism in this industry has a significant impact its development. Firstly, lack of professionalism usually breeds bad customer service at hotels, restaurants, and tourist sites which mean that most guests and tourists are more likely to be dissatisfied with service and may not come back in the future. Also these same guests and tourists are also unlikely to give good referrals to others who wish to travel to Ghana and experience the rich culture, heritage, and tradition that we speak so highly of. This causes a decline in revenue and foreign exchange which hampers the development of the industry.

Below are a few ways to counter such issues and ensure productivity and development of our tourism and hospitality industries:

It takes training:

In Kenya, South Africa, Egypt and other giants in the African tourism industry, hospitality training institutions are widespread which offer tourism and hospitality related degrees and diplomas. Some even go as far as the Master of Arts degrees. Here, prospective professionals are carefully trained in various areas and these courses are open to a wide range

of people such as front office staff, tour guides, car rental drivers, etc. Take a look at other countries such as Sri Lanka and Singapore where some taxi drivers and tour guides are university graduates.

The knowledge, eloquence and open-mindedness allow them to assist guests and tourists in feeling more at home even in a far away land. This gives guests confidence to return to Ghana on future vacations. They are even more confident referring the country as a tourist destination to other family and friends. These countries know the value of quality service. This is something Ghana can pick up and intensify.

Standards and regulation

Even with all the trained staff, it will also take some level of effort from the policymakers and law enforcers to ensure strict compliance with certain codes and regulations. For instance, front office and kitchen staff at some hotels or restaurants feel reluctant to wear uniforms and aprons all the time. Some kitchen staff doesn't wear appropriate attire for work. Some also lack the facilities and technology which will aid the individuals to exhibit a high sense of professionalism.

It is the responsibility of certain law enforcement agencies as well as policymakers to regularly inspect and check standards at these hotels, guest houses, tourist sites, and restaurants. This will ensure that they always conform to these standards and regulations and in turn better serve their guests and visitors. When all these are in place, there is only an upward path for tourism and hospitality development in Ghana.

Competition:

Competition is not always negative. Sometimes, especially in hospitality and tourism development, competition is very good. When hotels, tourist sites, car rentals, airlines, and restaurants improve upon their services and facilities, and invest heavily in the standard of professionalism, it provides a great platform for competition. Hotel A, which may have been comfortable with a few staff who didn't take excellent customer service and professionalism seriously will see a decline in sales because hotel B may have put in place measures to ensure a strict professionalism output and this will automatically transform into sales.

With more and more hotel chains coming into Africa and Ghana, facilities and technology alone may not be adequate. In order to stay in business, hotels have to comply and improve upon standards of professionalism and ensure strict adherence to procedures as well as regular training.

Tourist sites are also not left out. When a tourist visits a destination and is greeted by a well-dressed guide who speaks multiple languages and is able to relate hospitably with this tourist, we are assured of that person returning and referring Ghana to his family and friends. When these sites are run by trained staff who keep adequate records and manage the facilities effectively with regular maintenance, the tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana will definitely grow massively.

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