

**SIMON DIEDONG DOMBO UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS AND  
INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE SISSALA EAST  
MUNICIPALITY IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA:  
A CASE STUDY OF GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE**

**ABASS MUSAH TONDUOGU**

**2023**

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**BY**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND  
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THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF  
PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

**OCTOBER, 2023**

**DECLARATION**

***Candidate's Declaration***

I hereby declare that this research is my own work produced from research I carried out under supervision. This research has not been presented by anyone for any academic award, in this or any other institution. All references made to work done by other people have been duly acknowledged. I am solely responsible for any shortcomings in this work.

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***Supervisor's Certification***

I hereby certify that this research was supervised in accordance with the procedure laid down by the university.

SIGNATURE	DATE
.....	.....

DR. DANIEL TANKO DAWDA  
(SUPERVISOR)

## **DEDICATION**

This work is firstly dedicated to the Almighty Allah for His immersed wisdom and direction granted to me to complete this work. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program. Special dedication also to my lovely wife and the entire family for their support and to all who supported with ideas and prayers in any form.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD),

Department for International Development (DFID),

Ghana tourism authority (GTA)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (OECD)

## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined rural tourism development in the Sissala East municipality of the Upper West region of Ghana with specific reference to the Gbele Resource Reserve. The study used the case study design of qualitative research. The data for the study was collected using Focused Group Discussion (FGD), key informant interview and observation with a sample size of 99. According to the findings of the study, the major actors involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve were the community members including chiefs and assembly members, the government agencies as well as the non-governmental agencies in the study area. The study also found that, the long-term viability of the tourism industry depends on local community support and participation. In terms of the Participation of the Local Community in decision making, the study found that to increase the trust and confidence of residents in the development of the Gbele Resource Reserve, the local people must be included in the decision-making and policy-making processes. In addition to making investments in the delivery of essential services, it is imperative the government, through the Ghana Tourism Authority, identifies tourism goods and protects ecology, history, and the environment. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the natural attractions of the Gbele Game Reserve are the primary draw for tourists. Strengthening local community involvement as well as improving infrastructure such as roads, accommodation and sanitation facilities will help enhance the visitor experience and attract more tourists to the site.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of the study

Tourism is widely recognized as a multidimensional economic activity that has been intertwined with human civilization throughout history (Bankole, 2013). In modern times, it has evolved into a social necessity and, to some extent, a social right, as evidenced by the growing number of tourists visiting various destinations. Tourism is renowned for its economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits and its impact on human development (Martin and Uysal, 1990; Mathieson and Wall, 2006; Cooper et al., 2008; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012; OECD, 2012; Kim, 2007; Virod and Sandeep, 2014).

Moreover, tourism has emerged as one of the largest industries worldwide, playing a significant role in the development processes of communities and nations (Holloway, 2002; McIntosh et al., 2000; Wall, 1997). According to William (2008) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2013), tourism has been acknowledged as a powerful catalyst for economic growth in the modern world. It has contributed more than 10% to the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and up to 11% to the GDP of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2014). This has prompted governments worldwide to implement various policies for rural tourism development (Asiedu, 2002; Holden et al., 2011; Hall, 2008).

Rural tourism has gained international recognition as an important economic activity and a potential solution to development challenges faced by underprivileged communities (Tchetchik et al., 2008; Pratt, 2015). It is viewed as a sustainable approach for rural communities to alleviate poverty, enhance livelihoods, and expand their local economies through the benefits derived from rural tourism (Doohyun et al.,

2014, as cited in Asiedu, 2002). Consequently, global organizations, national governments, community-based organizations, and policymakers have endeavored to promote rural tourism as an alternative solution to rural poverty (Asiedu, 2002).

In many rural societies, communities heavily rely on agricultural production as their primary economic activity and sole source of livelihood (Asiedu, 2002). However, some scholars argue that these communities cannot sustain themselves without a diversified economic base or external assistance (Asiedu, 2002). Rural tourism is seen as a complementary source of community development, particularly for agrarian-based rural communities.

At the international level, rural tourism has been recognized as a crucial factor in expanding and diversifying local economies (Musasa and Mago, 2014). This sustainable intervention was initiated by the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), which advocated for support from national governments (Eja and Ajake, 2005). As a result, frameworks such as the Sustainable Livelihood Framework have been developed to assess people's livelihood assets and outcomes.

One such framework, popularized by the Department for International Development (DFID), has been adopted in this study.

Research into rural development has shown that rural tourism has played a significant role in reducing poverty among local populations in Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa (Ashley, 2006; Goodwin, 2000). The continent is rich in natural and cultural resources in rural areas, which, if harnessed and developed, could contribute positively to improving individual livelihoods and local economies.

Within the West African region, Ghana seems to possess much improved opportunities for establishing diverse game reserves. Some rural tourism resource in Ghana has been selected and classified by the Wildlife Department. Among the classifications are

tropical rainforest, savanna woodland, coastal wetlands, outlier forests, sub-montane forests, wetlands, ancient grooves, and other cultural links to conservation, waterfalls, bird watching, monkey and butterfly sanctuaries (Asiedu, Citation2002). However, the main rural tourism facilities that are legally protected by the Wildlife Department of Ghana are the Kakum, Mole, Bui and Bia National Parks, Shaihills, Kogyae and Bobiri reserves, Paga and Agyambra crocodile ponds, Tafi Atome and Buabeng Fiema monkey sanctuaries, Lake Bosomtwe and the Volta River estuary including some other wildlife sanctuaries and wetlands. Apart from these are other unprotected areas such as the Digya and Kyabobo range national parks, Kalakpa and Gbele resource reserves that are important resources for rural tourism development

In Ghana, the tourism sector has experienced substantial growth in recent years, contributing about 6.5% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with estimates projecting a contribution of more than 7.5% by 2020 (GTA, 2010). However, due to the uneven development strategies in place for tourism, most well-developed tourist sites are concentrated in the coastal areas and middle rainforest belt of the country (Asiedu, 2002). Peripheral areas, especially those in the Northern sector of Ghana, have received little attention or development despite their significant potential for rural tourism resources. For instance, the Mole Game Reserve in the north-western part of Ghana faces challenges such as poaching and inadequate access roads, hampering its development.

Agriculture remains the backbone of the local economies in these areas, and there are limited or no other livelihood opportunities for diversification. Developing the tourism resources in these regions could create opportunities for rural communities, improve their livelihoods, and establish links with agricultural products.

The Gbele Resource Reserve, located within the Sissala East Municipality of the Upper West Region in Ghana, possesses significant tourism potential that can be harnessed for local economic development. If a rural tourism development strategy can be implemented, these sites and the surrounding communities could experience substantial growth. Since the local economy is predominantly agricultural, developing rural tourism assets could diversify the economic base and contribute to poverty reduction. However, the key question remains whether rural tourism in the Sissala East Municipality can truly enhance livelihoods. This study aims to examine the ways in which rural tourism can contribute to the improvement of rural livelihoods in the municipality, using the Gbele Resource Reserve as a case study.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Rural tourism is rapidly emerging as a significant sector in the global tourism industry, driven by a growing interest in leisure travel and a recognition of the importance of sustainable economic development (Eja et al., 2011). The remarkable growth of rural tourism highlights its potential to contribute to the overall development of countries and provide various economic benefits. It has the capacity to generate employment opportunities, reduce economic leakages, and create multiplier effects that foster sustainable economic growth (Eja et al., 2011).

The Gbele Resource Reserve, located in the Sissala East Municipality, attracts tourists on a daily basis. If proper measures are taken to develop and promote the reserve, it has the potential to complement the livelihoods of local residents and improve the local economy. These communities are positioned as rural tourism destinations, particularly compared to other tourism destinations in the Upper West Region and Ghana as a whole. As a result, they are well-positioned to benefit from the services and markets offered by these destinations for the development of tourism.

However, the Gbele Resource Reserve faces several challenges that hinder its development as a tourism destination. These challenges serve as disincentives for tourists to choose the reserve as their destination. According to the Forestry Commission of Ghana (2021), the Gbele Resource Reserve has experienced a decline in patronage since 2017. For instance, The Forestry Commission of Ghana reports that in 2017, the Gbele Resource Reserve attracted only 7 tourists, in 2018, 3 tourists, while in 2019 and 2020, the area attracted no tourists. And only 2 tourists visited the site in 2021. (Forestry Commission Annual Report; 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). But the reserve possesses the potential of growing into a world class tourism destination. It is therefore crucial to examine the operationalization of the reserve and identify measures that can be adopted to enhance its tourism potential.

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

The main objective was to examine the challenges and potentials of the Gbele Resource Reserve in the Sissala East Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

The study specifically sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the actors involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve
2. To examine the tourism potentials of the Gbele Resource Reserve.
3. To examine the challenges of the Gbele Resource Reserve as tourism destination
4. To analyze the benefits of the tourist site to the people of the area.

### **1.3 Research questions**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Which actors are involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve?
2. What are the tourism potentials of the Gbele Resource Reserve?
3. What are the challenges faced by the Gbele Resource Reserve as a tourist destination?
4. What are the benefits of the tourist site to the local communities in the area?

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The study was conducted in Sissala East Municipal, located in the Upper West Region of Ghana, specifically focused on the spatial aspects of tourism within the municipality. Sissala East Municipal is situated approximately 133 kilometers away from Wa and covers an area of about 360 square kilometers.

The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of rural tourism development in Sissala East Municipal and its operations within the area. The particular emphasis of the study was on the tourism industry in the Conservation Area, as it dominates the municipality in terms of tourism activities. Recognizing the vital role that tourism development plays in local development in Ghana, it was imperative to conduct an in-depth examination of the operational challenges faced by the industry, including issues related to supply, demand, and marketing of tourism. The study also aimed to shed light on the shortcomings of promotional institutions in adequately meeting the needs of the tourism sector.

A key focus of this research was to explore the promotion of tourism industries as a strategy for local development in Sissala East Municipal. To achieve this, various

aspects that hold significance within the municipality were examined. These included the educational level of the local population, the occupational profiles of individuals, infrastructural development, the transportation system, availability of accommodation facilities, petty trading activities, and local catering services. These factors were given prominence in the study due to their influence on the tourism sector within the municipality. Additionally, the study aimed to capture the perceptions of tourists regarding the tour sites and other related activities in the area.

By conducting this study, the researchers sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of rural tourism development in Sissala East Municipal. The findings of the study would contribute to identifying the operational bottlenecks faced by the industry and offer insights into strategies for sustainable tourism development in the area. Furthermore, examining the perspectives of tourists would provide valuable information for enhancing the overall experience of visitors and potentially attracting more tourists to the municipality.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

Due to time constraints, the field research, proposal preparation, data collection, and report writing had to be completed within a limited timeframe. Although the available time was not extensive, I managed to complete the study within the required period. The study was conducted in the Sissala East Municipality, situated in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

Another significant challenge faced during the study was the non-availability of data, particularly from promotional institutions. Obtaining relevant information from these institutions proved to be difficult, as some were reluctant to release data, especially regarding revenue generated from the tour sites. This lack of cooperation hindered the

ability to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the financial aspects of the tourism industry in the area.

Despite these challenges, appropriate measures were taken to address them and ensure the study could be conducted effectively. Alternative data sources were explored, and efforts were made to establish rapport with the residents, enabling a better understanding of the study's objectives and encouraging their cooperation.

In conclusion, although the study faced time constraints and encountered difficulties in accessing data and obtaining accurate information from residents, steps were taken to overcome these challenges. The research was carried out efficiently within the available timeframe, and efforts were made to gather relevant data and fulfill the objectives of the study.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study includes but not limited to the following:

1. **Economic Impact:** This study delves into the potential economic repercussions of rural tourism in the Sissala East Municipality, echoing the findings of prior research on similar undertakings. By discerning the opportunities and obstacles in the path of development, this study extends the insights provided by previous investigations. It presents an informed perspective on how rural tourism can bolster the local economy, usher in employment prospects, and alleviate poverty within the area.
2. **Sustainable Development:** Rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality is poised to be a catalyst for sustainable practices, corroborating the findings of earlier studies. Through the exploration of the tourism potential within the Gbele Resource Reserve, this study builds upon the existing body of knowledge. It outlines strategies for safeguarding the region's natural and cultural heritage while simultaneously

fostering economic benefits. The approach endorses resource conservation, environmental protection, and the promotion of responsible tourism practices, aligning with the sustainability goals articulated in prior research.

3. **Diversification of Local Economy:** This study, in line with the insights of previous investigations, accentuates the importance of diversifying the local economy beyond conventional sectors like agriculture. By advocating for the introduction of rural tourism as an alternative economic pursuit, this research advances upon existing knowledge. It highlights how such diversification can reduce the municipality's reliance on a singular industry, ushering in novel revenue streams for the local populace. This diversification serves as a mechanism for reinforcing resilience against economic shocks and contributes to overall economic stability, a concept well-documented in the literature.
4. **Infrastructure and Access:** The examination of operational challenges encountered within the Gbele Resource Reserve, as emphasized in previous studies, underscores the pressing need for enhanced infrastructure and improved access. This study reiterates the necessity for infrastructure development initiatives, encompassing road enhancements and accommodations, which have been widely acknowledged in prior research. These improvements are indispensable for attracting tourists and facilitating their visits to the reserve, offering ancillary benefits to the local community by augmenting connectivity and overall living standards.
5. **Policy Recommendations:** This study extends prior research by furnishing essential insights and recommendations aimed at informing policymakers and tourism authorities at various administrative levels. By identifying the roadblocks and opportunities inherent to rural tourism development, this research builds upon the

findings of preceding studies. It serves as a critical resource for the formulation of effective policies, strategies, and interventions supporting the sector's growth. These recommendations, consistent with the observations made in previous research, foster an enabling environment for rural tourism, promote collaboration among stakeholders, and guide resource allocation to underpin the sustainable evolution of tourism.

In summary, this study on rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality, with a particular focus on the Gbele Resource Reserve, significantly augments our comprehension of the economic, social, and environmental advantages associated with rural tourism. It provides a solid foundation for informed decision-making, aids in the formulation of policies, and supports the implementation of sustainable tourism practices. Ultimately, these efforts culminate in the enhancement of livelihoods and the overall development of the region, aligning with the broader body of research in this domain.

### **1.7 Organization of the study**

The research is structured into five detailed chapters, each serving a specific purpose in the study:

First is the Chapter One (introduction). This chapter provides an overview of the research and sets the stage for the study. It includes the background information that contextualizes the research topic and highlights its significance. The chapter also states the problem that the research aims to address and presents the research objectives. The significance of the study is discussed, emphasizing its potential contributions to the field. Research questions are formulated to guide the study. The scope of the research is defined, outlining the boundaries and focus. The limitations of the study are

acknowledged, and the chapter concludes with an outline of the organization of the entire research.

The next chapter in this work is Chapter two (literature review). In this chapter, an extensive review of relevant literature is conducted. Various sources such as books, articles, and other scholarly works written by researchers in the field are examined.

The purpose of the literature review is to identify existing knowledge, theories, and concepts related to the research topic. It provides a theoretical framework that informs the research design and data analysis. The chapter synthesizes the findings from the literature and identifies any gaps or inconsistencies that the current research aims to address.

Chapter three has to do with methodology of my work. This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the research. It describes the research design, including the sampling technique used to select participants or data sources. The chapter also specifies the sources of data, such as primary and secondary sources, and explains how the data was collected through various methods and instruments. Sample size determination and sampling techniques are discussed. Data analysis methods are outlined, highlighting the statistical tools and techniques that will be employed to analyze the collected data.

Furthermore, Data Analysis and Discussion is contained in Chapter Four of my work. This chapter presents the comprehensive analysis of the research data. Statistical tables, cross-tabulations, and other analytical tools are utilized to derive meaningful insights and patterns from the data. The results are interpreted and discussed in relation to the research objectives and the existing literature. The chapter provides a detailed exploration and interpretation of the findings, facilitating a deeper understanding of

the research topic. The discussions are supported by evidence from the data analysis, ensuring the rigor and validity of the study.

Lastly, the final chapter provides a concise summary of the research findings. It restates the research objectives and answers the research questions based on the analysis and discussions conducted in the previous chapter. The chapter also offers recommendations based on the findings, suggesting practical actions or

interventions that can address the identified issues or contribute to further research.

Finally, the chapter concludes the research by summarizing the main points, emphasizing the significance of the study, and highlighting its potential implications for future studies and practical applications.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores concepts and models related to tourism development. It begins by providing clear and concise working definitions of the relevant terms and concepts that will be used throughout the research. This ensures a common understanding and facilitates effective communication of ideas.

The chapter then delves into an extensive review of existing literature on tourism development. It examines various models and theories that have been proposed by scholars and researchers in the field. These models outline different frameworks for understanding the complexities of tourism development and its impact on host communities.

One important focus of this chapter is the relationship between the host community and tourism development. It explores how tourism can influence and interact with the local community, both economically and socio-culturally. The benefits and challenges that arise from tourism development in host communities are discussed, highlighting the potential positive impacts such as employment opportunities, income generation, and cultural preservation, as well as the potential negative impacts such as overcrowding, cultural commodification, and environmental degradation. By presenting a comprehensive review of concepts and models related to tourism development, this chapter enhances the understanding of the subject matter and establishes a solid theoretical foundation for the research. It provides a framework for examining the complexities and dynamics of tourism development, host community

relationships, and the planning and management of tourism destinations. another country.

## **2.2 The Concept of Tourism**

According to Scheyvens (2019), tourism encompasses the activities of individuals who travel to and stay in locations outside their usual environment for a period of up to one year, whether for leisure, business, or other purposes. Simão and Mósso (2017) further explored the behaviours of individuals in unfamiliar environments, how businesses cater to their needs, and the resulting economic, physical, and social impacts on the host communities.

This definition highlights the key stakeholders in the tourism sector, namely tourists (individuals who venture beyond their usual place of residence), the tourism industry (organizations that cater to the needs of travelers), and the impacts of tourism on the economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects. Additionally, it acknowledges the host community, whose tourism resources have attracted visitors and who play a vital role in accommodating and serving them. The community that a tourist visits is commonly referred to as the host community. As defined by the United Nations (2022), the host community encompasses any town or city that welcomes guests and provides the necessary services for their stay. UNWTO (2019) also defines host communities as those who reside near a tourist destination and are directly or indirectly involved with or impacted by tourism-related activities. The interaction between visitors and the local environment is an integral part of the tourism experience.

The World Tourism Organization categorizes tourism into four types: domestic, inbound, outbound, and global tourism. Inbound tourism refers to foreigners (nonresidents) entering a country, such as a British citizen visiting Togo. Outbound

tourism refers to residents traveling abroad, for example, a Ghanaian visiting the United States of America (Scheyvens, 2019). Domestic tourism, on the other hand, refers to travel by nationals within their own country. International tourism encompasses both inbound and outbound travel. In the context of this study, both domestic and foreign factors will be considered. Since domestic travel accounts for 65% of all tourism in Ghana, it is crucial to examine both segments. The remaining 35% of tourists are from outside the country, and foreign visitors tend to travel longer distances and spend more money compared to local tourists.

By understanding the various categories and participants in tourism, this study aims to analyze the complexities and dynamics of both domestic and international tourism, as well as their impacts on the host community. It recognizes the interplay between tourists, the tourism industry, and the host community, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices and the need to balance economic benefits with environmental and socio-cultural considerations.

### **2.3 The concept of sustainable rural tourism**

Strong political leadership is essential in fostering widespread engagement, forming consensus, and ensuring the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders in sustainable tourism development (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). Sustainable tourism encompasses all forms of travel, including leisure, business, conferences, adventure, and ecotourism, emphasizing the need for responsible practices in every aspect (Simão & Mósso, 2017). UNESCO (2010) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that respects both the local community, visitors, cultural heritage, and the environment. To maintain high visitor satisfaction and meaningful experiences, it is crucial to raise awareness of

sustainability issues and encourage sustainable tourism behaviors among travelers (United Nations, 2022).

Today, the terms "sustainable rural tourism" and "community capacity building" are often used interchangeably. The overarching objective of tourism policies is to harmoniously integrate the economic, political, cultural, intellectual, and environmental benefits of tourism with people, destinations, and nations, aiming to improve the quality of life for all and lay the foundation for peace and prosperity (UNWTO, 2021). For rural tourism to succeed, it needs to be multifaceted and sustainable, ensuring the long-term viability of the tourism sector, rural economy, scenic landscapes, environment, and the unique culture and character of host communities. Tourism is now seen as a tool for revitalizing rural economies.

However, rural ecosystems are delicate, and tourism can easily disrupt or destroy them through sudden changes. Numerous studies highlight the selling advantage of "rurality" for countryside vacations, with pristine nature, landscapes, and scenery being highly sought after (King, 2020). Rural tourism has grown due to government initiatives and market forces seeking alternative types of vacations, with developed countries experiencing significant impacts. In Ghana, village or rural tourism is a significant sector, providing opportunities to explore the customs, cultures, arts, and cuisine of diverse communities and ethnic groups (Michael, 2020). However, for village tourism to grow sustainably in Ghana, political stability is crucial.

Proper marketing of rural tourism destinations is essential, and the government should promote equal rights and empowerment for all ethnic groups. Green tourism, with minimal negative impacts on the environment and wildlife, is considered the primary approach for expanding the tourism industry, fostering the growth of existing

businesses, and meeting the rising demand for sustainable vacations (King, 2020). Long-term sustainable green tourism is seen as a logical choice that aligns with the increasing environmental consciousness and can contribute to the wellbeing of local communities. Therefore, activities related to ecotourism or green tourism should be supported to ensure the growth of sustainable tourism, recognizing the critical role of the environment in its success. (Morrison, 2019)

#### **2.4 Role of government in tourism development**

The role of government in tourism development is expansive, encompassing numerous public institutions, each equipped with its distinct set of policies and regulatory frameworks. This comprehensive involvement is crucial for realizing the full potential of the tourism industry, resulting in economic growth, societal well-being, and the responsible management of vital resources (Fennell, 2019).

At the national level, Ministries of Tourism assume a central role as government bodies responsible for crafting national tourism policies and strategies. They play a pivotal role in shaping the overarching direction of the tourism sector, ensuring alignment with broader national objectives. Their work extends to the formulation of comprehensive policies, which serve as guiding documents to chart the course of tourism development at a national scale (Page, 2019).

On a regional or local level, Tourism Boards and Authorities emerge as key players. They take on the mantle of promoting and marketing their specific destinations, fostering tourism growth within their respective regions (Richards, 2019). These entities often go beyond mere promotion, actively overseeing tourism infrastructure projects, thereby driving the physical development of tourist destinations (Gartner, 2019).

The importance of efficient transportation networks cannot be overstated in ensuring tourist accessibility. Transportation Authorities, therefore, wield substantial influence (Hall & Page, 2019). Their responsibilities encompass infrastructure development, including the maintenance and expansion of transportation networks such as roads, airports, and public transit systems. Such initiatives are crucial in improving the accessibility and connectivity of tourist destinations (Prideaux, 2019).

One of the cornerstones of responsible tourism development is the prudent management of natural and cultural resources. This responsibility falls under the purview of Environmental and Conservation Agencies (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2019). They work diligently to safeguard these resources, implementing policies and regulations that promote sustainable tourism practices. This oversight helps minimize the environmental impact of tourism, preserving the unique attractions that draw visitors.

Local governments, operating within their respective jurisdictions, assume a significant role in the regulation and management of tourism activities (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2019). They enforce zoning laws, issue permits, and collaborate closely with local businesses to ensure compliance with regulations. This localized approach fosters responsible and sustainable tourism practices within their communities (Pechlaner & Volgger, 2019).

In addition to these public institutions, governments at various levels establish a comprehensive array of policies and regulatory frameworks (Bieger & Wittmer, 2019). These have a profound impact on the tourism sector, serving as the foundation for its development and operation.

Tourism policies, often crafted at the national level, offer a comprehensive vision and strategic roadmap for the sector (Hall & Lew, 2019). These policies span diverse areas,

encompassing sustainable tourism development, promotional strategies, and workforce training. They provide a clear trajectory for the evolution of the tourism industry (Dredge & Whitford, 2019).

Regulations governing tourism businesses are instrumental in defining the standards and practices that such businesses must adhere to (Weaver, 2019). These regulations are essential in ensuring the quality and safety of services provided to tourists, ultimately contributing to their satisfaction and the success of the tourism sector.

Government policies were instigated to make the growth of the Ghana tourism industry possible. Tourism in the mid-1980s was recognized and given precedence in the investment code of Ghana (PNDC Law 116) as one among the five sectors permitting development as well as investments. The prospective nature of tourism as a long-term national development plan resulted in the formulation of national tourism development plans that focused on the notion of sustainability in Ghana. Among these plans was the 15-year National Development Tourism Plan (NDTP) 1996–2010, which was followed by the Tourism Sector Medium Term Development Plan (TSMTDP) 2010–2013 and currently the Ghana National Tourism Development Plan (GNTDP) 2013–2027 (Adu 2019). These plans propose equal benefit distribution and development among residents of the country and specifically local people of rural communities living close to attractions. In this case, the plan supports the development of rural tourism, which considers issues of rural development important. This is to make sure that resources are utilized sustainably with tourism benefits equitably distributed throughout the country (Akyeampong & Asiedu, Citation2008; Asiedu, Citation2002). Environmental legislation is critical for safeguarding the natural environment, preventing overexploitation, and minimizing the impact of tourism activities on delicate ecosystems (Buckley, Zhong, Ma, & Wang, 2019). These regulations are

aimed at preserving the pristine beauty and ecological diversity of the destinations that attract visitors.

Licensing and permit requirements establish stringent prerequisites for businesses and individuals operating in the tourism sector (Fyall & Garrod, 2019). This ensures that only qualified and responsible entities participate, enhancing the overall quality and safety of the tourism experience.

Taxation is another facet of government involvement in tourism (Song, Wang, & Liu, 2019). On one hand, it generates revenue for the government, and on the other, it can be employed strategically through incentives like tax breaks and grants to stimulate tourism development in specific areas or during particular seasons (Wang, Weber, & Zhang, 2019).

Crisis management procedures are an integral component of government oversight (Ye, Cai, Zhong, Wang, & Li, 2019). These procedures are indispensable for managing unexpected emergencies in tourism, ranging from natural disasters to pandemics. They are designed to ensure the safety of tourists and protect the reputation of tourist destinations (Sheldon, & Fesenmaier, 2019).

Finally, governments also establish regulations and policies related to tourist safety and security (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). These encompass a wide range of measures, from the implementation of emergency response systems to the enforcement of health regulations and law enforcement efforts. These regulations serve to guarantee the well-being of tourists during their visits (Tarlow, 2019).

In conclusion, the government's role in tourism development is multi-faceted and intricate, involving a wide array of public institutions, policies, and regulatory frameworks. This comprehensive approach is essential for driving the growth of the tourism sector while simultaneously ensuring that development is sustainable and

responsible (Lew, & McKercher, 2019). These specific institutions and policies play pivotal roles in achieving these objectives, forming the backbone of the broader tourism landscape.

## **2.5 Ways of improving tourism in Ghana**

The success of Ghana's tourism industry has long depended on the generosity of visitors and tourists from abroad. The country needs foreign currency, so this occurrence may not be all that awful, but we must transfer our attention to increasing local tourism numbers. Citizens must take a great interest in visiting our tourist destinations if we want to increase this sector of our tourism. It is common knowledge that Ghana is home to some of the most breathtaking sights on earth. Naturalists and eco-tourists will find that the nation is the perfect place to be for some authentic tourism adventure because many of these sights are still in their original states. The grandiosity of an industry that is quickly becoming as one of the key pillars of the economy is further enhanced by Ghana's magnificent and picturesque tourist sites, friendly people, and delectable cuisine (United Nations. 2022). Even while data throughout the years have proven that international visitors and tourists have contributed to the sector's growth, there are also signs that Ghana's people may raise the bar for the country's tourism industry. The need to boost domestic tourism numbers derives from evidence that the sector is ripe with the potential to improve livelihoods through employment and income development, both globally and notably in specific African nations (UNWTO, 2019).

There are many signs that a thriving domestic tourist industry helps tourism's capacity to alter economies and improve lifestyles to its fullest extent. Countries who started promoting local tourism are still enjoying the rewards, and they have been successful in converting entire towns into tourist destinations while raising local engagement.

For instance, domestic tourism in South Africa, which saw 17.2 million domestic visitors last year and has cruise and rural tourism as its two main development sectors, has grown to be a significant source of income and employment. Worldclass sites have been constructed to memorialize the country's past and celebrate its new found unity, while the quantity and quality of community, village excursions have expanded drastically (King, 2020).

Even if the Ghanaian situation may be very different from this story, there is plenty of evidence that the country may benefit from a more active and productive domestic tourist industry that would greatly enhance the living standards of individuals who work in it. Ghana has an extensive and beautiful array of forts, castles, memorial sites, and other structures that serve as continual reminders of our historical involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade period. These websites can be used to mirror the illustration provided by South Africa. (Michael, 2020)

It is important to remember that encouraging domestic travel is a shared duty that calls for the coordinated efforts of all parties involved, including decision-makers in the public and corporate sectors, traditional authorities, and local residents.

Individually, a change in perspective towards the patronage of tourists' sites could go a long way to give the industry the needed facelift. While people may be inclined to visit some of these sites only during holidays, a change in perspective could make it a routine exercise which in turn could bring in more foreigners to the sites. As a result, they could visit Kakum Park on weekends rather than waiting to plan a group trip on, say, Farmers' Day. (Morrison, 2019).

A distinctive feature of Ghana's tourist industry is that it is one of the few economic sectors that directly pays individuals involved, suggesting that a rise in visitors will

eventually enhance stakeholders' financial circumstances. Ghana has demonstrated to the world that we can be trusted when it comes to the safety of tourists, and local folks can take advantage of this fact by helping to drive home this idea to potential international visitors and tourists. Ghana is a nation renowned for its peace and political stability (Ruoss 2017). Creating tourist clubs and environmental protection organizations in schools is one strategy to encourage interest in travel. In order for Ghana's young to have a strong desire to be a part of its success stories in the future, more and more of them must be active in the tourist industry. Additionally, in order to ensure that employees have time to visit tourist attractions, yearly vacation from employees should be made mandatory. Maybe it should be company policy that employees who don't use their leave immediately lose that time off. Ghanaians must be made aware of the value of domestic travel and how it affects the country's economy. It is commendable that new projects keep popping up in the domestic tourism campaign, including those from the Ghana Tourism Authority, See Eat Wear Feel Ghana, Heritage Caravan on Citi FM, and Wango Wango, among others. While it is highly laudable that such initiatives are assisting in the opening up of tourism destinations to Ghanaians, more can be done to arouse interest in and a desire to visit these destinations. We applaud the government's efforts to pique individuals' interest in domestic travel, but we implore it to foster the favorable conditions necessary for regional investments and enterprises to prosper in the industry. The great potential for tourism to advance the nation is frequently disregarded. We will continue to rely on the generosity of foreigners to grow a sector that has the ability to generate riches through significant employment for local residents as long as not every Ghanaian is ready to capitalize on this enormous opportunity.

## **2.6 Tourism and sustainable rural development**

A new term in the globe has been suggested today: sustainable development. Dissatisfaction with the ecological effects of development and socioeconomic expansion in rural and urban cultures is where sustainable development first emerged. This plan affirms that development is solely a process that improves the quality of life for all people by combating production, distribution, and consumption practices that are incompatible with the environment and preventing resource depletion and environmental destruction (Ushie, 2019). Sustainable rural development seeks to replace just economic development with a holistic and balanced development that takes into account the balance and protection of values, the quality of economic ethnicities and principles, as well as economic advantages.

According to this perspective, tourism development that makes use of available resources not only satisfies the economic, social, cultural, and legal requirements of society as well as the expectations of tourists, but also offers unity and integration, cultural identity, health, environmental protection, economic balance, and the welfare of local people. Since these interactions may be positive and dynamic, it is attempted to maintain a balance between the ties between the host culture, the tourist destination, and visitors. Additionally, cultural and environmental vulnerabilities are reduced, tourist pleasure is attained, and economic growth is boosted by easing the tensions and crisis among the aforementioned aspects (Byrd, 2020). Rural tourism diversifies the economy, lowers agricultural risks, and creates opportunities for all-around growth. Exploring the natural world and sustainable development are clearly different. While sustainability must be considered in all tourist operations, planning, and activities, nature exploration is just one area of the business (Curry & Moutinho, 2022).

The core topic of development and planning talks, sustainable development, is really the result of differing development-related viewpoints. Different conceptions of sustainable development might be inferred, much as the idea of development. The common thread throughout all of these concepts is sustainability and achieving a dynamic, long-lasting growth process that can meet current requirements without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Del Chiappa, & Melis, 2017). The goal of tourism and sustainable tourism can only be accomplished if all influential groups involved in the industry, including tourists themselves, feel responsible and are given the necessary training to understand their roles and how to best fulfill them.

Planning and managing tourism in a way that supports and does not harm the host society's economy, natural resources, and environment is essential (Dieke, 2019). In order to reduce rural poverty and the strain on resources to achieve sustainable development, growing rural tourism is advised as a supplementary economy. Information technology and communication are among the prerequisites of sustainable development in all societies because of their exceptional capabilities that have earned them a specific place in the development process. The environment is the primary driver of commercial tourism. The relationship between sustainable forms of development and tourism is evident, and tourism must in turn ensure sustainable development, as industrial tourism has a significant ability to reduce the long-term effectiveness of the environment.

Due to globalization and the rise of the "global village," the development of tourism in rural regions and local societies has become more and more important nowadays. Traditional traditions, historical practices, and folklore of traditional communities have all been eradicated by globalization to the point that these characteristics are no longer

present in cities (Dickinson, 2019). Rural tourism is one of the many components of sustainable rural development. Enhancing rural development as a development factor is important to achieving sustainable rural development because it plays a critical role in ensuring that income is distributed fairly in society and lays the foundation for regional and national development. Developing and promoting cooperative development is another goal of increasing rural development.

Other objectives of rural tourism include encouraging people to participate in decision-making processes, implement projects, share the advantages of various development initiatives, and work together to evaluate initiatives (Elliott, & Neirotti, 2019).

The idea of sustainability in rural tourism is achieved by working toward multiple objectives, emphasizing not only the preservation of natural resources but also the enhancement of host societies' culture and characteristics, the strengthening of perspectives and residencies, the growth of the village's economy, raising public awareness and information, developing sustainable tourism plans, etc (Lee, 2019).

Sustainable tourism is helpful to exploit the potential of natural areas to restore and increase the productivity of their resources in the future, to acknowledge the customs, traditions, and way of life of the locals, to gain tourism experience, to accept the equal share of locals in tourism profits, and to increase the motivation and incentives of locals which raise the awareness and perception of the role of tourism in the growth and development. The link between three positive elements of the tourism environment—tourists, destinations, and host societies—forms the basis for sustainable tourism development (Ruoss 2017).

One of the key goals of tourism is sustainable regional development. Tourism requires less investment than other endeavors like industrial or manufacturing activity,

exploitation of the environment, and logging of forests. Aside from this, ecotourism won't do irreparable harm to the ecology or terrain, and it could even be effective at preserving it. Ecotourism is a morally righteous, rational, and careful use of the environment (King, 2020). It is crucial for all nations, especially emerging ones, to achieve sustainable development and progress. Tourism must be seen as a constructive and pleasant activity that benefits local communities and tourist attractions just as much as it does travelers. To preserve the ecosystem over the long run, the relationship between tourism and the environment needs to be organized. Natural resources must not be depleted by tourism, which might have a permanent negative impact on them and reduce job prospects (Michael, 2020). The nature, size, and characteristics of the tourist destination must be respected in all tourism-related activities and development. Given that villages are the source of natural cultural assets, which, along with the ambiance of the village, may draw many visitors to rural regions, it makes sense to impose sustainable tourism laws on rural tourism.

Though the environment and the tourism industry are two of the main goals of sustainable development, some intellectuals are skeptical of the idea of sustainable tourism because they wonder whether it supports the former (sustainable development for economic profit) or the latter (no development to preserve it). It should be noted that long-term tourism development is a comprehensive process with the goal of preserving rural environment, rural economy, the structure and culture of local communities in villages as well as giving tourists a place to experience new things and making use of the tourism industry in rural areas over the long term (Morrison, 2019).

In Ghana, tourism plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable rural development, offering a promising path towards economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation (Fenny et al., 2017). This burgeoning industry holds the

potential to transform rural communities, capitalizing on Ghana's abundant natural and cultural assets (Adongo et al., 2018).

A fundamental driver of this transformation lies in economic diversification. Tourism introduces alternative economic activities to rural areas, reducing their reliance on traditional sectors like agriculture. This diversification not only enhances economic resilience but also creates new income streams for local populations, contributing to overall economic stability (Enu et al., 2016).

Moreover, the tourism sector generates a substantial number of employment opportunities in rural regions, mitigating issues of unemployment and underemployment (Buor, 2019). Job prospects within the tourism industry span various domains, from hospitality and tour guiding to handicraft production and agriculture, offering diverse employment options for the local workforce (Donkoh et al., 2020).

To cater to the needs of tourists and ensure their satisfaction, rural areas require improved infrastructure. Investments in areas like road networks, accommodation facilities, and utilities are essential (Baidya et al., 2019). These developments, while enhancing the tourist experience, also benefit local communities by improving connectivity and raising overall living standards (Mireku et al., 2018).

The preservation of Ghana's rich cultural heritage is a vital component of rural tourism. The sector provides opportunities for rural communities to safeguard and showcase their traditions and customs. Festivals, cultural heritage sites, and traditional practices play a pivotal role in preserving these valuable intangible assets while attracting tourists (Amoako et al., 2020).

Sustainable tourism practices in rural areas promote the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems (Asare et al., 2020). Ghana's rural landscapes often encompass diverse natural attractions, including national parks and wildlife reserves. Responsible tourism helps protect these environments, promoting biodiversity conservation and sustainable environmental practices (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2018).

Community empowerment is another key aspect of rural tourism development. Many tourism projects in Ghana prioritize community participation and empowerment (Antwi et al., 2017). Local communities are actively engaged in decision-making, benefit-sharing, and the development of tourism activities. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and pride, further enhancing the sustainability of tourism initiatives.

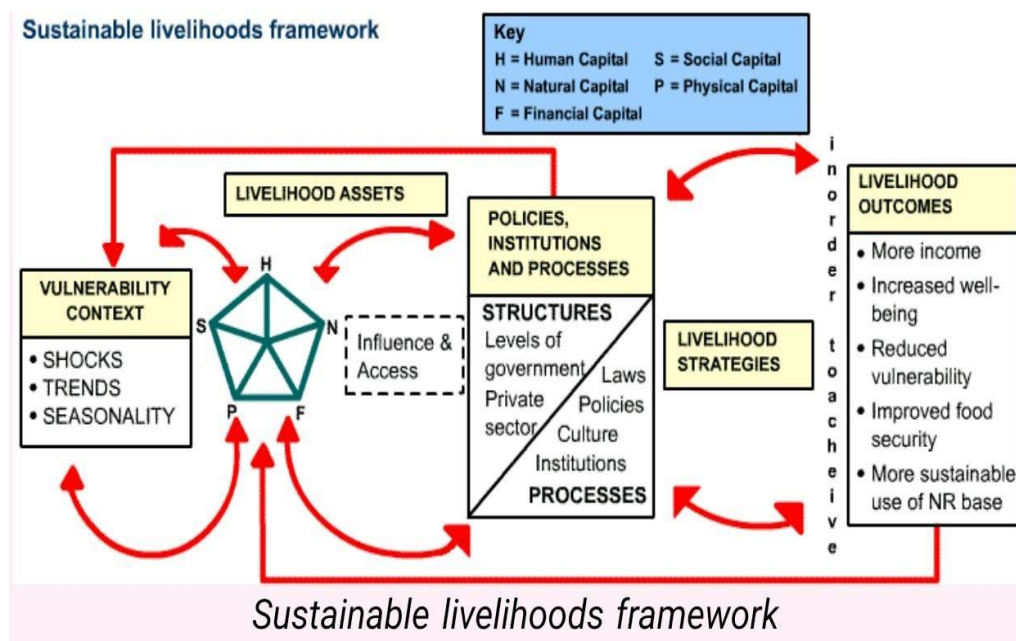
Revenue generated from tourism, including visitor spending, taxes, and entrance fees to attractions, contributes to the local economy (Enu et al., 2016). These funds can be reinvested in various rural development projects, such as education, healthcare, and the enhancement of infrastructure (Donkoh et al., 2020).

Tourism in Ghana also facilitates cultural exchange between visitors and rural communities (Asiedu et al., 2019). This exchange fosters increased understanding and appreciation of local traditions, thereby promoting cultural preservation and encouraging cross-cultural learning.

Government policies that promote sustainable rural tourism development play a crucial role in this process (Buckley et al., 2018). The Ghanaian government has actively supported the sector through the formulation of tourism policies, infrastructure development, and incentives for investors in rural tourism (Ankomah et al., 2018).

## 2.7 Conceptual framework

The livelihoods of people and organizations that reside close to a tourist attraction are impacted by tourism. In his research, King, (2020) demonstrates how the growth of tourism has an impact on people's quality of life, including areas of livelihood and income. According to Michael, (2020), the theoretical framework of livelihood demonstrates that a person's or a group's access to capital determines their ability to support themselves. Capital refers to the financial, social, infrastructure, natural, and human resources as well as the human, natural, and physical capital of the economy. Each capital accessible by persons is a contributing element to access additional capital, therefore the capital may be accumulated or transformed. In livelihood context, capitals affect the sustainability of people's livelihood. This shown in the figure below.



**Figure 1. Sustainable livelihood framework**

Source: *Conway and Chambers, (1998)*.

The concept of livelihood sustainability encompasses various critical factors that can significantly impact individuals' assets and the long-term viability of their way of life.

These factors include demographic changes, such as shifts in population size and composition, as well as technological advancements that influence job prospects and economic output. Additionally, the term "seasonality" refers to the possibility of seasonal variations in pricing, employment opportunities, and overall economic activity. It also encompasses unexpected shocks, such as natural catastrophes or economic inflation, which can have profound effects on people's assets and their ability to maintain a sustainable livelihood (Conway and Chambers, 1998:4).

The sustainable livelihoods framework operates on the principle that individuals need access to various types of assets to achieve successful livelihood outcomes.

These assets can be classified into different categories. Human capital, for example, encompasses individuals' abilities, knowledge, labour capacity, and state of health, which collectively enable them to lead the lives they desire. Human capital plays a crucial role in utilizing the diverse forms of capital available to individuals. Social capital refers to the social resources that individuals can leverage to support themselves financially. These resources can be accessed through formalized group memberships, networking, or even interpersonal trust, which encourages others to provide assistance. Natural capital encompasses both tangible and intangible resources, ranging from the more ethereal elements like climate and biodiversity to concrete elements like natural resources such as land and trees. Therefore, the term "natural capital" should be interpreted broadly to encompass these diverse resources. Physical capital refers to the essential producer commodities and infrastructure required to sustain the desired livelihoods of individuals. Financial capital, on the other hand, represents the assets individuals can utilize to secure the livelihood outcomes they aspire to achieve (Conway and Chambers, 1998:4).

The transformation of structures and processes, including institutions, organizations, and policies, plays a vital role in shaping the means of subsistence for the poor at various levels, from local to global. These structures and processes have a significant impact on determining who has access to whose assets. Examples of processes include international agreements, ownership rights, and laws that protect individual rights, while structures can range from the existence of ministries and banks that provide loans to farmers to neighborhood self-help organizations. Livelihood strategy refers to the actions individuals take to secure their intended means of subsistence, which are influenced by their access to various assets and the rules and procedures prevalent in their society. Livelihood outcomes represent the successes or achievements of people's livelihood initiatives and go beyond mere wealth, encompassing broader aspects that must be articulated by the local population. Understanding what individuals want and why can be challenging for outsiders, as it is often influenced by cultural norms, regional customs, and local values (Conway and Chambers, 1998:4).

Figure 1 further illustrates how a person's or a group's access to capital, along with trends, seasonality, and unexpected events or shocks, collectively influence the resilience of their livelihood. These components can be analyzed from the perspectives of policies, institutions, and processes. Policy aspects, as depicted in Figure 1, play a significant role in influencing the resilience of livelihoods in the face of various factors. This includes macroeconomic policies that shape the overall economic environment and sectoral policies that specifically target and regulate different sectors of the economy. Macroeconomic policies, such as fiscal and monetary measures, can impact the availability of financial resources, investment climate, and overall economic stability, thereby influencing livelihood outcomes. Sectoral policies, on the other hand,

focus on specific industries or sectors within the economy and can have direct implications for employment, income generation, and resource allocation.

Institutions also contribute to the resilience of livelihoods by providing the necessary framework and support systems. These institutions include legal, commercial, social, and cultural entities that shape the rules, regulations, and norms governing livelihood activities. International agreements and ownership rights, for example, establish the legal foundations for economic activities and determine access to resources. Commercial institutions, such as banks and financial institutions, play a vital role in providing access to financial capital and facilitating economic transactions. Social and cultural institutions, including community networks, self-help organizations, and social support systems, contribute to social capital and can enhance livelihood opportunities through collaboration and mutual assistance.

Furthermore, processes within society influence the livelihood strategies individuals adopt and the outcomes they achieve. Livelihood strategies refer to the actions and approaches people employ to secure their desired means of subsistence. These strategies are shaped by access to various assets and resources, as well as the rules and procedures established by the society in which individuals operate. Processes such as decentralization, participation, and free commerce can influence the opportunities and constraints individuals face in pursuing their livelihoods.

The interplay of policies, institutions, and processes can have a direct impact on shocks, trends, seasonality, and the access individuals or groups have to capital. Changes in policies, institutions, or procedures can significantly influence the ability of individuals to withstand shocks or adapt to changing trends and seasonal variations.

The effectiveness of policies, the inclusiveness of institutions, and the efficiency of processes all contribute to the overall resilience of livelihoods.

Preserving livelihoods and achieving livelihood goals require strategic approaches that consider the multifaceted nature of the livelihood system. The objectives of livelihoods encompass not only increased income but also improved welfare, food security, resource sustainability, empowerment, and the reduction of vulnerabilities. Rural livelihoods, in particular, experience transformations through tourism, as locals leverage natural resources, local culture, and tourist attractions to generate income. It is important to recognize that the impacts of the tourism industry extend beyond economic aspects, affecting the lives of those residing near tourist attractions, and considering sustainable practices becomes crucial in managing these impacts.

The sustainable livelihood framework provides a holistic approach to balance economic development, environmental conservation, and social well-being. When applied to the research topic of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana, it offered a valuable perspective that enabled researcher to assess the potential impact of tourism on the local community, natural resources, and the cultural heritage of the area.

For instance, in terms of the economic dimension, sustainable tourism development should prioritize the economic benefits for the local community. This entails creating income-generating opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting local businesses. By focusing on economic growth in the region, the tourism industry can contribute to the overall prosperity while ensuring that the benefits are distributed equitably among the residents.

Within the environmental dimension, the Gbele Resource Reserve holds great significance as a natural asset that needs to be preserved and protected. Sustainable tourism development must minimize any negative environmental impacts, such as deforestation, pollution, and habitat destruction. Responsible resource management, biodiversity conservation, and the adoption of eco-friendly practices should be prioritized to ensure the long-term sustainability of the reserve and its surrounding areas.

Regarding the social dimension, it is crucial to consider the social well-being and cultural heritage of the local community in rural tourism development. Engaging and involving community members in decision-making processes and providing opportunities for their active participation in the tourism industry are essential. Furthermore, cultural preservation and respect for local traditions should be promoted. It is also important to ensure that tourism activities contribute positively to the social fabric of the community, such as improving infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

Applying the sustainable development framework in the context of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality requires conducting thorough assessments of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of tourism activities. This assessment should inform the implementation of appropriate policies, regulations, and strategies to ensure that tourism development aligns with the principles of sustainability. This may involve promoting community-based tourism initiatives, implementing sustainable tourism practices, and raising awareness among tourists and stakeholders about the importance of responsible and sustainable tourism.

By adopting the sustainable development framework, the aim is to achieve a balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and social wellbeing. This

approach ensures the long-term sustainable development of rural tourism in the Sissala East Municipality while safeguarding the Gbele Resource Reserve and its surrounding areas.

## **2.8 Theoretical framework**

### **2.8.1 Neil Leiper's Tourism System Model (Leiper's Tourism System Framework, 1979)**

Leiper's model, developed by Australian academic Neil Leiper in 1979 is widely recognized as one of the most influential models in the field of tourism studies. It offers valuable insights into understanding tourism as a complex and interconnected system. In the past, tourism was often regarded as a simple industry, but it has become evident that it is far more intricate, requiring a holistic and integrated approach for comprehensive analysis. Leiper's model provides a framework that assists researchers in comprehending the intricate relationships between various subsystems and the broader elements of the tourism sector.

At its core, Leiper's model consists of three primary components or actors within the tourist system. The first component is the visitor or tourist themselves, representing the demand side of tourism. They are individuals seeking travel experiences and engaging in leisure activities. The second component comprises the geographical elements, including the traveler-generating region (the place of origin of the tourist), the travel route region (the transit or transportation routes), and the travel destination region (the place visited by the tourist). These geographical factors play a crucial role in shaping the travel experience.

The third component of Leiper's model is the tourism industry itself, representing the supply side of tourism. This includes all the organizations, businesses, and services

involved in facilitating and providing the necessary infrastructure, accommodations, transportation, attractions, and activities for tourists. The tourism industry acts as a bridge connecting the visitors with the destination and plays a significant role in shaping the overall tourism experience.

Leiper's model also introduces the concept of a tourist attraction system, which describes the empirical relationship between the tourist, the nucleus (the core attraction or activity), and the marker (the supporting elements and infrastructure surrounding the nucleus). This perspective recognizes that tourists seek experiences related to leisure and recreation, and these experiences are created through the interaction between tourists, attractions, and the supporting infrastructure.

Furthermore, Leiper's model views tourism as a sequential process with interconnected components that must occur in a particular order for travel to take place. These elements include the human element (the tourists themselves), the industrial element (the tourism industry and its services), the geographic element (the different regions involved in the travel process), and the environmental element (the natural and built environments that form the backdrop of the tourism experience). It is important to note that these factors can be influenced by external factors such as the environmental, social, legal, and political context in which tourism operates.

By understanding the interplay between these components and their surrounding environment, tourism researchers and practitioners can gain valuable insights into the dynamics of the tourism system. This knowledge can inform the development of effective strategies and policies to enhance the positive impacts of tourism, mitigate negative consequences, and ensure the sustainable development of tourism destinations. Leiper's model serves as a valuable tool for analyzing and managing the

complexities inherent in the tourism industry, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon.

### **2.8.2 The challenges of tourism industry in Ghana.**

The tourist industry, like any other industry, has its share of positive, negative, and challenging aspects. Despite its significant contributions to various sectors, the tourism business is not immune to the inherent volatility of markets. While leisure travelers play a vital role in driving many industries, it is essential to recognize that tourism encompasses more than just leisure visitors. Business tourists, for instance, exhibit similar behaviours and spending patterns to leisure travellers, making them an important demographic within the tourism industry.

Professionals in the travel and tourism sector are well aware of the political, medical, and economic turbulence that can impact their industry. These fluctuations are often beyond the control of tourism and travel experts, as they are influenced by external factors. However, industry leaders and professionals strive to develop strategies to effectively handle unexpected contingencies that arise from these uncontrollable factors.

It is important to acknowledge that while tourism brings about opportunities and generates revenue, it is not without its drawbacks. Various negative aspects can significantly impact a location's well-being. Social issues, such as cultural clashes or social disruptions arising from tourism, can pose challenges to the local community. Environmental concerns, including over-tourism, strain on natural resources, and pollution, can degrade the very attractions that draw visitors.

Moreover, the effects of climate change pose additional difficulties, with rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and ecosystem disruptions threatening the sustainability of tourism destinations.

According to Ushie, (2019), the majority of environmental issues caused by tourism have a negative effect on the host nation. Mass tourism is defined as when thousands of people go at the same time for the same reason. Because these tourists don't care about the environment, they end up contaminating it by tossing all types of rubbish to the beach and other areas in the destination, which has a negative impact on the ecology. The ecosystem is frequently impacted by visitors who bring various sorts or shapes of plastic debris and bottles, which over time may disrupt the inhabitants of the flora and fauna life cycle.

Young people who like imitating foreign cultures in an effort to think and act the same way might easily pick up some of the problematic life systems of visitors who have questionable dress codes and lousy manners. The host community is harmed by unfriendly environmental activities, and the consequences cannot be made up for financially. The social aspect of tourism is another problem; when tourists travel to a place, it encourages or facilitates prostitution among the local populace. Prostitution is rampant in tourist areas, which undoubtedly has detrimental effects on local culture. Teenage girls with low incomes and parents who are unable to support them take advantage of visitors' cheap money and become susceptible to pregnancy and its negative effects. Additionally, Byrd, (2020) identify Cuba as a place where sex and prostitution tourism is thriving.

Climate change is another issue with tourism; during the past ten years, there has been a rise in the relationship between the two. Climate change has an impact on some

nations and industries a number of natural factors, including biodiversity, environmental resources, snow depth, and fresh water, are also impacted by climate change. Because of the high risk of climate change and their limited ability to adapt, developing nations whose primary source of revenue and economic expansion is tourism are more likely to experience the effects of climate change (Byrd, 2020).

When a country is suffering from climate change, terrorism, violence, and unfavorable alliances, political instability is another important problem that affects tourists' willingness to travel to that place. The visitors themselves often through hardships while trying to travel and remain in these strange countries. Some of these include looking for visas and the amount of time the host nation allows for visitors to remain. Security is a further, extremely significant issue. Tourist abduction is a concern in Nigeria in particular, historically occurring largely in the south. Tourists are an easy target for kidnappers because of the high ransom demand. The governments of the United States and Great Britain have frequently had occasion to issue travel warnings to people who were planning to visit dangerous areas. Nevertheless, despite the risks involved, people continue to travel because tourism is here to stay.

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) offers a comprehensive perspective on the factors influencing rural livelihoods and how they are affected by external factors and interventions. In the case of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana, the SLF can be applied to examine the impacts and potential benefits of tourism on local livelihoods.

The SLF emphasizes the importance of various assets that individuals and communities possess. In the context of rural tourism, the Gbele Resource Reserve serves as a valuable natural asset with the potential to generate tourism-related activities.

Understanding how these assets are utilized and contribute to the development of sustainable livelihoods is crucial.

Livelihood strategies play a significant role in rural communities. As tourism develops in the area, individuals and communities may engage in various activities, such as providing accommodation, offering tour guide services, selling local products, or participating in cultural performances. Analyzing the range of livelihood strategies employed by the locals in response to tourism development can shed light on their effectiveness and sustainability.

Institutions also play a vital role in rural tourism development. Local government bodies, community-based organizations, and tourism associations govern and manage tourism activities. Assessing the roles and effectiveness of these institutions in supporting rural tourism development and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits is essential.

Considering vulnerability and resilience is crucial in understanding the impacts of tourism on local livelihoods. Rural communities may face various risks and challenges associated with tourism, including changes in economic conditions, social dynamics, and environmental impacts. Assessing the vulnerabilities and resilience of local communities in the face of tourism development can provide insights into strategies to enhance resilience and minimize negative impacts.

Applying the Sustainable Livelihood Framework to the research topic of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality and the Gbele Resource Reserve can offer a comprehensive understanding of how tourism affects local livelihoods. It can identify opportunities for sustainable livelihood development and inform policy and interventions to promote inclusive and responsible tourism practices. By considering

assets, livelihood strategies, institutions, and vulnerability, the study can provide valuable insights into the potential of tourism as a driver for rural development while ensuring the well-being and resilience of local communities.

## **2.9 Potentials of Tourism**

Rural tourism is a type of travel that showcases rural society's way of life, as well as its art, culture, and legacy. It also helps the local community economically and socially, while fostering contact between visitors and locals for a longer-lasting experience. In the current period, tourism is described as a tool that has a significant influence on both the town that hosts visitors and the country as a whole. Any type of tourism is, in fact, expected to have a radically favorable influence from the outset. However, at first, its negative effects are ignored and go unnoticed. Therefore, it is indisputable that tourism will have no negative effects on the neighborhood or society at large. (Ruoss 2017)

### **2.9.1 Environmental impacts/benefits**

The impact of tourism-related activities on the environment was identified by OECD research from the late 1970s. This study highlighted key areas of stress or activity in the tourist sector, such as ongoing environmental restructuring at highway, airport, and resort locations that produced waste materials both biological and nonbiological. Indirect environmental stress brought on by tourist activities (destroying coral reefs, dunes, etc.) and effects on population dynamics are the other two. These have a detrimental influence on flora, alter fish output, generate health concerns, and reduce the allure of a location (migration, increase of population in a particular place). (Byrd, 2020). Tourism-related activities have a three-fold influence on the environment. An example of these is natural resources. In locations where the resources deemed important are already few, the growth of tourism inadvertently leads to problems.

Activities related to tourism may also put strain on scarce local resources including food, energy, and raw materials such as water. Pollution has an additional effect on the environment. The main issue at the moment is air pollution, which is caused by emissions from many modes of transportation. Noise pollution also has an impact on natural resources as minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland, and animals. Construction in the tourist and recreational industries has put more strain on these resources and on picturesque landscapes, directly affecting natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable. Another unfavorable effect of tourism is the deforestation carried out for the purposes of land clearance and the harvesting of fuel wood. One traveler engaged in trekking in Nepal, for instance, would consume four to five kg of wood per day.

(Curry & Moutinho, 2022)

### **2.9.2 Socio-cultural impacts/benefits**

The socio-cultural effects of tourism can be viewed from both positive and negative perspectives. Every nation has a history of researching the sociocultural effects of tourism in relation to the interactions between the local and foreign populations.

The author attempts to highlight both good and negative effects of tourism in the host nation or region in this chapter. The local community benefits from infrastructural and leisure amenity improvements brought about by tourism. The contact and sharing of customs and beliefs between the host and visitor constitutes the beneficial sociocultural influence. It implies that tourists not only take in the local culture and customs, but also return home and spread their own culture. It facilitates the sharing of cultural customs between the two parties. Additionally, tourism promotes the preservation and protection of cultural heritages, historic sites, traditions, handicrafts, and festivals. In

this way, tourism actively contributes to the preservation of vital resources that have both regional and global significance. (Del Chiappa, & Melis, 2017). However, there are some issues that cannot be disregarded since they have a negative tendency in terms of their effects on society and culture.

In the context of tourism, there are instances where significant misunderstandings can arise between visitors and the host community due to differences in behavior and cultural norms. These misunderstandings can occur when visitors encounter standards and values that are unfamiliar or contrary to their own experiences. Similarly, the host community may be taken aback by the behaviors and practices of the visitors. Such disparities in viewpoints, cultures, and beliefs can create challenges and negative reactions.

When visitors are not aware of or do not understand the local customs, traditions, and values of the destination they are visiting, it can lead to tensions and miscommunications. The host community may feel disrespected or offended by the visitors' actions, while the visitors themselves may feel perplexed or uncomfortable in unfamiliar situations. This can create a sense of pressure and strain on both parties involved.

To mitigate these challenges, it is essential for travelers to be culturally sensitive and aware of the location they are visiting. This includes understanding and respecting local traditions, customs, and values. By being mindful of the cultural context and adapting their behavior accordingly, visitors can help foster positive interactions and reduce misunderstandings. This requires open-mindedness, flexibility, and a willingness to learn and appreciate different cultural perspectives.

In addition, effective communication and dialogue between visitors and the host community can play a crucial role in promoting understanding and resolving any potential conflicts. By engaging in respectful and open conversations, both parties can express their perspectives, clarify expectations, and find common ground. This can lead to greater mutual respect, appreciation, and a more harmonious relationship between visitors and the host community. (Dieke, 2019)

### **2.9.3 Economic impacts/benefits**

Tourism has significant economic effects that extend beyond the immediate tourism-related sectors. It plays a crucial role in boosting income, sales, profits, and employment opportunities in the areas it encompasses. While the key tourism sectors such as lodging, dining, travel, entertainment, and retail experience the most direct and immediate consequences of tourist activities, other sectors also benefit indirectly through secondary impacts.

The economic impact of tourism is often assessed through economic impact analysis, which examines the changes in sales, income, and employment resulting from tourist activities in a particular area. These analyses provide valuable insights into the economic benefits generated by tourism and help in understanding its overall contribution to the local economy.

The tourism industry is recognized as one of the largest service-based sectors, primarily driven by the pursuit of economic gain. Employment creation, revenue generation, and foreign exchange are key drivers of the industry's development plans. In the context of tourism, domestic tourism is often considered an export from the host region to other local regions, while international tourist expenditure is regarded as an invisible export from the host country itself.

When visitors choose domestic destinations instead of traveling abroad, it is commonly referred to as a substitution of imports. Central banks play a role in collecting and monitoring data on people's movements, which is useful in assessing the revenue and expenditure in the tourism industry. Quantifying the activities and impact of foreign tourism is generally easier when there are currency exchange and immigration factors involved.

The economic effects of tourism go beyond the direct spending by tourists. Tourism can stimulate various sectors of the economy, including transportation, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, as these sectors provide goods and services to support the tourism industry. Additionally, tourism can create multiplier effects, where the income generated by tourism spending circulates within the local economy, creating further economic opportunities and benefiting a wide range of businesses and individuals.

Moreover, tourism can contribute to the development of infrastructure and amenities in a destination, as the demand from tourists often leads to investments in transportation networks, accommodations, recreational facilities, and cultural attractions. These developments can have long-term positive effects on the local economy by enhancing the attractiveness of the destination and diversifying the economic base. (Elliott, & Neirotti, 2019). Activities related to international tourism promote the flow of foreign currency. The service industry has seen more economic expansion in recent decades than any other sector in many countries. According to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the GDP contribution of the service sector is 40% in developing countries and up to 65% in industrialized nations. Because tourism is a key component of the service sector, its steady and quick expansion has received praise (Lee, 2019). The creation of a Tourist Satellite Account is a useful

strategy for assessing the economic significance of tourism operations to an economy (TSAs). When using economic impact models to ascertain the financial advantages of tourism, it plays a variety of functions. The activities related to tourism also have detrimental economic effects. Numerous unreported expenses associated with tourism services may have detrimental economic impacts on the local economy. Rich countries frequently make more money from tourism than impoverished countries do. Infrastructure, transportation, and tourist centers need to be improved for the tourism sector to operate more efficiently (Scheyvens, 2019). This development often costs the head of state, thus tax money must be used to pay for it. Jobs and services related to tourism are frequently temporary and seasonally based. One of the key factors that has a detrimental economic impact on tourist operations is spending leakage. The amount of money that stays in the economy after visitors spend money there relies on the degree of leakage that takes place.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND PROFILE OF STUDY AREA

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the various methods and techniques that were relied upon for the purposes of gathering and analyzing data for the study. The chapter begins by providing background information of the area for the appreciation of the setting of the study. The profile covers areas including demographic characteristics, AgeSex Structure of Sissala East Municipality, Structure of the Local Economy, Transport and Communication Spatial Analysis as well as the methodology of the study.

The main methodological issues that are examined under the chapter include the study design, target population, methods of data collection, sampling and sample and the methods of data analysis. This is important in providing the basis upon which data for the research is collected, analyzed and the final development of the report for the study.

#### 3.1 Study Area

The Sissala East Municipality is situated in the Upper West region of Ghana, specifically within the Guinea Savannah woodlands. Geographically, the municipality is positioned between latitude 10°9' and 9°20' North of the equator and longitude 0°60' and 1°40' West of the Greenwich meridian. It spans an extensive area of approximately 1,674 square kilometers, with dimensions of approximately 55km from North to South and 53km from East to West (Sissala

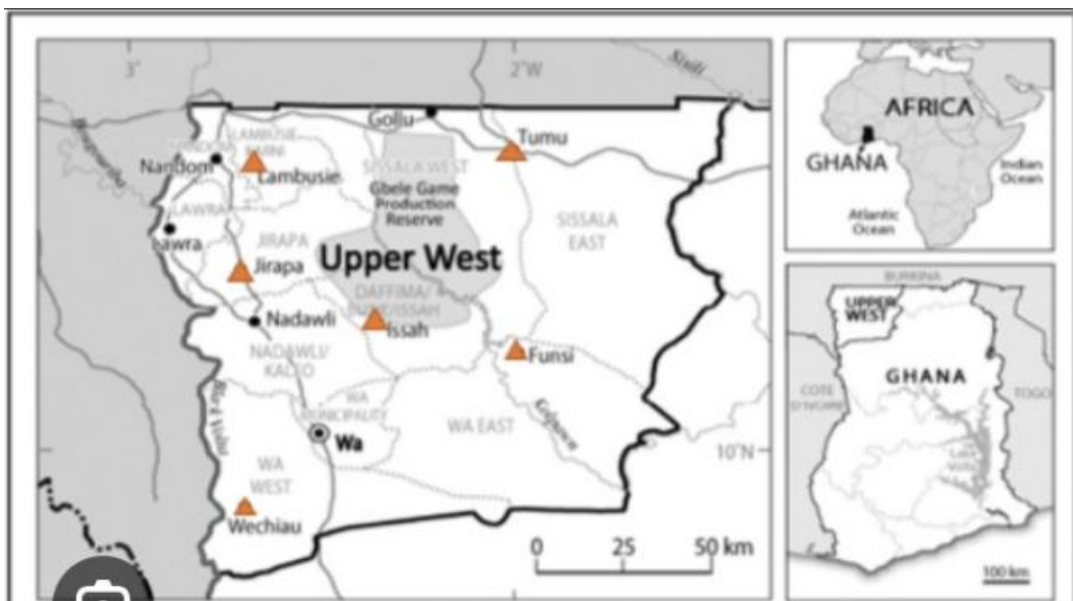
East Municipal assembly, 2018). The municipality shares its borders with Burkina Faso to the North, Bolgatanga to the East, Nandom and Hamile of the Upper West Region to the West, and Wa Municipal of the Upper West Region to the South.

The Sissala East Municipality experiences a tropical maritime air mass between

May and October, resulting in an average annual rainfall of around 950 millimeters. The climate is characterized by high evapo-transpiration rates. The vegetation in the municipality predominantly consists of the Sahel and Sudan-Savannah types, featuring open savannah with fire-swept grassland and deciduous trees. River basins and forest reserves are the most densely vegetated areas, with notable examples being the Sissili forest reserves. During the dry season, many trees in these forested areas shed their leaves. However, human activities such as deforestation and bush burning have adversely affected the original vegetation cover (Sissala East Municipal assembly, 2018).

The Sissala East Municipality, along with its tourism centres, is a prominent destination within the Upper West Region of Ghana. It is known for its unique attractions that draw tourists from far and wide. One such attraction is the friendly ever green Gbele Resource Reserve. The Gbele Resource Reserve is a notable destination, known for its natural beauty and offering diverse tourist activities such as sightseeing, walking, and camping. Additionally, the reserve's forested areas provide opportunities for research and education on plant and animal species. As a result of these attractions, the Sissala East Municipality acts as a magnet, attracting visitors from different parts of the country who seek to explore its diverse ecosystem, engage in learning experiences, and pursue business opportunities in the tourism industry, either directly or indirectly. Moreover, the availability of water resources and the strategic location of the municipality as a border town contribute to its status as a thriving business hub, further attracting people from all over the country to the area. However, despite its tourism potential and the influx of visitors, the economic status of the municipality remains relatively poor.

Several factors contribute significantly to the popularity of the Sissala East Municipality as a rural-based tourism destination. The development of infrastructure, such as campsites and other facilities, in the town and surrounding areas, caters to the demands of the tourism industry. The accessibility of the Gbele Resource Reserve further enhances the municipality's appeal as a tourist destination. Consequently, the decision to conduct this study in the Sissala East Municipality, focusing on the Gbele Resource Reserve as a case study of a rural tourism destination, is based on the combination of three major factors: the municipality's unique geographical features, the presence of diverse tourist attractions, and the availability of infrastructure to support tourism activities.



**Figure 2: Map of Upper West region**

*Source: (Sissala west municipal assembly, 2023)*

### **3.2 Demographic Characteristics**

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC), Sissala East

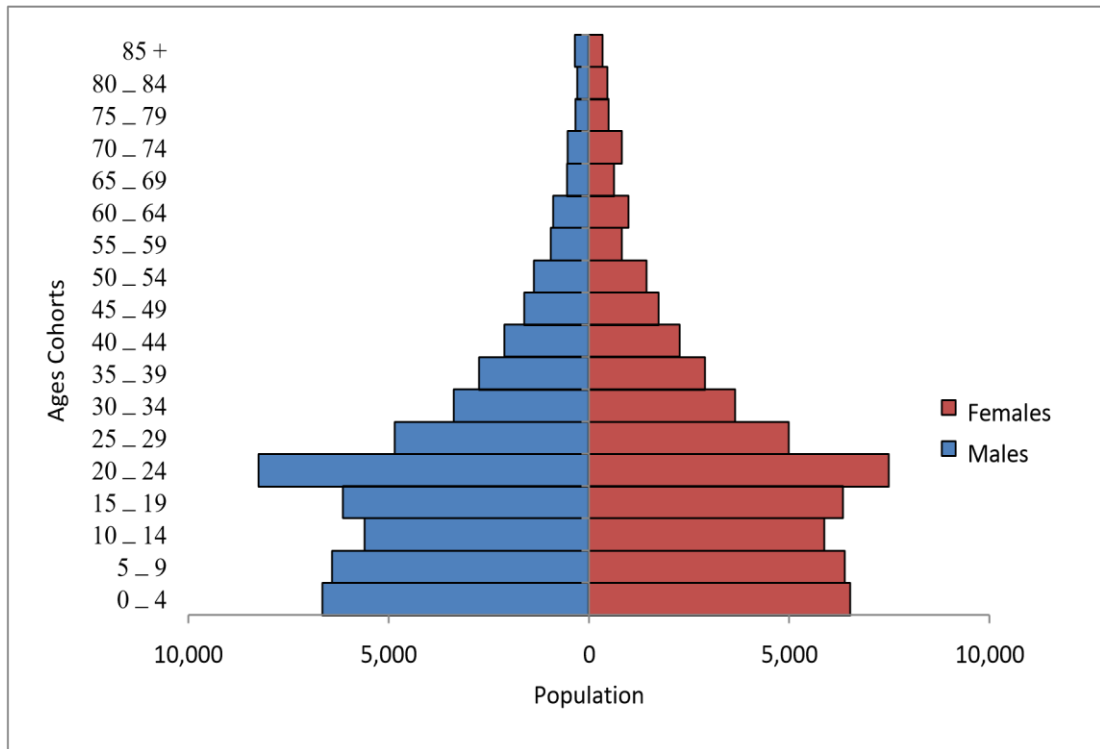
Municipality had a total population of 100,875 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). In light of this, the growth rate of the Municipality varies between 3.7% for rural and 6% for the urban. Currently as it stands, the 2021 population and housing census depicts that, the Municipality population currently stands at 153,264 of which males constitute, 69,427 and the remaining 83,837 constitute females (Population and housing census, 2021)

From the 2021 population and housing census (2021) the population structure of the municipality reveals a preponderance of the youth over the aged and females over males (Youth 49%, potential working population 47% and the aged 4%). This meant a high dependency ratio since the economically active population is 47% compared to a dependent population of 53%. The population is also a female dominated one. That is 54% females against 46% males. Given the ratio of males to females in the municipality, the hospitality industry in the municipality will be in favor of human resources capable of ensuring the it's effective functioning thereby providing quality services to ensure the development of the tourism industry in the municipality. This is based on the fact that, the findings of (Mathembu, 2008), women are more suitable for almost 84% of the vacancies in the hospitality industry due to their gender roles (thus home management roles) in their respective societies.

### **3.2.1 Age-Sex Structure of Sissala East Municipality**

Based on the findings of the 2021 population and housing census, Sissala East Municipality has a youthful population structure with a broad base which consists of a large number of the population that belong to ages 0-24 years however persons in the age group 20-24 years broaden out more. The age sex structure depicts that, the tourism industry of the municipality has abled labor force at its disposal ready to work to ensure

the development of the industry. This is due to the fact that The age-sex structure is similar to those observed in developing countries which is very youthful in nature. This is shown in the figure below.



**Figure 3: Population pyramid for Sissala East Municipality**

### 3.3 Structure of the Local Economy

Agriculture serves as the backbone of the district's economy, employing more than 60 percent of the economically active population. The agricultural practices in the district heavily rely on rainfall, making them predominantly rain-fed. However, to support farming during the dry season, smaller dams, dugouts, and other water bodies serve as important sources of irrigation.

While crop farming plays a significant role in agricultural development, the people in the municipality also engage in other non-cropping activities such as fishing, hunting,

and livestock and poultry keeping alongside their agricultural pursuits. Additionally, the community possesses tourist products that can be leveraged to diversify the local economy. Informal small-scale industrial activities contribute to the industrial revenue and employment within the municipality. These activities include small-scale agro-processing of items such as fibers, cotton, groundnuts, Shea fruits, dawadawa, and rice, among others, as well as small-scale construction projects. These sub-sectors provide opportunities for value addition to the district's raw agricultural produce.

The service or tertiary sector plays a significant role in employment generation within the municipality, accounting for approximately 32 percent of total employment (Municipal Profile, 2017). Apart from contributing to the aggregation of the district's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment indices, the services offered by this sector complement and extend the outputs derived from the primary and secondary sectors. In essence, these services not only generate revenue but also fill the gaps left by agricultural activities in terms of livelihoods.

Trading and commercial activities in the district primarily revolve around foodstuffs, semi-processed food items, and craft products. These goods are sold in local markets as well as outside the district, with some specialized items intended for the international market, albeit on a small scale. Notably, about 95 percent of individuals engaged in these activities are women. The foodstuffs traded include millet, sorghum, cowpea, groundnuts, and rice. Other items, such as cassava, gari (cassava flakes), palm fruits, plantain, and citrus fruits, mainly originate from southern Ghana, with Techiman serving as the main point of purchase. The nature of economic activities in the municipality contributes to creating a memorable experience for tourists, as the diverse range of economic activities complements the services provided by the tourism industry.

### **3.4 Transport and Communication**

Transportation services play a crucial role in facilitating effective communication, information dissemination, and the distribution of productive resources. In the Municipality, the primary mode of transportation is through various types of roads, with footpaths being of paramount importance. The Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Kingdom Transport Services Ltd., and Imperial Transport Services are the major service providers for long-distance travel, both within and outside the Municipality. Metro Mass Transit (MMT), privately owned trucks, mini-buses, and taxi cabs cater to travelers within the central townships, between communities, and to surrounding districts such as Wa, Nandom, Hamile, and Bolgatanga.

The transportation infrastructure and communication characteristics of the municipality greatly facilitate access to tourist services within the area. With the help of communication infrastructure, tourists are able to book accommodations in the hospitality industry even before arriving at their desired destinations. Furthermore, the transportation infrastructure enables tourists from other locations to travel to the various tourist sites within the municipality. Essentially, the transportation infrastructure ensures geographical access to these tourist sites.

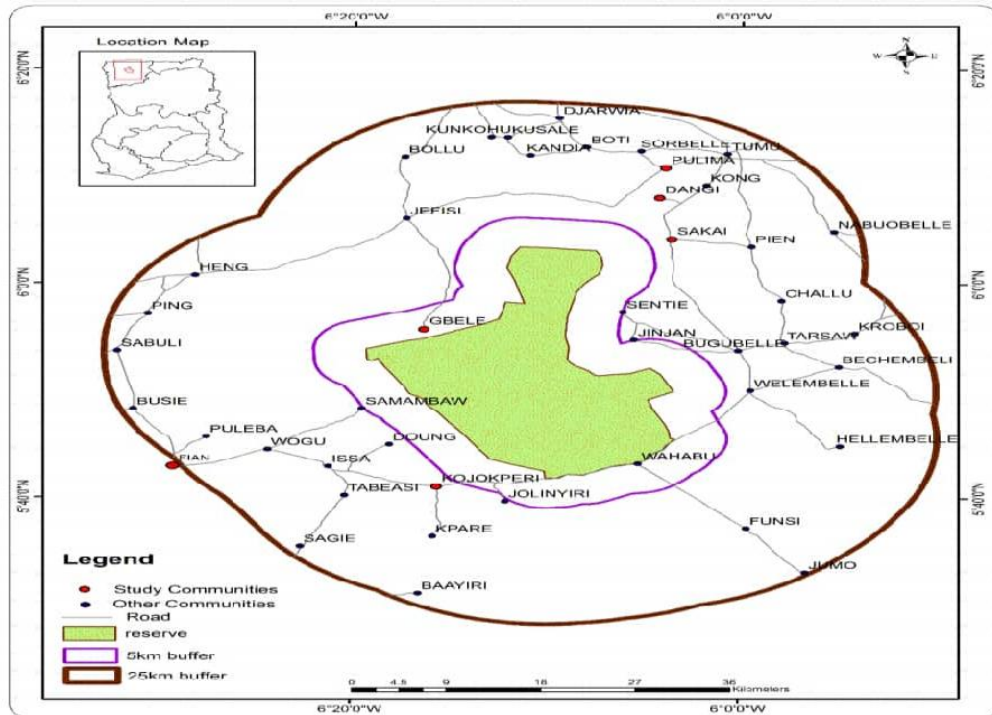
This efficient transport system plays a vital role in enhancing the tourism experience within the municipality. It enables tourists to easily reach their desired destinations, explore the scenic spots, and engage in various tourism activities. Moreover, the availability of reliable transportation options enhances the overall convenience and accessibility for both domestic and international tourists. By providing smooth connectivity and reliable means of transportation, the municipality fosters an enabling environment for tourism development and encourages tourist inflow.

In addition to its role in facilitating tourism, the transportation system in the municipality contributes to the socio-economic development of the local community. It supports trade, commerce, and the movement of goods and services, thereby stimulating economic growth and generating employment opportunities. The transportation infrastructure acts as a lifeline for the residents, ensuring connectivity with neighbouring districts and regions, promoting social interactions, and facilitating the exchange of goods and services.

Overall, the transportation services in the municipality form a critical component of the tourism industry, enabling tourists to access the various attractions and services offered by the municipality. The well-developed transportation infrastructure, coupled with efficient communication networks, ensures that tourists can easily navigate the region and enjoy a seamless travel experience.

#### **3.4.1 profile of Gbele Resource Reserve**

The Gbelle Resource Reserve was established in 1975. Geographically, the reserve was established in the short-grass savannah zone. Gbele Resource Reserve is the only wildlife protected area in the Upper West Region of Ghana. It is also located within the jurisdiction of four district assemblies: Sisaala West, Wa East, Sisaala East and Daffiama-Busie-Issah. It is reputed for its large herds of Roan Antelopes, Warthogs, Kob and Waterbuck, which form the main attractions and others such as Warthogs, Hartebeest, Kobs, Roan Antelope, Waterbuck, Black and white Colobus Monkey, Stripe Jackal, Porcupines, Baboons, Buffalos, Royal Pythons, Crocodiles, Bird Viewing, Colorful Butterflies, Elephants and Lions. The south-western portion in particular has been identified as a major concentration area for these species of animals. Side Attractions include but not limited to: 1) Safari 2) Birding/Bird Watching 3) Crocodiles 4) Wild Camping 5) Hiking 6) Sports Fishing



**Figure 4: The Gbele Resource Reserve**

Source: Forest Services Commission, Upper West Region (2014)

### 3.5 Philosophical underpinning

#### 3.5.1 Interpretative philosophy

The interpretative philosophy, deeply rooted in the fields of tourism and heritage interpretation, plays a pivotal role in enriching the understanding and appreciation of cultural, natural, and historical elements within various destinations (Fennell, 2015). This philosophy places the visitor at the core, shaping experiences to cater to their diverse interests and backgrounds. Interpretation seeks to actively engage visitors, offering context, narratives, and storytelling to render the subject matter relatable and unforgettable (Knudson et al., 2017). Through a variety of interactive tools such as hands-on activities, guided tours, and interactive exhibits, interpretation fosters a more immersive and informative experience for tourists.

Contextualization is one of the fundamental tenets of interpretation, providing historical, cultural, and environmental context to facilitate visitors' comprehension of the significance of the places they encounter (Beck & Cable, 2002). Inclusivity is another core aspect, ensuring that interpretation is accessible and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors, regardless of their age, background, or abilities (Black, 2005). Furthermore, interpretation serves an educational purpose by imparting factual information while also inspiring curiosity and encouraging further exploration (Ham, 1992).

Interpretation often presents multiple perspectives on a subject or site, fostering critical thinking and discussions among visitors (Ballantyne et al., 2011). It creates a strong connection to the physical and cultural environment, engendering a sense of place and a profound appreciation for the landscapes, history, and culture of a destination (Braun & Loomis, 2010). In contexts like heritage sites and natural reserves, interpretation can advocate for conservation and sustainability by conveying the value of preserving these places (Dawson et al., 2005).

Moreover, interpretation frequently integrates the insights and knowledge of local communities, offering authentic perspectives and contributing to local economies (Phillips & Jenkins, 2007). It is an adaptable and flexible approach, taking various forms such as guided tours, exhibits, and digital platforms, and can be customized to suit different environments, settings, and target audiences (Tilden, 1977).

Interpretation finds application in cultural and heritage tourism, nature-based tourism, museums, national parks, historic sites, and other tourist attractions (McArthur & McArthur, 2017). By providing experiences that transcend the mere conveyance of

information, interpretation aims to create meaningful connections that cultivate a lasting appreciation for the places and experiences encountered during travel.

In the context of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality, particularly with a case study of the Gbele Resource Reserve in the Upper West Region of Ghana, the interpretative philosophy assumes a central role (Fenny et al., 2017). This philosophy is rooted in the notion that comprehending and interpreting the local culture, heritage, and environment is fundamental for the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism.

A key aspect of this philosophy is the importance of cultural understanding (Fenny et al., 2017). It underscores the significance of acknowledging and respecting the indigenous communities' customs, traditions, and way of life in the Sissala East Municipality. This understanding serves as a guiding principle for developing tourism activities that are culturally sensitive and uphold local values.

The preservation of cultural and historical heritage is another vital dimension (Asiedu et al., 2019). The interpretative philosophy advocates for the safeguarding of this heritage through responsible tourism practices. In the case of the Gbele Resource Reserve, it entails protecting and showcasing the unique cultural heritage of the region, including traditional dances, crafts, and folklore, as integral parts of the tourism experience.

Furthermore, the philosophy encourages the responsible interpretation of the natural assets, particularly the diverse ecosystems and wildlife found in the Gbele Resource Reserve (Amoako et al., 2020). This involves educating tourists about the significance of the reserve's flora and fauna and the imperative nature of conservation efforts in place to protect these precious resources.

Community engagement is another principle aligned with the interpretative philosophy (Antwi et al., 2017). It calls for the active involvement of local communities in the planning and operation of tourism activities. The knowledge and insights of these communities are invaluable in creating authentic and meaningful experiences for tourists.

Education of visitors is paramount in the interpretative philosophy (Asiedu et al., 2019). It places a strong emphasis on providing context and information to tourists, helping them comprehend the cultural and environmental importance of the places they visit. This not only enriches the visitor experience but also promotes responsible behavior and respect for the local culture and environment.

Sustainability is at the core of the interpretative philosophy (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2018). It calls for a harmonious balance between economic development and the preservation of the environment and culture. In the context of the Gbele Resource Reserve, it translates into developing tourism activities that generate income for local communities while ensuring the long-term protection of the reserve's natural and cultural assets.

Cultural exchange is another outcome of the interpretative philosophy (Amoako et al., 2020). It encourages interaction and understanding between tourists and local communities. This exchange fosters mutual appreciation and meaningful cultural interactions, contributing to a more profound and enriching travel experience.

In practice, interpretation centers or visitor centers often serve as hubs for promoting the interpretative approach (Asiedu et al., 2019). These centers provide information, exhibitions, and educational materials to help tourists interpret the local culture and environment, facilitating a more immersive and educational tourism experience (Antwi et al., 2017).

In summary, the interpretative philosophy is highly relevant in rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality, particularly with the Gbele Resource Reserve as a case study. It promotes responsible and sustainable tourism development that benefits both tourists and the local community while safeguarding the region's cultural and natural treasures.

### **3.6 Research Design**

The study employed the case study research design to facilitate data collection and analysis. A case study research design is a qualitative research method that involves the detailed examination of a single case or small number of cases to investigate and understand a particular phenomenon or situation. This design was chosen to help me gain a deeper understanding of the issue under investigation and to give voice to the participants involved. The qualitative research design allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the collected data, offering insights and in-depth perspectives. It was an inductive, holistic, subjective, and process-oriented approach that aimed to understand, interpret, describe, and develop theories about a specific phenomenon or setting. Unlike quantitative research, which focused on measurements and numerical data, qualitative research emphasized words, language, and personal experiences.

This design was well-suited for retaining the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as individual life cycles, group behaviour, organizational processes, neighbourhood dynamics, educational performance, international relations, and industry development. In the context of this research topic, the case study design focused on neighbourhood change as a result of the presence of tourist sites in the study area. It allowed for an in-depth exploration of the changes that had occurred and provided a platform for referencing relevant previous studies. Additionally, the case

study design enabled me to understand complex issues and phenomena in their natural context.

Overall, the qualitative research design, specifically the case study design, was well-suited for this study. It allowed for an in-depth exploration of the topic, honouring the experiences and perspectives of the participants. By adopting a person-centered and holistic approach, this research sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of the human experience within the context of neighbourhood change influenced by tourist sites.

### **3.7 Target population**

The target population of the study was the workers of the resource reserve, as well as opinion leaders (chiefs, Assembly Members, and Unit Committee Members) and some community members of the selected communities.

The workers of the resource reserve played a major role in the sustainability of the Gbele Resource Reserve by ensuring the daily operations of the tourist sites. In light of this, the workers of the site were able to provide credible data on the challenges they encountered in the course of executing their duties from time to time. The opinion leaders of the municipality served as the source of data on the measures put in place by the opinion leaders (chiefs, Assembly Members, and Unit Committee Members) to ensure the development of the tourist sites within their jurisdiction. The role of opinion leaders (chiefs, Assembly Members, and Unit Committee Members) included assisting with a coordinated approach to integrated land use planning and development, facilitating access to communal land for tourism purposes, the development of authentic cultural and heritage tourism products, and the development of rural tourism precincts. The opinion leaders (chiefs, Assembly Members, and Unit Committee

Members) were closer to the people and played a central role in driving cultural tourism in areas within their jurisdiction.

### **3.8 Sample Size**

Due to the fact that the study employed the qualitative research design, the sample size for the study was determined by the principle of saturation. Saturation meant that no additional data were found, and the researcher did not identify any unique data. In literal terms, the principle of saturation was applied when adding another respondent or participant did not add any different data or discover any additional data unique from what had already been collected. This principle was strictly applied to the workers at the reserve. In the light of this, a sample size of 99 was used for the study. However, by default, Assembly Members, Unit Committee Members of electoral areas including Desime electoral area, Wallemballe electoral area, Kpeviara/Yalia electoral area, Kejekpere electoral area, Buguballe electoral area, and those in and around the municipality associated with the reserve, the chiefs of the various communities, as well as the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), were included in the sample size.

### **3.9 Sampling techniques and procedure**

#### **3.9.1 Purposive Sampling technique**

The sampling technique adopted for the study was the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of respondents who had special knowledge about the phenomenon of interest.

The process of purposive sampling involved several steps to identify and select participants who possessed the desired knowledge and expertise. Here is a description of the process:

1. Identifying the target population: The researcher determined the target population for the study, which included workers of the game reserve and opinion leaders (chiefs, Assembly Members, and Unit Committee Members) from selected communities. These individuals were considered key informants who could provide valuable insights into rural tourism development.
2. Defining inclusion criteria: The researcher established specific criteria for inclusion in the sample. These criteria included factors such as job roles, level of experience, expertise, and influence within the community. For example, workers of the game reserve who were directly involved in tourism operations and opinion leaders with a track record of involvement in tourism-related activities were considered suitable candidates.
3. Identifying potential participants: The researcher conducted a thorough review of the available pool of workers and opinion leaders in the study area. The researcher relied on their knowledge of the local context, previous research, and consultation with local authorities to identify individuals who met the inclusion criteria.
4. Contacting and approaching participants: Once potential participants were identified, the researcher made contact with them to explain the purpose of the study and seek their participation. Participants provided information about the research objectives, the expected time commitment, and any benefits or incentives associated with participation. This step involved establishing rapport and gaining the trust of the potential participants.
5. Assessing participant suitability: The researcher assessed the suitability of potential participants based on their qualifications, knowledge, and willingness to participate. The researcher evaluated whether the participants could provide valuable insights

related to the research objectives and whether participants were willing to contribute their expertise.

6. Selecting the final sample: From the pool of potential participants, the researcher made informed decisions to select the final sample. The researcher considered factors such as diversity of perspectives, representation of different roles or positions, and ensuring a sufficient number of participants to achieve data saturation. The final sample consisted of workers of the game reserve and opinion leaders who best met the research criteria.

### **3.10 Methods of data collection**

This section presented the methods of data collection that were used for gathering data for the conduct of the study. Since the study was a qualitative case study, data was collected using qualitative methods. Specifically, interviews, focus group discussions, and observation served as methods of data collection for the study.

#### **3.10.1. Key-informant Interviews**

Interviews were a valuable research method that allowed researcher to focus on specific topics of interest and delved into the perspectives of the respondents. They provided an opportunity to test the researcher's preliminary understanding while remaining open to new ways of seeing and understanding. In this study, specific key-informant face-to-face interviews were conducted to gather data from the participant. These interviews involved asking open-ended questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study.

The inclusion of open-ended questions in the unstructured interviews was crucial as it allowed for the exploration of new perspectives and insights. The interactions between

the researcher and the respondents during the interviews were recorded for accurate record-keeping.

The interview method of data collection was chosen for its ability to gather detailed information from the interviewees. By interviewing participants, researchers could obtain a nuanced understanding of specific events, their perspectives, and social cues. These social cues, such as voice tone, body language, and intonation, provided additional information beyond verbal responses. This level of detail, both verbal and nonverbal, could reveal hidden connections between emotions, people, and objects that quantitative methods often missed.

Moreover, interviews offered the advantage of tailoring questions to each respondent, allowing researcher to obtain rich and detailed stories that aligned with the specific information needed for the project. Researcher could request more examples or explanations when necessary, gaining insights not only into specific events but also into people's interior experiences, their perceptions, interpretations, thoughts, and feelings. By understanding the process behind an event and its impact on individuals, researchers could go beyond surface-level observations and delve into the deeper meaning and implications.

In the context of this study, interviews aimed to gather data on the tourism potentials of the Gbele Resource Reserve and the benefits associated with the tourist sites under investigation. Through interviews, respondents had the opportunity to express their experiences and the benefits they derived from the tourist sites. Since benefits were subjective and varied from person to person, interviews provided a platform for capturing diverse perspectives and understanding the multifaceted nature of the topic.

### **3.10.2 Focus Group Discussions**

A focus group discussion (FGD) was a comprehensive field method that involved gathering a small, homogeneous group of individuals, typically ranging from six to twelve participants, to engage in a structured discussion on specific topics related to the study agenda. The primary objective of conducting a focus group discussion was to leverage the social dynamics within the group, facilitated by a moderator or facilitator, to encourage participants to express their underlying opinions, attitudes, and motivations that shaped their behavior.

In this study, the focus group discussion (FGD) was employed as an in-depth field method of data collection. It brought together a small, homogeneous group of participants, specifically tailored to the research topic at hand. The intention of utilizing this method was to harness the social dynamics of the group to stimulate discussions and uncover insights into how tourism impacted their daily activities and livelihoods collectively.

In all, four separate Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were held; among management of the reserve, between assembly members and committee members, amongst community members, and the last was between management of the reserve, assembly members, committee members and the community members.

The focus group discussion (FGD) approach offered a unique opportunity to delve into the shared experiences and perspectives of the participants. By bringing together individuals with similar characteristics or backgrounds, the discussions tapped into common themes, collective beliefs, and interactions among group members. The presence of a skilled moderator or facilitator ensured that the conversation remained focused and encouraged participants to openly share their thoughts and experiences.

Through the focus group discussion (FGD), the study aimed to explore the intricate ways in which tourism influenced the participants' lives. By understanding the collective impact of tourism on their livelihood activities, the FGD provided valuable insights into the broader social and economic dynamics at play. It went beyond individual perspectives and allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections and interdependencies that arose within the group.

In essence, the focus group discussion (FGD) method served as a powerful tool for uncovering the underlying mechanisms and dynamics of how tourism activities affected the participants' daily lives collectively. By engaging in open and interactive discussions, the FGD provided a platform for participants to express their thoughts, share their experiences, and shed light on the multifaceted ways in which tourism intertwined with their livelihood activities.

The focus group session was conducted in a suitable and convenient venue within the study area. The venue was arranged in a way that facilitated open discussion and encouraged participation from all participants.

Prior to the focus group session, the participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study, the topics to be discussed, and the importance of their contributions. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring their voluntary participation and confidentiality of their responses.

The focus group discussion was facilitated by the researcher who was knowledgeable about the study objectives and skilled in conducting qualitative research. The moderator used a semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions to guide the discussion and encourage participants to share their experiences, opinions, and challenges related to the economic potential and challenges in the municipality.

During the focus group session, the moderator actively listened to participants, encouraged their active participation, and ensured that all voices were heard. The discussion was guided by the interview guide, but participants were also encouraged to share any additional insights or experiences they deemed relevant. The focus group session was audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure accurate capturing of their responses. Additionally, detailed notes were taken by a designated note-taker to capture non-verbal cues, group dynamics, and other observations during the discussion.

Once the focus group session was completed, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the notes were reviewed and consolidated for further analysis. The qualitative data gathered from the focus group discussion served as valuable inputs for the study, providing rich insights into the economic potential, challenges, and opportunities in the Sissala East Municipality.

### **3.10.3 Observation**

Observation served as a technique for data collection for the study. Observation was more than just looking or listening. Observation is defined as a ‘systematic inquiry made public’ (Stenhouse, 1975). In light of this, it involved systematically selecting and watching tourist sites in the study area. Specifically, direct observation was employed, where I (the researcher) remained physically present and personally monitored what took place in the study area. This data collection method was chosen because it was relatively free of observer bias. It could establish frequencies and was strong on objective measures, which involved low inference on the part of the observer. Based on this, the observation method aided in collecting data on the activities that went on at the various tourist sites under study and presented them in the form of pictures. Hence, enabling readers to gain a maximum understanding.

### **3.11 Tools for data collection**

The interview guide, focus group discussion (FGD) guide, and observation guide served as essential tools for data collection in the study on rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana, specifically focusing on the Gbele Resource Reserve case study. These guides provided structure and direction for the data collection process and ensured consistency and reliability in capturing relevant information.

1. **Interview Guide:** The interview guide played a crucial role in conducting face-to-face interviews with key informants. It served as a framework for the researcher to ask open-ended questions and explore specific topics of interest. The guide allowed for flexibility and adaptability during interviews, enabling the researcher to delve deeper into participants' perspectives and understandings related to tourism potentials and benefits. The interview guide included a series of open-ended questions that aimed to capture detailed and nuanced information from the participants. By using this guide, the researcher could gather comprehensive data and gain insights into the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the interviewees. Additionally, the guide facilitated consistency across interviews by ensuring that all participants were asked similar questions, enabling meaningful comparisons and analysis of the data collected.
2. **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide:** The FGD guide was designed to structure and facilitate group discussions among participants with similar characteristics or backgrounds. It provided a roadmap for the moderator or facilitator to lead the discussion and encourage participants to share their opinions, attitudes, and motivations related to tourism and its impacts on their daily lives and livelihoods.

The FGD guide included specific topics and questions that aimed to stimulate conversation and uncover collective insights. It allowed for the exploration of shared experiences, beliefs, and interactions within the group. The guide helped maintain focus during the discussion and ensured that all relevant aspects of the research topic were addressed.

By following the FGD guide, the researcher could tap into the social dynamics within the group, encouraging participants to openly express their thoughts, share experiences, and contribute to a rich and interactive discussion. The guide served as a valuable tool to capture diverse perspectives and understand the broader social and economic dynamics of tourism in the study area.

3. Observation Guide: The observation guide provided a systematic framework for the researcher to conduct direct observations at various tourist sites within the study area. It outlined the specific aspects and activities to be observed, ensuring consistency in data collection.

The observation guide allowed the researcher to remain physically present and personally monitor the events and behaviors taking place at the tourist sites. It emphasized objectivity and low inference, enabling the collection of accurate and unbiased data. The guide also provided guidance on documenting observations in the form of pictures, which added visual evidence to complement the qualitative data.

Through the observation guide, the researcher could capture important details, such as frequencies of specific activities, interactions between visitors and the environment, and other relevant aspects related to tourism development. The guide facilitated a structured and systematic approach to data collection, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

In summary, the interview guide, focus group discussion guide, and observation guide were instrumental tools for data collection in the study. These guides provided structure, consistency, and focus during the data collection process, ensuring that relevant information was captured from participants and observed activities. By following these guides, the researcher could collect comprehensive qualitative data and gain valuable insights into rural tourism development in the study area.

### **3.12 Data analysis**

According to Bernard and Ryan (2010, p. 109), analysis is the process of exploring data to identify patterns and generate ideas that help explain those patterns. It involves interpreting the identified patterns, determining their significance, and linking the findings to existing research. In this study, the data analysis process will be qualitative in nature, focusing on searching for patterns and ideas within the collected data.

The qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were initially organized into themes to facilitate the analysis process (Riessman, 2008). Systematic comparisons were made among the identified themes to establish similarities or commonalities. To ensure accuracy, the themes were validated by listening to the audio recordings and comparing them with the visual transcripts, ensuring consistency between the two sources. Once the validation process was complete, the analysis took on a narrative form, based on the experiential accounts provided by the participants.

The data analysis followed the following process:

1. Organizing and preparing the data: This step involved transcribing interviews, scanning visual materials, typing up field notes, cataloguing all visual materials, and sorting and categorizing the data based on its source.

2. Coding the data: This process involved organizing the data by segmenting text or image segments and assigning categorical labels to them (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Text data or pictures collected during data collection were segmented into categories, and these categories were labelled
3. with descriptive terms, often derived from the participants' own language.
4. Using the coding process to generate descriptions and categories/themes for analysis: The coding process contributed to creating a detailed description of the study setting and the participants. It involved capturing and organizing information about the respondents and the study area.
5. Interpreting the findings: The final step of data analysis involved interpreting the results and findings. This was done by identifying themes that aligned with the research questions and objectives. The interpretation provided a deeper understanding of the data and offered insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

By following this data analysis process, the study was able to identify meaningful patterns and themes within the qualitative data collected. The analysis provided a comprehensive description of the study setting and the participants, allowing for a thorough exploration of the research questions and the achievement of the research objectives.

### **3.13 Ethical consideration**

The research took the following ethical issues into consideration.

#### *Respect for Local Communities*

One of the foundational ethical principles in this research was the respect for local communities. To safeguard the rights and dignity of community members within the study area, informed consent was diligently obtained. The research activities were carefully designed to avoid exploitation or harm to these communities. Transparency and open engagement with local stakeholders were maintained throughout the research process to ensure their voices and concerns were acknowledged.

### *Cultural Sensitivity*

Cultural sensitivity was of paramount importance throughout the research. Given the rich cultural diversity in the Sissala East Municipality, the researcher approached the study with a deep understanding of local customs, traditions, and beliefs. Expert guidance from local cultural authorities was sought to prevent any inadvertent cultural insensitivity or offense.

### *Environmental Conservation and Protection*

To address the ethical consideration of environmental conservation and protection, the research rigorously examined potential environmental impacts. The study took place in the ecologically sensitive Gbele Resource Reserve. The researcher was committed to minimizing harm to the environment through responsible and sustainable research practices, thus protecting the natural resources within the reserve.

### *Data Privacy and Confidentiality*

Data privacy and confidentiality were maintained with the utmost rigor. Personal information pertaining to individuals and organizations involved in the research was anonymized to protect their identities and rights. Data was securely stored and handled in compliance with ethical data management standards.

### *Community Benefit*

An essential ethical principle guiding this research was ensuring that it benefits the local community. The study aimed to contribute to the sustainable development of the region, enhancing the livelihood of the local population, thereby focusing on long-term community well-being.

### *Avoiding Harm*

Preventing harm to the Gbele Resource Reserve and its inhabitants was a central ethical concern. The researcher took meticulous precautions to avoid ecological damage, wildlife disturbance, or cultural disruption. The research activities were designed to minimize any negative impacts on the environment and the community.

### *Transparency and Accountability*

Transparency and accountability were core ethical principles of the research. The research team ensured that all methods, findings, and results were transparently reported. The researcher maintained accountability for the work and avoided any conflicts of interest. This commitment to transparency built trust with both the local community and the broader academic and policy community.

### *Informed Consent*

Informed consent was foundational to the research process. Local community members and stakeholders were actively involved in the research, with their informed consent obtained at every step. Participants were made fully aware of the research's objectives, methods, and potential implications. They were always given the option to withdraw their consent.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The data presented here were collected from the fieldwork conducted in the research area, with the aim of achieving the research objectives. The discussion of the findings is organized thematically to allow for a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the data. The themes discussed in this chapter are directly linked to the research objectives, and each theme is explored in detail to provide insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data collected, analyze it, and provide interpretations that help to answer the research questions.

#### 4.1 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Here, the total number of participants and the proportion of males and females, are presented in the study. Table 4.1 displays the sex distribution of the respondents.

**Table 4.1: Sex Distribution of Respondents**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Males	43	43.43%
Females	56	56.56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2022.*

Out of the 99 respondents, 43 were male representing 43.43% and 56 were women representing 56.56%. out of the 43 males, 7 of them were staff of the reserve. And out of the 56 females only 1 of them was a staff of the reserve. Based on the findings presented, it is very much obvious that the females in the study area are more into

economic activities which however, have more indirect than direct relations with the Gbele Resource Reserve. Also, the data presented above gives a clear example of gender inequality. Whereas there was more representation of females involved in economic activities in relation to the tourist site, there was less representation of same in terms of employment at the resource reserve. The higher representation of females in tourism is attributed to several factors. In many societies, women are often involved in activities such as hospitality, accommodation services, cultural performances, and handicraft production, which are integral components of the tourism sector. Women's participation in these areas may be influenced by cultural norms, historical roles, and economic opportunities within the local context.

Additionally, the higher percentage of females in the sample may reflect the gender dynamics of the community or the specific research context. It is important to consider factors such as social norms, cultural practices, and gender roles that shape the participation and representation of men and women in the tourism industry. The lack of female workers at the tourist site maybe if not the major cause but one of the causes of poor sanitation at the Gbele Resource Reserve. The data also presented an example of little or no interest shown by females towards the tourism industry.

However, the physical nature of some kinds of work at the reserve like; range guards required more males than females. `

The usefulness of data on the sex of the respondents of the study cannot be underestimated. This is based on the fact that the data on the sex distribution of respondents is relevant to the research topic of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana, particularly for understanding how gender may impact tourism development in the area. For example, data on the sex distribution of respondents can provided insights into how tourism development

initiatives may impact men and women differently, such as differences in employment opportunities, income, and access to resources. It can also reveal any potential gender biases or inequalities that may exist in the tourism industry in the region, such as women being underrepresented in leadership positions or experiencing barriers to accessing training and education programs.

#### 4.2 Age of Respondents

This section of the chapter presents data on the various age categories in which the respondents belong to. Data on the age of respondents is relevant to the research topic of rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana as it can provide insights into the potential demand for tourism services and activities within different age groups.

The table below shows the age distribution of respondents.

**Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Under 25	17	17.17%
25 – 35	26	26.26%
36 – 45	27	27.27%
46 – 55	11	11.11%
Over 55	18	18.18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

*(Source: Field Survey, 2022)*

From table 4.2, out of the 99 respondents, 17 were under 25 years, 26 of the respondents fell between 25-35 age category, 27 in the 36-45 category, 11 were in the 46 – 55 category and 18 were above 55 years.

Based on the data presented in Table 4.2, it can be observed that the majority of the respondents (53%) fall within the age range of 25-45 years. This implies that the study has captured the perspectives and experiences of a relatively young and active population, who may be more likely to participate in and benefit from tourism development activities in the Sissala East Municipality.

### 4.3 Education level

Table 4.3 shows the respondents' degree of education. 23.23% of the respondents had tertiary education. 13.13% and 17.17% of the sample as a whole, had completed their elementary and JHS schooling respectively. Additionally, 14.14% and 13%, respectively, had completed SHS schooling and had no formal education. This is presented in the table below.

**Table 4.3: Educational background of Respondents**

<b>Educational status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No formal education	38	38.38%
Primary education	13	13.13%
JHS	17	17.17%
High School	14	14.14%
Tertiary (Diploma, Bachelor Masters, PhD)	23	23.23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

From the above table, a significant portion of the respondents in the study population have some level of formal education. The sustainability of the Gbele Resource Reserve

as well as the tourist sector as a whole are both greatly benefited by this category. This is supported by the fact that almost all the employees of the Resource Reserve have high levels of formal education. The employees who at least had a tertiary degree possessed the capabilities required, such as communication abilities, which are crucial for the expansion and sustainability of the game reserve.

This finding is in line with that of Lappi (2010), who discovered that level of education has been identified as one of the crucial elements for communication in contemporary businesses, such as those involved in the travel and tourism industry. Likewise, some leaders of some communities within the study area who have had the benefit of higher education provided more insights about tourism and Gbele Resource Reserve for that matter. In the tourism sector, professional knowledge is crucial for productivity, but Lappi (2010) indicates that having merely technical skills is no longer adequate to handle the demands of the current economic climate. Employers are no longer interested in those who just have certain abilities and lack other important skills, especially soft skills (Lapland, 2014). The management confirmed that the majority of the Gbele Resource Reserve employees have the requisite soft skills, such as interpersonal abilities, dealing with people and attitudes, and interpersonal interactions, all of which are associated with a higher degree of education. In the long run, this helps to ensure the efficacy and efficiency of the game reserve.

One of the managers said

*‘Effective communication is a must for the Gbele Resource Reserve to work well, but its significance is especially clear in the service sector, where it is the foundation of the service business, resulting in the sustainability of the Ghanaian tourist industry as a whole.’ (Manager, 2023)*

Since tourism is concentrated on communication to transfer information from one party to another, the importance of education as the source of the soft skills required is even larger. In the tourism industry, communication has a far broader significance than just passing along information, particularly when it comes to interactions between customers and staff. Additionally, communication is the most crucial soft skill in tourism, according to Lapland Finland (2014). According to Himalay, (2015) hospitality managers communicate with people up to 80% of the time they are working, and this communication has a significant impact on how satisfied their staff members are with their jobs. On the other hand, Maggs (2015) offered a new organizational structure model in the form of an inverted pyramid and emphasized that the most essential workers were those who had direct contact with visitors. To create a healthy corporate environment, all tourism staff must be able to establish friendly relationships and conduct well with clients, co-workers, and all other stakeholders at all levels.

The significance of an employee's educational background in the context of the tourist sector has been covered in several studies. Prior studies have mostly concentrated on the broad facets of interpersonal relationships (Himalay, 2015). The ability to maintain friendly interpersonal relationships has frequently been highlighted as a vital talent needed in the tourism sector because tourism is a people-based profession. It should also be emphasized that the knowledge and abilities needed in tourism evolve throughout time (Madasu, 2013). Due to the enormous technological breakthroughs, technology and tourism are increasingly interwoven, necessitating the development of new digital skills among tourist staff.

#### **4.4 Occupation of respondents**

The data collected from the field of the study pointed out that, 25% of the respondents were Gbele Resource Reserve employees. Tradespeople from the communities around the Gbele Resource Reserve made up 33% of the responses. Teachers, security guards, and other government workers made up 17% of the respondents.

First and foremost, when one views employment statistics connected to tourism, they should be aware that there are many categories of employment with distinct ranges, including direct, indirect, and induced employment (Himalay, 2015).

Direct employment is produced as a direct result of tourist and government expenditure and consumption. This includes those who (nearly) directly interact with the tourists, such as the travel agent, taxi driver, hotel management, and receptionist. For instance, the food a customer orders at a restaurant are created by the agricultural sector and delivered by the transportation sector. Therefore, visitors' actions indirectly create some of the work done by farmers and drivers. In Gbele community for instance, the majority of the community member who were engaged in farming with little selling and acquisition of items relating to carvings amongst others also offered food and beverages including many other provisions some of which tourists often come to consume or purchase. As a form of employment, some of these people are often engaged.

This conclusion is in line with that of Bhattacharya (2016), who discovered that tourism significantly contributes to the creation of job prospects for locals, especially those living near tourist attractions. As a result, the tourist sector has a huge potential to generate both direct and indirect jobs. The game reserve indirectly employs individuals in the Gbele community who hunt, calve, sell provisions etc.

and also, taxi drivers, and others who provide auxiliary services to hotels' clients, such as those who provide hotels with vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, cereals, and other foods within the capital.

In places where there are limited employment possibilities, tourism generates a large number of jobs. For instance, while some households or individuals in the Gbele community and its surrounding rely on the game reserve for their livelihood, other individuals working in the tourist sector and their families need their own products, services, healthcare, education, etc., which also indirectly supports jobs in stores, institutions of higher learning, and healthcare facilities. Therefore, with the rapid increase in tourism, the industry offers a wide range of job opportunities, from highly skilled managers and chefs in five-star hotels to room attendants, transport employees, craftsmen, etc. For unemployed young people and educated young people, new opportunities are emerging.

#### **4.5 Objective one: The actors involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve**

This section of the chapter presents and analyzes the actors involved in the management of the Gbele resource Reserve.

##### **4.5.1 Local Community Members**

One of the key components of tourism development is local community involvement since it is essential to the long-term viability of the tourist sector. The government, the corporate sector, several organizations, and people are just a few of the sectors that are involved in the growth of the tourist industry. The local community is perhaps the only morally and legally permitted participant in the development of tourism in that list of involvements. For residents, their way of life, and the natural,

cultural, and traditional features that make up tourism's core draw, participation in local community has significant importance (Scheyvens, 2019). So, it's important to continue to consider the wants and requirements of the community.

Economic, environmental, and cultural advantages will arise from sustainable development brought about by the growth of tourism and local community engagement. The improvement of the tourism experience is also ensured by the community's active engagement in the industry. This accurately reflects the information gathered from the study's field. According to the findings, 87% of respondents agreed that it was important to promote the local community's involvement in the development of the Gbele Resource Reserve. A respondent in a FGD said that:

*“the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission recently not clear and formed some groups various communities called Community Resource Management Area (CREMA), I think it is because of community engagement”* (Stakeholder in Kejekperi, 2023).

According to the manager of the Reserve, the establishment of the Gbele Resource Reserve is facilitated by encouraging local community involvement in promoting tourist activities there. This result is consistent with King's (2020) research, which revealed that including a community in tourist development ensures that they are an active participant and that there is a check on their actions since they have a stake in the area and a dedication to environmental quality. Long-term viability of the tourism industry depends on local community support and participation. There are several instances when community-led programs with significant local participation in the

tourist industry have been successful, such as in rural Greece (agrotourism), the Scottish Highlands, France, and Spain.

There has been a contention that tourism aids in local development by bringing economic advantages to the host nations and that these benefits do not reach all strata of society. However, the findings of this study and the literature suggest that local community engagement helps to ensure that the economy is distributed fairly and simultaneously enhances the long-term prospects for tourism. In terms of the Gbele Resource Reserve, local engagement in the community verifies a greater employment level with fair compensation and seasonal work opportunities as well. By promoting local ownership of guard services, transportation, handicrafts, and local product stores, local engagement can stop the leaking of foreign cash. To achieve sustainable goals and enhance the welfare of the local community, local community engagement in tourist development is essential. Participation of the community guarantees preservation of the environment and local culture.

In terms of Participation of Local Community in Decision making, the traditional leader of the study area said in an interview that,

*“To increase the trust and confidence of residents on the development of the Gbele resource Reserve, the local people must be included in the decision-making and policy-making processes”.* (Chief of Desime, 2023). This answer is in line with the observation by Bhattacharya (2016), who discovered that community participation fosters a feeling of community involvement among those who share a common goal while ensuring the improvement of planning and service delivery.

Local engagement in the Gbele reserve also contributes to the preservation of regional customs, indigenous knowledge, and culture. It attests to the accomplishment of

sustainability, community welfare, and environmental preservation aims. Community members should thus take an active role in decision-making, involved labour, and representation in organized communities. Participating in the community seeks to promote effective communication among residents to support improved decision-making and sustainable growth and development. As a result, local community support and collaboration are essential to the success of the development of the reserve. If local community goals and capacities do not line up with tourism development and planning of the reserve, as observed by the Manager, the potential of the reserve may be destroyed.

#### **4.5.2 Central government's role in the management of the Gbele resource Reserve**

Heavy investment is needed in a wide range of various activities for the development of the tourist infrastructure. Many of these activities take the shape of public services including transportation, power, water, and gas. Even in nations that adhere to "free market" ideas, government intervention is seen as necessary since these services are so essential to society. (Madasu, 2013).

Tourism must interact with a number of different economic sectors because of its diversity. The government must play a significant role in allocating monies to different federal and provincial ministries for the construction and upkeep of roads, highways, motorways, bus terminals, railroads, air services, seaports, and other infrastructure. Although roads and other infrastructure are being built in the Gbele Resource Reserve in cooperation with international tourism organizations, they are not yet sufficient to guarantee the proper operation of the game reserve.

Aside that, an interviewee who was a one of the workers of the Gbele community said in a interview: *‘as we speak the government is making effort to increase the coverage of both portable water and electricity so as to make the game reserve more attractive and accommodating’*. This response is in line with that of Bhattacharya (2016), who discovered that it is crucial to provide land at discounted rates and amenities in the locations that are most important for tourism. Private sector projects would not even begin to germinate without these fundamental conditions, much alone develop. Determining, coordinating, and implementing comprehensive long-term and short-term strategies for the development of a tourist superstructure by the government is therefore necessary.

In addition to making investments in the delivery of essential services, the government, through the Ghana Tourism Agency, identifies tourism goods and protects ecology, history, and the environment. Since it is unrealistic to expect market forces to prevent environmental deterioration, the government of Ghana ensures that funds are given to start awareness campaigns and carry out necessary environmental preservation initiatives in order to maintain the natural allure of Gbele Resource Reserve.

Based on the measures taken by the private sector to ensure the sustainability of the Gbele resource reserve, an interview with the traditional leader of the Gbele community revealed that the private sector and government have so far collaborated to develop plans for the Gbele resource reserve's sustainable and profitable growth. According to the traditional leader

*“The following target regions, in particular, have seen significant private sector involvement in the rehabilitation and acceleration of the development of the Gbele resource Reserve;*

- • *Constructing and running the necessary tourist facilities at all points of attraction for tourists.*
- • *Ensuring shared accountability for establishing global standards, ethical guidelines, and best practices.*
- • *Involving the local communities in tourist initiatives and making sure they receive the proper proportion of the benefits.*
- • *Improving tourist security and safety.*” (traditional leader, 2023)

#### **4.6 Objective Two: Tourism potentials of the Gbele Resource Reserve.**

The major attraction of the game reserve was based on the perspective of the respondents of the study. From the field of the study, majority of the respondents who represents about 41% pointed out natural attraction of the game reserve. The natural attraction entailed the natural environment of the game reserve. Specifically, the serene environment with the sound of birds captured attention of the tourists. The natural environment of the game reserve is made up of water bodies and green vegetation. This is shown in the picture below.

**Plate 1. Natural environment of Gbele resource Reserve**



*(field survey 2022)*

## Plate 2. Natural environment of Gbele Resource Reserve



(field survey 2022)

The cultural traditions of the study region, according to 22% of respondents, were the game reserve's main draw in addition to its natural attractions. This included their clothing choices, diet, social mores, and belief systems, among other things. Because it is difficult to evaluate and is not viewed as being essential to placement selections, culture per say is rarely taken into account when determining a tourism destination's level of competitiveness. The ability to draw people by providing a high quality of life is vital for regional competitiveness in terms of tourism, according to Bhattacharya (2016). In an interview with the traditional leader of the study area he said

*“When analyzing a tourist destination's appeal, it's necessary to take into account both the factors that draw visitors and those that keep them there, and here is where culture comes into play.”* (Traditional leader of Gbele, 2023).

Based on this response, it can be seen that culture is one of the elements taken into account along with others (housing, work, etc.) when deciding on a location, and that

the highly educated, especially those with an artistic degree, tend to appreciate culture the most.

Contrarily, 37% of respondents thought the Gbele Resource Reserve's leisure was a draw. The respondents in a Focused Group Discussion opined that; one of the primary goals of tourism is

*"recreation, the physical and intellectual refreshment of people."* (Focused Group Discussants, 2023).

This assertion of Lappi (2010), who discovered that recreational travel has become a widespread phenomenon as a result of people's increased financial well-being, paid time off from work, advancements in transportation and manufacturing, and consumers' increased purchasing power. Active leisure, the development of wellbeing, the restoration of one's working ability, the maintenance and enhancement of one's health serve as its driving forces in order to reduce civilizational stress. Several tourist activities, such as viewing the wildlife, tree climbing, entertainment fishing and various forms of entertainment, were incorporated in the Gbele Resource Reserve's recreational offerings.

In addition to the above, the Gbele Resource Reserve is known to have vast land which can be utilized for various tourism activities such as camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, the Gbele Resource Reserve covers an area of about 565 square kilometers. This provides a huge opportunity for the development of tourism activities that require a large land space.

For instance, camping and hiking activities require a large land space, and the availability of vast land in the Gbele Resource Reserve makes it an ideal location for such activities.

Moreover, the Gbele Resource Reserve is home to a variety of wildlife species, including elephants, antelopes, baboons, and warthogs. The availability of vast land provides an opportunity for tourists to view these wildlife species in their natural habitat. This can contribute significantly to the development of eco-tourism in the area, which is a sustainable form of tourism that promotes environmental conservation and community development. With its 565 square kilometres of land area, the reserve can support various tourism activities that require a large land space. This can contribute to the development of the tourism industry in the Upper West Region of Ghana, create employment opportunities, and improve the livelihoods of the local communities.

Never the less, the data collected brought to light the fact that, The Gbele Resource Reserve, located in the Upper West Region of Ghana, has significant potential as a tourism destination due to its capacity to sustain a diverse range of animal species. The Reserve's unique ecosystem is home to a variety of animal species, including primates, antelopes, and elephants, which attract tourists who are interested in wildlife and nature-based tourism.

According to a report by the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS), the Gbele Resource Reserve has the potential to support over 40 mammal species, including some that are classified as vulnerable or endangered. The report also notes that the Reserve is home to over 250 species of birds, which further adds to its tourism potential.

In addition to the variety of animal species, the Gbele Resource Reserve also has significant ecological value as a conservation area. The Reserve serves as a critical migratory pathway for wildlife, facilitating movement between the Guinea and Sudan savannahs, which contributes to the maintenance of the regional ecosystem.

Lastly, Easy accessibility is an important tourism potential for any destination. In the case of the Gbele Resource Reserve, it can attract more tourists if it is easily accessible.

Easy accessibility can refer to the availability of roads, airports, and other modes of transportation. This makes it easier for tourists to reach the destination and encourages them to visit.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), accessibility is one of the key factors that influence tourist decision-making. In their report, UNWTO states that "easy accessibility and good transport infrastructure are important factors in the growth of tourism." (UNWTO, 2019).

In the case of Gbele Resource Reserve, it is located in Sissala East with a distance of about 80km from the municipal capital and about 140km from the regional capital with poor road network. The poor nature of the roads connecting to the reserve makes it relatively difficult to reach to reach.

According to the Forestry Commission, the Upper West Region received 40,337 domestic and 2,539 international tourists in 2019. This represents a 15.6% increase in domestic tourism and a 22.4% increase in international tourism compared to 2018. (Forestry Commission, 2018).

#### **4.7 Objective Three Benefits of Gbele Resource Reserve as a tourist site**

In the context of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, the benefits derived from the Gbele Resource Reserve, primarily rooted in employment creation and income generation for the community members of Gbele, represent a significant avenue for improving livelihoods.

Data was collected to gauge the extent to which Gbele community members had benefited from the Gbele Resource Reserve as a tourist site, particularly in terms of employment opportunities. The findings revealed that 33% of the respondents

identified job creation as one of the key benefits since the Gbele Resource Reserve gained popularity as a tourist destination.

This finding underscores the positive impact of tourism development in the Gbele Resource Reserve on employment opportunities within the local community. The creation of new jobs in the tourism sector not only stimulates economic growth but also contributes to poverty reduction by providing a vital income source for local residents and supporting the growth of small businesses.

The study revealed that the existence of the resource reserve has not only created direct employment opportunities but has also led to indirect job creation in related industries, such as transportation, food and beverage, and accommodation services. This ripple effect further stimulates economic activity within the local community, fostering a more sustainable and diversified economy. An interviewee, a commercial driver, emphasized the significance by stating that a substantial portion of their daily customers was connected to the resource reserve.

This aspect is of paramount importance as it underscores the impact of the Gbele Resource Reserve on local businesses. The Reserve's popularity as a tourist destination has provided opportunities for local enterprises, including restaurants, hotels, souvenir shops, and tour operators, to thrive.

This finding is consistent with the study by Akudugu and Tengan (2017), which demonstrated that rural tourism development in the Sissala East Municipality has positively impacted local businesses, resulting in increased income and job creation. The study also highlighted the potential of rural tourism to contribute to poverty reduction, community development, and the enhancement of the local standard of living.

Furthermore, the Gbele Resource Reserve's role in the preservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage is essential for sustainable development. This conservation ensures that future generations can also benefit from the resource reserve, emphasizing the principle of intergenerational equity.

However, it's worth noting that rural tourism development can also carry negative environmental and cultural impacts. Increased tourist activities may lead to environmental degradation and the erosion of cultural values. Therefore, policymakers must develop appropriate policies and regulations to ensure sustainable rural tourism development that balances economic benefits with environmental and cultural preservation.

These results align with the findings of Madasu (2013), who highlighted employment as a significant direct economic impact of tourism. In the Gbele community, the game reserve's employment impact permeates various segments of the local economy, influencing nearly all service sectors. The tourism sector, as a service industry, is a substantial source of employment, employing a wide range of individuals with varying skill levels.

Tourism has a broad workforce, offering diverse job opportunities, from low-skilled to highly specialized roles, and benefits various commercial entities, including food vendors, transporters, travel agencies, tour operators, gift shops, taxi drivers, and tour guides. This sector's presence offers locals new income sources without necessitating additional taxation.

Nonetheless, it's crucial for local communities not to have unrealistic expectations of employment generation, as sustainable tourism may not translate into an economic windfall for an entire town. Instead, it typically creates specific employment

opportunities, often part-time or seasonal, while supporting the local economy. Simo & Mósso (2017) support this perspective, emphasizing that sustainable tourism's impact on employment should be realistically assessed, as it may not lead to extensive job creation.

#### **4.8 Objective Four: Challenges of the Gbele Resource Reserve as a tourism destination**

This section examines the challenges faced by the Gbele Resource Reserve as tourism destination. As such the views of the respondents were sought on the problems that hinder the development and growth of the Gbele Resource Reserve as a tourism destination. Majority (72%) of the respondents said that Gbele Resource Reserve lagged behind other tourism sites in terms of its development and growth. This was based on the respondents' comparisons of the game reserve's tangible and intangible attributes to those of other game reserves outside the Sissala East area and, for that matter, other regions of Ghana.

To point out the specific challenges that are making Gbele Resource Reserve lag behind as compared to other tourist destinations, poor road network, inadequate accommodation facilities, inadequate security (in terms of fewer numbers of tour guards), Poor Sanitation, poaching and encroachment on the land by farmers as major challenges facing the Gbele Resource Reserve.

Based on the findings from the research respondents, Gbele Resource Reserve is a wildlife-protected area located in the Upper West Region of Ghana, covering an area of about 565 square kilometers. The reserve is home to a variety of plant and animal species, including the African elephant, buffalo, antelope, and a number of primate species. However, the reserve is facing threats from poaching and encroachment,

which are having negative effects on the reserve's biodiversity and ecotourism potential.

Poaching is the illegal hunting or killing of wildlife, and it is a major problem in many wildlife protected areas, including Gbele Resource Reserve. Poaching has been identified as a major threat to the reserve's biodiversity, as it targets some of the most iconic and endangered species, such as elephants and antelopes. The illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products is a lucrative industry, which is encouraged by high demand from domestic and international markets. Poaching has a negative impact on the local economy, as it reduces the potential for ecotourism, which is an important source of revenue for the local community.

Encroachment, on the other hand, refers to the illegal occupation or use of land within the boundaries of the reserve. Encroachment is a major problem in many wildlife protected areas in Ghana, including Gbele Resource Reserve. The encroachment of human settlements, farming activities, and other forms of land use within the reserve's boundaries leads to habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity, and degradation of the ecosystem services provided by the reserve. Encroachment also has negative effects on ecotourism, as it reduces the attractiveness of the reserve as a tourist destination.

Several studies have been conducted on the effects of poaching and encroachment on Gbele Resource Reserve. For instance, a study by Ntiamoah-Baidu et al. (2002) found that poaching was a major threat to the reserve's biodiversity, with elephants being the most targeted species. The study also found that the local community was involved in poaching, as a means of supplementing their income. Another study by Addeah and Kuuder (2018) found that encroachment was a major problem in the reserve, with the

local community engaging in farming activities within the reserve's boundaries, despite the fact that it is illegal.

#### **4.8.1 Poor Road Network**

Transport is one of the fundamental infrastructure elements that must be developed in concert with tourism. However, the road network in and around the Gbele Resource Reserve is one of the major factors that hinder the growth and development of the site. The tourist industry places a lot of emphasis on transportation, which also serves as a major engine for socioeconomic

development. It is essential because without it, travelers would not be able to visit many popular tourist attractions. It acts as a crucial link between the places of origin and the places of destination (Chhetri, & Gauchan, 2015). It makes it easier for vacationers, business travelers, those who are visiting friends and family, and those who are engaging in educational and health tourism to move about. One of the fastest-growing economic sectors in Ghana as a whole and in many areas that host tourist attractions, tourism has seen substantial expansion throughout the years in Ghana.

According to one respondent, the game reserve lagged behind other places because of its crumbling roads.

*'Tourism heavily relies on road transportation as a crucial component, (Forest Ranger, 2023)*

This response justifies the significance of road transportation for moving both people and products as far as tourism is concerned. There is no denying the importance of road transportation, whether it is for tourism-related or other reasons. Why, though? One of the key elements of tourism activities is transportation. Because transportation plays a large role in the growth of tourism, the interaction between the two is crucial.

*“A well-developed road network is an advantage for the growth of tourism in any given location,”* (a driver and community member, 2023). This was justified by the fact that moving people by road circumvents physical limitations imposed by distance and satisfies their urge to move around in space.

This finding is consistent with Gupta's (2015) discovery that a road connects the origin and destination of travel. Numerous modes of transportation enable the movement of people on a national and worldwide scale. At a fair price, millions of visitors are carried securely, swiftly, and comfortably to their destinations. In actuality, transportation and the infrastructure that goes along with it have greatly aided human mobility.

According to Simo and Mòsso (2017), the development of tourism and transportation are two interrelated challenges. This is because visitors want safe, quick, and pleasant transportation services, which they pay for out of their own pocket. The selection of a certain mode of transportation, as well as how they are used in different combinations, is influenced by both that mode's characteristics and the passengers' goals.

In the case of this study, a respondent who was a driver said *‘The main trunk roads leading to the Gbele Resource Reserve are in a deplorable state and discourage tourists from visiting the reserve. The roads are often muddy and slippery during the rainy season, making it difficult for vehicles to navigate. As a result, tourists who come to the area find it challenging to access the reserve’*. According to Asamoah et al. (2017), the road network is the major challenge facing the Gbele Resource Reserve in terms of accessibility. The authors also noted that tourists who manage to reach the reserve have to contend with the poor internal road network within the reserve, which makes it challenging to navigate the reserve. The poor road network leading to the

Gbele Resource Reserve affects tourism in the area in several ways. Firstly, tourists find it challenging to access the reserve, which reduces the number of visitors to the area. Secondly, the lack of proper roads within the reserve makes it difficult for tourists to move around, reducing the quality of the tourist experience. According to Badu et al. (2020), the inaccessibility of the reserve due to the poor road network is one of the factors contributing to the decline in tourism in the Upper West Region.

The UNWTO (2019) states that the growth of tourist transportation is dependent on the availability of suitable modes of transportation, such as roads, highways, railway lines, stations, bus stops, river and sea ports, airports, etc. Today's modernity and variety of modes and methods of transportation has greatly accelerated the growth of the tourist industry. The advancements achieved in this field have made it easier to overcome some natural impediments or include resources in the tourism industry that are located a significant distance from tourist emitting areas. Land-based transportation, mostly by vehicle, is the most common mode of transportation in the Sissala East Municipality. However, the municipality's roadways are littered with potholes, which deters people from traveling from one area to another.

King (2020) asserted that road transportation is the most popular mode of transportation in Sissala East Municipality and that it has the longest history and greatest geographic reach. Because they are not attached to certain permanent installations, like rail transportation, for example, motor vehicles have a unique mobility. As a result, they can enter areas where other forms of transportation cannot, becoming an essential part of multimodal transportation. Increasingly popular modes of transportation include the bus and coach, particularly for group travel.

According to the Municipal Chief Executive of Sissala East Municipal, “*Car transport is the main mode of transport as far as movement from one place is concerned in the Sissala East Municipality*” (MCE,2023). This was supported by the numerous benefits of road transportation, including its independence, affordability, and flexibility. Tourists frequently hire automobiles in Sissala East Municipality in order to drive themselves to their destinations. In general, it is less expensive than all forms of transportation. It is the only mode of transportation that allows a complete travel from one destination to another without requiring transfers. The Sissala East Municipality's subpar roads are the only obstacle.

**Plate 3. Roads under construction in Gbele community**



(field survey 2022)

According to Highest Bridges (2010), accessibility is the first requirement for a destination to be really visited by visitors, making it visible and appealing for future investments and growth. The visitors' first choice of whether or not to visit a certain location is influenced by the accessibility of the location. However, in places with numerous rival attractions, the choice is firmly influenced by the feasibility of the access routes.

In addition to the above, the focused group discussion pointed out that, Improved roads not only increase the number of visitors to the game reserve, but they also end up growing the tourism industry in places with good roads," stated a participant in a group discussion (group discussion, 2023).

However, Scheyvens (2019) argues that better roads assist in bridging various tourism destinations and landmarks within the same jurisdictions. Poor roads in the Sissala East municipality deter visitors from visiting other tourist destinations after visiting the Gbele Resource Reserve, making it challenging to increase the municipality's earnings from the tourism industry. This assertion is consistent with Simo & M'osso's (2017) findings that connection is a prerequisite for the development of expansive tourism zones and allows for the integrated capitalization of additional resources. As a result, it alludes to the transportation system inside larger tourist locations, which plays a significant part in shaping their allure. According to some writers, connection affects how long visitors remain and how satisfied they are overall. A longer stay in one place also translates into more tourists visiting that place, which benefits local lodging and healthcare facilities, adventure trip operators, and shops, among other businesses. By enabling the expansion of tourism routes and increasing the region's overall tourist offering, it also improves the effectiveness of tourism operations. Construction of improved roads is crucial because it increases access to a variety of products while also

boosting the appeal of the product by merging the attraction or a number of attraction providers into regional packages. tourist promotion tactics (United Nations, 2022).

**Plate 4. Visual display of nature of roads in Gbele resource Reserve**



*(field survey 2022)*

**Plate 5. Tourists pushing vehicle stacked due to poor road network tn The tourist site**



(field survey 2022)

#### **4.8.2 Inadequate accommodation facilities**

According to the findings, the accommodation sector is the largest and possibly most significant sub-sector of the tourism industry. The findings highlights the importance of having good accommodation facilities to attract tourists to the region. Good accommodation facilities are necessary to make tourists feel comfortable and enjoy their stay in the area.

The data collected further explained that the accommodation sector serves not only local visitors but also national and international visitors, as well as those from nearby regions and countries. This indicates that the accommodation sector is crucial for the development of the tourism industry in the region. Tourists are more likely to visit a place with good accommodation facilities, which can have a positive impact on the

local economy by generating employment opportunities and boosting the local businesses.

As a crucial and important component of the tourist supply, lodging forms the foundation of the tourism business. During their travels, tourists need to find a place to relax and reenergize (King, 2020). As a result, there are businesses that provide lodgings. In regard to location and services offered, there is a lot of variation in the size and style of accommodations. Based on their intended clientele, lodging establishments offer varying services.

Because travellers need places to stay, rest, sleep, and unwind when traveling to different locations, Michael (2020) said that the lodging sector is essential to the travel and hospitality industries. In reality, according to several definitions, a visitor is only considered a tourist if their trip is more than 24 hours and they remain overnight. Both in the context of urban and rural tourism, lodging for visitors serves a crucial purpose. It gives tourists the chance to experience the area and its attractions for an extended period of time while also boosting the local economy with their purchases. According to the data gathered, 92% of the respondents identified lodging as a problem and one of the factors contributing to Gbele Resource Reserve's underperformance. Most tourists who spent the night at Gbele slept in tents, according to the replies. Due to this, the tourist's exploration is less memorable. This is supported by the claim made in Highest Bridges (2010) that lodging serves as a foundation for tourists to explore both urban and rural surroundings. In general, lodging doesn't draw tourists on its own; instead, it offers support services, which make up the basis of the tourism business. Thus, it may be stated that the incentive of tourists to travel is not produced by lodging. The desire to enjoy a greater range of tourist goods at a certain resort or locale—with lodging as one of the essential tourism products—is typically the driving force behind

travel.

**Plate 6. Dilapidated accommodation in the Gbele resource Reserve**



(field survey 2022)

The response from the chief of the Gbele community, shows that there aren't enough accommodations for both travelers and tourist-related activities.

**4.8.3 Inadequate security**

However, mass travel and mass tourism are a new phenomenon associated with the 20th century since travel was previously only available to the very wealthy or to those who had to travel due to the nature of their jobs (such as sailors or soldiers) in the period before the 1950s. As a result, security in tourism is not only a question of the postmodern age. (Chhetri, & Gauchan, 2015). Given that tourism became more widely accessible in the 20th century, as social mobility increased and overall revenues increased, tourism became one of the most important economic sectors and, as a result, tourism security has "become one of the most important national security issues across the globe" (Bhattacharya, p. 26, 2016). Since "peace, safety, and security are the key precondition for successful tourism growth," this focus is understandable.

Security is a feature that is increasingly vital to consider while choosing a tourism location, according to Madasu (2013). This is predicated on the fact that, despite the fact that both local crime and terrorists have distinct goals, the tourism sector is immensely alluring. Terrorism attempts to make an effect by acting in the name of a cause (such as a religious, political, or philosophical one) and in a fashion that attracts global notice. As a result, it frequently targets more victims, ideally those of various nationalities. Tourists are frequently the easiest targets for criminals who commit crimes for financial gain. The globalization phenomenon and the development of ICTs provide a deeper understanding of the globe on many levels, providing travelers with information about security issues before choosing their location. As a result, this portion of the chapter contains information on the respondents' perceptions of the security situation as it relates to the Gbele Resource Reserve. According to the data gathered, nearly all of the respondents (98%) believed that the Gbele Resource Reserve and the Gbele community as a whole lacked proper protection. According to the respondents, Gbele Resource Reserve's level of patronage has decreased in recent years, and this may be mostly due to insufficient security.

One of the respondents who is a Forest Ranger said in an interview that ‘hmmm, *at least 6 theft cases are reported by the tourist within a week. This is very bad. If security is not tightened a time may the game reserve will lose its international recognition.*’ (Forest Ranger, 2023).

Chhetri & Gauchan (2015) discovered that in order for a city to be a desirable tourist destination, it must be able to give tourists a safe atmosphere, which supports the respondent's point of view. Indeed, since they lack local language skills and cultural awareness, visitors may be more vulnerable to some types of crime. In the context of the unpredictability and volatility experienced in the modern world, safety and security

are considerations that can be crucial in selecting a location as well as a competitive advantage of tremendous significance. Typically, it doesn't play a big role in deciding where to go. However, it could influence a traveler's decision to select one location over another or, as an alternative, take the location with the lowest risk into consideration.

More and more vacationers think things through before making a choice to ensure that their downtime meets and, if at all possible, surpasses their expectations. Travel and tourism have always required a high level of safety and security. But it is undeniable that over the past 20 years, concerns about safety and security have grown significantly in relevance for Ghanaian tourism. According to Gupta (2015), the security situation may be linked to criminal activity, terrorism, conflict, and civil unrest. According to Highest Bridges (2010), the primary targets can include tourists (declared or not) traveling to and from their destinations, tourists vacationing in a specific location, tourism and hospitality installations and facilities, strategic and non-strategic transportation facilities serving tourists, public and private services and businesses also serving tourists, and so on.

**Plate 7. Forest guard on duty with an outmoded gun**



*(field survey 2022)*

**4.8.4 Poor Sanitation**

From the field of the study, about 90% of the respondents pointed out that, sanitation was a huge challenge that may affect the sustainability of Gbele Resource Reserve. During the interviews with the respondents, one of the tourists said

*‘If the visiting tourists are dissatisfied with sanitation facilities in a Gbele Resource Reserve, they are likely not visit again and discourage other potential tourists as well’ (tourist, 2023).*

This statement was based on the fact that, as a consequence of inadequate sanitation some of them also suffer from health-related issues malaria, skin rashes etc. This results in the loss of tourism earnings due to inadequate sanitation.

United Nations (2022) estimates that insufficient sanitation will cost the tourism industry 12 billion (\$266 million). Of these, 55% (or \$6.6 billion, \$145.6 million) are losses resulting from gastrointestinal ailments among foreign visitors, accounting for 45% (\$5.5 billion, \$121 million) of the total loss of tourism profits. This situation is quite reflective of Gbele resource Reserve. The chief of Gbele community said in an interview *'The game reserve has seen a sharp decline in patronage during the past ten years, huh!. Most visitors who typically stayed for longer than a week left with malaria and other illnesses connected to poor hygiene. They never returned after leaving, and some even went out of their way to prevent their friend from visiting the game reserve.'* (General Manager, 2023)

This declaration by the chief supports the idea that universal sanitation and hygiene are essential for the growth of tourism. This involves adequate safety precautions, efficient water usage, wastewater management, and pollution control. The local population and tourism are both negatively impacted by inconsistent sanitation standards in tourist areas (Simo & Mósso, 2017).

In addition to providing access to clean drinking water, Scheyvens (2019) argued that a country's tourism destinations should have well-developed sewage systems that allow for high standards of sanitary, hygienic, and health safety. Comparatively to the nations that are developed in this area, the travel and tourist sectors in the nations that are not structured in this way are far less competitive. This is due to the fact that tourists place priority on the cleanliness of the surroundings, lodging, and restaurants while visiting a certain location (Gupta, 2015). Diseases in visitors can be brought on by drinking water, unsanitary circumstances, and a variety of other causes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study presents the summary of the key findings of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings as well as recommendations.

#### 5.1 Summary of findings

##### **Objective One: The Actors Involved in the Management of the Gbele Resource Reserve**

Local Community Members play a crucial role in tourism development as they are morally and legally the most relevant stakeholders. Their involvement ensures the preservation of their way of life and the natural, cultural, and traditional features that contribute to tourism's appeal. The study found that 87% of respondents acknowledged the significance of promoting the local community's involvement in the development of the Gbele Resource Reserve. This engagement results in economic, environmental, and cultural benefits while enhancing the overall tourism experience.

Local Community Participation in Decision Making is fundamental for building trust and confidence among residents and for improving planning and service delivery. The traditional leader of the study area emphasized the need for local people to be included in decision-making and policy-making processes. This involvement fosters a sense of community involvement, ensuring that decisions align with the community's goals and capacity, ultimately contributing to the Reserve's long-term viability.

The Central Government plays a significant role in managing the Gbele Resource Reserve. It invests in public services, including transportation, power, water, and gas,

which are vital for tourism development. Government intervention is crucial to ensure the proper operation of the game reserve. Additionally, the government allocates land at discounted rates and provides essential amenities to support private sector projects. Environmental preservation initiatives are also essential for maintaining the natural allure of the Gbele Resource Reserve.

Private Sector and Government Collaboration are essential for the sustainable and profitable growth of the Reserve. The private sector is involved in constructing and managing tourist facilities, adhering to ethical guidelines, involving local communities in tourism initiatives, and ensuring tourist safety. This collaboration contributes significantly to the Reserve's success and sustainability.

### **Objective Two: Tourism Potentials of the Gbele Resource Reserve**

Natural Attraction is a key feature of the Gbele Resource Reserve, with its serene environment, sounds of birds, water bodies, and green vegetation capturing the attention of tourists. Approximately 41% of respondents emphasized this natural attraction as the primary draw.

Cultural Traditions are another attraction, with 22% of respondents highlighting the region's cultural aspects, including clothing choices, diet, social norms, and belief systems. While culture is rarely the sole factor in destination selection, it adds to the overall appeal.

Leisure Activities are significant, with 37% of respondents finding leisure and recreation to be the main draw. Recreation offers physical and intellectual refreshment, and recreational travel has become increasingly popular due to rising financial well-being and increased purchasing power.

Vast Land for Activities is a distinctive feature of the Reserve, with an extensive land area of approximately 565 square kilometers. This allows for various tourism activities such as camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing, attracting tourists seeking these experiences.

Biodiversity and Eco-Tourism are strengths of the Gbele Resource Reserve. It is home to a variety of wildlife species, making it appealing to tourists interested in wildlife and nature-based tourism. The Reserve has the potential to support over 40 mammal species and hosts over 250 species of birds, contributing to its tourism potential. Additionally, it plays a critical role as a migratory pathway for wildlife, supporting the maintenance of the regional ecosystem.

Accessibility is essential for any tourism destination. Unfortunately, the Reserve faces challenges due to poor road networks, making it relatively difficult to reach. Improved transport infrastructure and accessibility are key factors influencing tourist decision-making.

### **Objective Three: Benefits of Gbele Resource Reserve as a Tourist Site**

The Gbele Resource Reserve has significantly contributed to the local community's livelihood improvement. Job creation is a key benefit, with 33% of respondents recognizing it. The Reserve's popularity as a tourist destination has not only created direct employment opportunities but has also led to indirect job creation in related industries, such as transportation, food and beverage, and accommodation services. This positive impact on employment stimulates economic growth, supports small businesses, and contributes to poverty reduction.

Local businesses, including restaurants, hotels, souvenir shops, and tour operators, have thrived due to the Reserve's popularity as a tourist destination. This success aligns with

previous research indicating that rural tourism development positively impacts local businesses, income, and job creation.

The Gbele Resource Reserve's role in preserving the natural environment and cultural heritage is essential for sustainable development. This conservation ensures that future generations can benefit from the Reserve, emphasizing the principle of intergenerational equity.

#### **Objective Four: Challenges of the Gbele Resource Reserve as a Tourism Destination**

The Gbele Resource Reserve faces several challenges as a tourism destination. These challenges were identified through respondents' perceptions:

Inadequate transportation infrastructure is a significant hindrance to the Reserve's growth. The condition of roads leading to and within the Reserve discourages tourists. A well-developed road network is essential for accessibility and tourism growth.

The lack of suitable accommodation facilities negatively impacts visitors' experiences. Good accommodations are crucial to attracting tourists and enhancing their comfort during their stay.

High instances of theft and insecurity deter potential visitors and could lead to a decline in the Reserve's popularity.

Sanitation issues were noted by approximately 90% of respondents. Inadequate sanitation facilities and hygiene standards can result in health issues for tourists, leading to a decline in patronage and tourist earnings. Maintaining proper sanitation is essential for the growth of tourism.

The Reserve is facing threats from poaching and encroachment, which negatively affect its biodiversity and ecotourism potential. Poaching is illegal hunting, while encroachment refers to illegal occupation or land use within the Reserve's boundaries. These activities result in habitat destruction and decreased attractiveness as a tourist destination.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the natural attractions of the Gbele Game Reserve are the primary draw for tourists. About 41% of respondents pointed out the natural environment of the game reserve, which included the serene environment with the sound of birds and the green vegetation. This highlights the importance of preserving and protecting the natural environment of the reserve to attract more visitors.

In addition to the natural attractions, cultural traditions were also identified as a draw for tourists, with 22% of respondents indicating that the cultural traditions of the study region were a significant attraction. This suggests that efforts to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of the area could help to attract more visitors to the game reserve.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be made to improve the management and development of the Gbele Resource Reserve:

### **Empower and Involve Local Community Members**

The management of the Gbele Resource Reserve should actively engage and empower local community members in decision-making processes and the development of tourism initiatives. This includes conducting regular community meetings, workshops,

and collaborative projects to ensure that the local community plays a central role in managing and preserving the reserve.

### **Foster Local Community Participation in Decision Making**

Local government authorities should actively involve and consult with the local community in decision-making processes related to the Gbele Resource Reserve. Local perspectives and community interests should be considered in the development of policies and plans, which will help build trust and ensure the long-term sustainability of the reserve.

### **Strengthen Government Support and Involvement**

The central government and relevant environmental agencies should continue to invest in public services and infrastructure critical for the Gbele Resource Reserve. They should allocate resources for land preservation, conservation efforts, and infrastructure development. This support is essential to maintain the reserve's natural allure and ensure its long-term viability.

### **Encourage Private Sector-Government Collaboration**

Private sector tourism businesses and government tourism departments should collaborate closely to create and manage tourist facilities within the Gbele Resource Reserve. They should adhere to ethical guidelines, involve local communities in tourism initiatives, and prioritize tourist safety. This collaboration is vital for the sustainable growth and success of the reserve.

### **Address Infrastructure and Accessibility Challenges**

The Ministry of Transportation and relevant infrastructure development agencies should work on improving the road network leading to and within the Gbele Resource Reserve. Investments in road construction and maintenance are necessary to enhance accessibility. By doing so, they will directly contribute to boosting visitor numbers and supporting the local economy.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WORKERS OF GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Abass M. Tondugou, a final year student of Social Administration, Department of Social Science and Arts from Simone Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (SDD-UBIDS). I am conducting a study into rural tourism development in the Sissala East municipality in the upper west region of Ghana. You have been selected as one of those to be interviewed. I will be recording the session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I cannot possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we are on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we do not miss your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with my supervisor, we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you are not obliged to talk about anything you do not want to and you may end the interview at any time.

#### SECTION A: RESPONDENT'S BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Gender:

A) Male

B) Female

2. Age:

A) Under 25

B) 25 – 35

C) 36 – 45

D) 46 – 55,

E) Over 55

3. Education level

A) High School

B) Diploma

C) Bachelor

D) Masters

E) PhD

4. Occupation:

A) Student

B) Retired

C) Housewife

D) Government Officer

E) Farming

F) Others

**SECTION B: THE CHALLENGES OF THE GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE  
AS TOURISM DESTINATIONS.**

**Instructions: the questions below are based on the challenges of the Gbele**

**Resource Reserve as a tourism destination**

1. Is Gbele Resource Reserve lagging behind compared to other tourist destinations?

YES/NO

2. If yes, How is that so? .....

3. Describe how poor road network is a challenge to the patronage of Gbele Resource Reserve.

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.....

4. Is accommodation a challenge that affects the sustainability of Gbele Resource reserve? YES/NO

5. If yes, How?

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.....  
.....  
.....

6. In your own words how is inadequate security a challenge to both the workers and the tourists of Gbele Resource Reserve ?

.....

.....  
.....  
.....

7. Does sanitation affects the level of patronage of Gbele Resource re  
Reserve? YES/NO

8. If yes, how ?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. Is the location of Gbele Resource Reserve a challenge to the sustainability of the Gbele  
game reserve? YES/NO

10. If yes how is it a problem?

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.....  
.....  
.....

11. Are there issues relating to theft at the tourist site?

.....  
.....  
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.....

12. If yes how is that serving as a challenge to the sustainability of the  
Resource reserve

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.....

13. Apart from the challenges highlighted, is there any challenge which was not captured  
in the previous questions. YES/NO

14. If yes, state it

.....  
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.....

**SECTION C: TO EXAMINE WAYS IN WHICH THE TOURISM POTENTIALS OF THE GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE CAN BE DEVELOPED.**

1. What are the major attractions in Gbele Resource Reserve in your opinion?

Natural attraction

Cultural attraction

Recreational attraction

A. other, please specify:

2. Is infrastructure sufficient to host tourism activities in Sissala East Municipality?

Yes

No

3. If no please kindly specify what kind of infrastructure is insufficient

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Should local participation in promoting tourism activities in Gbele

Resource Reserve be encouraged? YES/NO

5. If yes, how?

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Will the provision of security and medical services increase the patronage of the Gbele Resource reserve? YES/NO

7. If yes, how

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.....  
.....

8. Will the participation of private sectors and local entrepreneurs help boost the tourism potential of Gbele Resource reserve YES/NO

9. If yes, how

.....  
.....  
.....

10. Establishment of a tourism information desk in the district is essential.

Agree Disagree

**FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**THE CHALLENGES OF THE GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE AS TOURISM DESTINATIONS.**

1. What measures can be put in place for Gbele Resource Reserve catch up with other tourist destinations?
2. How does poor road network limit the potentials of Gbele Resource Reserve?
3. Do you think accommodation is a challenge that affects the sustainability of Gbele Resource reserve?
4. How is inadequate security a challenge to both the workers and the tourist of Gbele Resource reserve?
5. Is sanitation a problem for the Resource reserve? YES/NO
6. If yes, how  
.....  
.....
7. How does the location of Gbele Resource Reserve serve as a factor to the sustainability of the Gbele Resource reserve?
8. Aside the workers of the Reserve, are there any other stakeholders/people involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve?

## **ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GBELE**

### **RESOURCE RESERVE**

1. In what ways do you think the government is involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve?
2. How are the traditional leaders of Gbele and it's surrounding communities involved in the management of Gbele Resource Reserve?
3. In What ways do the community members of Gbele and it's surrounding communities help in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve?
4. Apart from the actors mentioned above, which other actors are involved in the management process of the Gbele Resource Reserve?

## **WAYS IN WHICH THE TOURISM POTENTIALS OF THE GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE CAN BE DEVELOPED.**

1. What are the major attractions in Gbele Resource Reserve in your opinion?
2. Is infrastructure sufficient to host tourism activities in Sissala East Municipality?
3. How should local participation in promoting tourism activities in Gbele Resource Reserve be encouraged?
4. In What ways can the provision of security and medical services increase the patronage of the Gbele Resource reserve?
5. In What ways can the participation of private sectors and local entrepreneurs help boost the tourism potential of Gbele Resource reserve

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR OPINION LEADERS (CHIEFS, ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND UNIT COMMITTEE MEMBERS)**

**SECTION A: ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE**

1. Is the government involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve?

YES/NO

If YES, how are they involved?

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.....  
.....

2. Are the traditional leaders of Gbele and it's surrounding communities involved in the management of Gbele Resource Reserve?

YES/NO

If YES, how are they involved

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Are the community members of Gbele and it's surrounding communities involved in the management of the Gbele Resource Reserve?

YES/NO

If YES, how are they involved

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Are there any non-governmental organizations involved in the management process of the Gbele Resource Reserve?

YES/NO

If YES, how are they involved

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.....  
.....

5. Apart from the actors mentioned above, which other actors are involved in the management process of the Gbele Resource Reserve?

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.....  
.....

Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with each statement by a cross

(X)

Please put a cross in all the listed statements. The responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Tourism creates employment for the community members					
Community members participate in making handicraft to tourist					
Tourism has improved the infrastructure					
in the communities					

Community members own tourism business					
Community members benefit from tourism projects in the community					

**THE CHALLENGES OF THE GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE AS TOURISM DESTINATIONS.**

1. In What ways do you think Gbele Resource Reserve lagging behind compared to other tourist destinations?

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.....

.....

.....

2. Describe how poor road network is a challenge to the patronage of Gbele Resource Reserve

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.....

3. How does accommodation serve as a challenge against the sustainability of Gbele Resource reserve?

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4. In your own words how is inadequate security a challenge to both the workers and the tourists of Gbele Resource Reserve ?

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5. Does sanitation affect the level of patronage of Gbele Resource Reserve?

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.....

**TO EXAMINE WAYS IN WHICH THE TOURISM POTENTIALS OF THE  
GBELE RESOURCE RESERVE CAN BE DEVELOPED.**

6. What are the major attractions in Gbele Resource Reserve in your opinion?

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7. Is infrastructure sufficient to host tourism activities in Sissala East Municipality?

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8. How should local participation in promoting tourism activities in Gbele Resource Reserve be encouraged?

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9. In What ways can the provision of security and medical services increase the patronage of the Gbele Resource reserve?

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10. In What ways can the participation of private sectors and local entrepreneurs help boost the tourism potential of Gbele Resource reserve

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