



Public transport mode preferences of international tourists in Ghana: Implications for transport planning



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ABSTRACT

Generally, most studies on tourism in Ghana have laid emphasis on motivations and experiences of tourists, their preference for accommodation and restaurant facilities, and the quality of services rendered at these facilities ignoring a significant component of tourism, which is transportation. This paper examines public transport mode preferences of international tourists in Ghana. Primary data were collected from 479 out-bound international tourists at the departure hall of the Kotoka International Airport in Ghana between June and August 2015. The analyses of the study were done using frequencies, charts, chi-square statistic and multinomial logistic regression model. The study found that generic dimensions of transport services such as their affordability, accessibility, availability, safety and comfort influence public transport mode choice of international tourists in Ghana. Aside these factors, there were strong relationships between socio-demographic characteristics of tourists and their mode preference. It is therefore recommended that emphasis should be given to accessibility-based transport planning in order to help public transport provide quality services to meet the transport needs of international tourists.

1. Introduction

The most important aspect of tourism is the ability of tourists to travel around various attractions within destination areas (Dickinson and Robbins, 2008). Thus, transport is not only considered as a basic need, but as an essential element that attracts tourists to some destinations. To Akyeampong (2007), transportation is an essential component of tourism and devoid of it, nearly all travel away from home would cease, let alone travelling within destinations. Transportation services are essential to the development of tourism at destinations. However, Akyeampong (2007) noted that tourist exclusive transport is very rare within the industry, thus, most destinations rely on public/local transport services to meet tourists transportation needs. Le-Klahn and Hall (2015: 787) define public transport as “the use of shared, and often state-operated or contracted, bus, ferry, tram and train transport available for use by the general public including tourists to move around an area, excluding transport on city tour buses”. Public transportation services over the years have provided tourists with experiences such as providing safe and efficient transport services for them at a given destination, through making available, cost effective modes of movement at the destination (Tran and Kleiner, 2005).

Several studies have been conducted worldwide on tourist travel patterns (Masiero and Zoltan, 2013). These have focused on modelling destination choices, exploring the dimensions of tourists' mobility, as well as determinants of their movement patterns. Besides, the existing studies on transport preferences have focused on countries such as Scotland (Hough and Hassanien, 2010), Oman (Rakesh and Shweta, 2010), India (Randheer et al., 2011), Portugal (Beirao and Sarsfield-Cabral, 2007), Germany and USA (Buehler, 2011; Le-Klahn and Hall, 2015), with studies on tourists' transportation preferences in Africa including Ghana being scanty.

Despite the central role of transportation in holiday experiences of tourists within Ghana, the interface between transportation and tourism in the country has received little research attention. Existing studies including Abane (1993, 2011) and Poku-Boansi (2008) focused on general commuters transport preferences and pricing of urban transport services in Ghana respectively. Specifically, Abane (1993) investigated mode choice to work among formal sector employees; he again examined travel behaviour of commuters in four metropolitan areas in Ghana (Abane, 2011) while Poku-Boansi (2008) investigated pricing of urban transport services in Ghana. Although these studies provide good information on public transportation modes in Ghana, they failed to

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address the transportation modes among tourists in the tourism industry. As a result, very little attention has been paid to public transportation preference of tourists in Ghana. There is therefore a knowledge gap on public transport mode preferences of international tourists in Ghana which this paper intends to fill. The objective of this paper is therefore to examine public transport mode preferences of international tourists in Ghana. In the context of this study 'public transportation preference' refers to the choice between available means of public transportation services at a destination.

Insights gained from this study will shed more light on public transportation preferences among tourists which will aid in planning for efficient and effective transport system to boost the tourism industry in Ghana. The study is also expected to provide tourists with the necessary information about public transport services in Ghana which will guide them in taking informed decisions on transportation services whenever they visit the country.

2. Factors that influence tourists' public transport preference

A number of independent variables (social, economic, cultural and environmental) have significant influence on transportation mode choices (Minal and Ravi, 2014; Thrane, 2015). Travel distance variables, trip-related characteristics, socio-demographics (Thrane, 2015), safety, convenience, affordability and accessibility (Racca and Ratledge, 2004; Stradling et al., 2007; Susilo and Cats, 2014) have been identified as key factors in determining transport mode choice preferences. Travel time, travel cost, waiting time, number and ease of transfers, and comfort are possible regressors which may also affect tourists' transportation mode choices. This study considers socio-demographic and psychographic variables as possible determinants of transport mode choice preferences in Ghana.

2.1. Psychographic variables

Psychographic variables include variables such as affordability, accessibility, availability of mode options, length of waiting time, safety/security of mode, comfort/convenience, reliability of modes and many others. These factors even though in varying degrees are inter-related and have influences on tourists' transport mode choice (Anable, 2005; Choo and Mokhtarian, 2004; Johansson et al., 2006) and as such act as key drivers of choice in transportation mode decision making. What this means is that, it is assumed that variations in the choices of tourists in selecting a preferred mode to ride in during their stay could be as a result of these drivers. For instance, tourists are safety conscious (Adam, 2015) and as such would engage in activities that would guarantee their safety. Spears et al. (2013) and Susilo and Cats (2014) noted that safety and security concerns have an important impact on the use of public transport. Research has also revealed that reliability (being on time) have an influence on transport preferences of tourists (Bent and Singa, 2009). According to Mathieson and Wall (1982), tourists stay away from home is temporal and they have limited time to spend at a destination, hence, they would like to complete their itinerary within the available time. For this reason, they are likely to choose means of transport that would guarantee them reliability and also ensure that the departure and arrival of the transport mode is timely. With the establishment of psychographic variables as possible regressors of transport mode choices, the study put forward a hypothesis that certain psychographic variables influence tourists' choices of public transportation modes.

2.2. Socio-demographic variables

A number of studies have considered transport preference as a function of socio-demographic variables (Abane, 2011; Can, 2013; Masiero and Zoltan, 2013; Susilo et al., 2009; Thrane, 2015). These studies have argued that socio-demographic variables cannot be

underestimated in the transport decision making continuum. Differences in transport preferences between males and females have been noted (Axhausen et al., 2003; Curtis and Perkins, 2006). Axhausen et al. (2003) have observed that females make fewer and shorter trips and most importantly have preference for transport modes that are stress free (Moriarty and Honnery, 2005). This could be extended to mean that they are likely to choose transport modes which would guarantee them safety, convenience, comfort and reliability. Beirao and Sarsfield-Cabral (2007) also opined that females take into consideration comfort which they conceptualise as transport modes with soft clean seats, having pleasant temperature, being air-conditioned and with less congestion. Although males on the other hand would prefer modes which are safe, convenient, comfortable and reliable, they would not be as critical as their female counterparts in selecting their preferred transport modes (Curtis and Perkins, 2006).

Age is another variable that has a relationship with transport mode preferences (Yavuz and Welch, 2010). Travel patterns have been observed to change with age, from adolescence through adulthood to the aged. Evidence suggests that individuals between 25 and 50 years would travel more frequently than their younger and older counterparts (Axhausen et al., 2003). Also, those above 60 years would prefer modes which are very reliable, comfortable and convenient so as to avoid any stress associated with travel (Buehler, 2011). These findings are laudable due to the fact that the aged are usually not physically strong and might not be able to withstand the stress associated with long travels. Hence they would prefer to opt for modes that would ensure their safety, comfort and convenience.

In terms of occupation, LaMondia et al. (2009) emphasised that students are more likely to use public transport services compared to other available modes since they are less expensive to use. In addition, income level usually tends to influence travel behaviour patterns. It has been argued by Thrane (2016) that since tourism is financed by discretionary income, spending on expensive activities, transportation and accommodation may require additional budget. In scenarios where transport becomes expensive, tourists will opt for cheaper modes since the already constrained budget of the tourists can be worsened leaving them with unsustainable finances which would reduce their planned itinerary (Adongo et al., 2017; Johansson et al., 2006; LaMondia et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the origin of individuals could determine which mode of transport they are familiar with and the likelihood of using the same mode away from home. Hough and Hassani (2010) in their research on transport choice of Chinese and Australian tourists visiting Scotland found a significant difference among the two countries of origin, suggesting that origin can be an important influencing factor, beside other socio-demographic variables.

3. Theoretical framework

The Alfonso's (2005) hierarchy of walking needs model was developed based on the Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs that suggests that human needs are arranged into a five-level hierarchy comprising physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. On this premise, Alfonso's theory also arranged factors/needs that influence travel decision-making into a five-level hierarchy consisting of feasibility, accessibility, safety, comfort and pleurability (Fig. 1) (Alfonzo, 2005).

According to Alfonso (2005), feasibility is the lowest or most basic need within the hierarchy, which bothers on whether the selection of the required mode is suitable for such a trip/journey. Next to this is the need for accessibility, which pertains to the availability of the preferred mode. The third need is safety, conceptualised as the physical conditions of the mode choice. After safety is the need for comfort which is conceptualised to include; ease, convenience and contentment of the mode of transport. The final need/factor is the pleurability, which is a higher derivative of comfort and seen as a form of enjoyment of the trip

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