

# Cultural Tourism and Employment Creation Nexus: Evidence from Kente Weaving and Wood Carving Industries in Kwabre East District, Ghana

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## Abstract

International tourism has grown extraordinarily in the past 50 years and it is currently one of the most pertinent industries in the world in terms of employment creation for individuals and revenue generation for governments. Governments and non-governmental organizations have therefore increasingly sought to invest in tourism driven poverty reduction initiatives by extensively exploring their tourism potential including those relating to culture. Africa suffers from record levels of unemployment that are undermining economic growth and worsening poverty across the continent. In this period of rapid urbanisation and continual call for economic diversification in developing countries, it is imperative that all potential income generating avenues are explored. This paper investigates the relationship between cultural tourism and employment creation. It demonstrates the need to pay more attention to cultural assets due to its potential economic gains. The paper uses a case study from Ahwiaa wood carving village and kente weaving industry at Adanwomase in Kwabre East District in Ghana to showcase the employment creation potential of cultural assets. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, about 246 informants participated in the study. The two cultural and touristic activities generated about 14 different employment avenues and employing about 1844 people. Although some of the jobs fetched less income, they constituted the main source of livelihoods for many individuals and households. The paper thus posits that, owing to their economic values, it is prudent for developing nations such as Ghana to package their cultural assets in a way that could attract the attention of the rest of the world.

**Key Words and Phrases:** Culture, Tourism, Development, Employment creation, Jobs, Wood carving, Kente Weaving

## 1.0 Introduction

International tourism has grown extraordinarily in the past 50 years and it is currently one of the most pertinent industries in the world in terms of employment creation for individuals and revenue generation for governments. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that international tourist arrivals and receipts will increase appreciably by the year 2020 especially in least developed countries (UNDP, 2011). Governments, development agencies and non-governmental organizations have therefore increasingly sought to invest in tourism driven poverty reduction initiatives (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). These initiatives often emerge from the assumption that tourism can stimulate marginal economies and promote development through job creation and its subsequent income generation and improvement in livelihoods of the poor (Liu & Wall, 2006). However, each country's experience with tourism may vary partly because of the many forms tourism could take as well as the unique characteristics and abilities of tourist destinations to attract and accommodate people. For this reason, there is yet a disagreement on the exact contribution of tourism since its impact may sometimes be unreliable and unrecognizable. The promotion of tourism as a key development strategy is therefore sometimes contested (Liu & Wall, 2006). However, evidence and available statistics indicate that, a number of developed nations such as Switzerland, Austria, Australia, and France and developing countries such as Egypt and Thailand have accumulated remarkable social and economic welfare based on profits from tourism (UNWTO, 2008, 2011).

Worldwide, it is estimated that tourism related activities provide about 10 % of the world's income and employs almost one tenth of the world's workforce. All considered, tourism's actual and potential economic impact is astounding (Mirbabayev, 2009; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Jobs accruing from tourism ranges from the hospitality business, the managers and staff of tourist sites, direct and indirect transportation jobs, artisans in craft related tourism (Liu & Wall, 2006). Tourism may take many forms including health tourism, seaside tourism, mountain tourism, *cultural tourism*, event and gastronomic tourism, shopping tourism, and business tourism (Kreag, 2001; Liu & Wall, 2006; NCC, 2004; UNWTO, 2013). Cultrual tourism, is the point at which *culture*—the identity of a society, meets *tourism*—a leisure activity pursued by people with an interest in observing or becoming involved in that society. Categorically, 'cultural tourism embraces the full range of

experiences that visitors can undertake to learn what makes a destination distinctive in terms of its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts, architecture, religion, its people and the business of providing and interpreting that culture to visitors' (Failte Ireland, 2013, p. 4; OECD, 2009).

Decades ago, the significance of the tourism industry in Ghana's development discourse was downplayed. However, the industry currently plays a pivotal role in the economic and socio-cultural development of the nation (Ministry of Tourism, 2012). Ghana's cultural tourism worth is embodied in her excellent natural, cultural and heritage resources such as historical forts and castles, national parks, a beautiful coastline, unique arts and craft, cultural traditions such as chieftaincy and cultural displays as well as a vibrant lifestyle. It is posited that if these potentials are further developed and properly packaged and marketed, Ghana will benefit immensely through the revenue and employment the sector generates (ibid). According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2005), Africa is suffering from record levels of unemployment that are undermining economic growth and worsening poverty across the continent (UNECA, 2005). Unemployment is a pressing social and economic issue in Ghana. In Ghana, unemployment is highest among the youth who constitute about 33% of population. Available data indicates that people between the ages of 15 and 24 has an unemployment rate of 25.6%, twice that of those between 25-44 years and three times that of the 45-64 age group. Moreover, the government is faced with the challenge of creating decent job opportunities for the youth or to engage them in some form of skills training to improve their chances of employment (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012). It is therefore pertinent that all possible avenues are thoroughly explored in order to minimise unemployment. The Government of Ghana has therefore opted to intensify its efforts to developing tourism as a sustainable engine of growth, as well as a poverty reduction mechanism. These efforts have often been in the form of tourism promotion activities and strategies aimed at exposing the rich culture of Ghana to the rest of the world. It is thus not surprising that tourism contributed about 7% to Ghana's GDP in 2011 and has created over 300,000 direct and indirect jobs all over the country (Mensah, 2011; VibeGhana, 2012). It is anticipated that, when fully developed and well managed, the tourism industry in Ghana will not only generate revenue and create employment but also preserve the environment and cultural values, curb rural-urban drift, promote investments and build cross-cultural relations (Ministry of Tourism, 2012).

This paper investigates the relationship between cultural tourism and employment creation. It demonstrates the need to pay more attention to the potential of cultural tourism especially in developing and least developing economies due to its economic gains. The paper uses a case from the wood carving at Ahwiaa and *kente*<sup>1</sup> weaving at Adanwomase in Kwabre East District in Ghana to showcase the employment creation potential of cultural assets when attention is given to the sector. The paper also discusses the challenges and the way forward for cultural tourism. The study District is one of the famous cultural tourism destinations in the country and in the Ashanti region. Currently, the main tourist attractions in the district are culturally related activities including making and sale of traditional textiles, such as Kente and Adinkra, famous traditional shrines such as Antoa as well as woodcrafts (Kwabre East District, 2010).

### 1.1 Kwabre East District: A Brief Background

The Kwabre East District puts a lot of priority on tourism development. The touristic/cultural activities constitute the second major economic activity in the District behind agriculture. The District therefore aspires to be the most popular tourists' destination in the Ashanti region. The district is located almost at the central portion of the Ashanti region. The District shares boundaries with Sekyere South District to the North; Kumasi Metropolitan Area to the South; Ejisu Juaben District to the East; Afigya Kwabre to the West (Kwabre East District, 2010).

Adanwomase is the most popular *kente* weaving centre in the district. As at 2010, the population of Adanwomase stood at 5,287. It has consistently been the royal weaving village for the Asantehene and the Ashanti kingdom. It is the first royal *kente* weaving enclave in the Ashanti region. The Adanwomase Tourism Management Team is a community based volunteer organization responsible for promoting friendly, hassle-free tourism in Adanwomase. All profits earned through tourism are used for the benefit of the entire community. Ahwiaa is also historically noted for wood carving both in Ashanti region and Ghana. The town is located on the main Kumasi-Mampong highway about 14 kilometers north of Kumasi in the Kwabre East District in Ashanti region, Ghana. Ahwiaa population was about 31,172 in the year 2010. Wood carving constitute one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Kente is a hand-woven cloth strips often made from silk and cotton fabric and is native to the Akan ethnic group of South Ghana.

commonest economic activities in the town although there have been reports of decline in the wood carving activity recently (Adu-Agyem, Sabutey, & Mensah, 2013; Kwabre East District, 2010).

### **1.2 Approach and Methodology**

The research entailed both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered through the use of structured questionnaires and interview guides. The secondary data mostly consisted of records of the past and current development initiatives and projects in relation to development of the cultural tourism potential of the district. Data was gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this respect, sampling techniques including purposive sampling and simple random sampling were used in selecting participants (see Bryman, 2008; Kothari, 2004). Purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants and the craftsmen while simple random sampling was used selecting informants in the administration of household questionnaires. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to the households. The questionnaires were proportionally shared between the two communities based on their population. In this respect, 130 questionnaires were administered at Ahwiaa and 70 at Adanwomase. Key informant interviews were conducted with the District Planning officer, the chairman of the District Culture Committee, one traditional and unit committee member of each of the two communities. Moreover, 20 craftsmen each were interviewed from the two communities. Overall, about 246 informants participated in the study. The data was analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). This was the preferred package in view of its flexibility and adaptability for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. It is worth noting that data for this paper was gathered intermittently from the January 2010 and March, 2014 in 3 phases. The first phase took place in January, 2010 while the second and third phases took place on April, 2011 and March, 2014 respectively. All monetary values stated in the paper are quoted in Ghana Cedi (GH¢). The conversion rate as at the time of putting together the final piece of this paper was US\$1= GH¢2.7. Except for names of district and community officers, all the names of participants used in this paper are pseudo names. This approach has been adopted to protect the primary participants.

### **1.3 Cultural Tourism Development in Kwabre East District**

With regards to its cultural tourism potential, the Kwabre East District aims at making the District the number one tourist site in the Ashanti Region and among the strongest in Ghana. Relevant measures and interventions have therefore been enacted over the years to promote the tourism sector in the district. The Assembly has inaugurated a committee on culture which is charged with identifying and developing inventible cultural sites, practices and values that can promote tourism. The committee has sub-committees at the various towns and villages that have recognised tourist sites (Kwabre East District, 2006). Grand festivals of chiefs and people of Kwabre East District are organised to showcase the various cultural assets of the District. In partnership with donor agencies such as European Union and the Nature Conservation Reserve Centre, the Assembly has constructed a visitors' centre, formed a Tourism Management Team and has constructed a weaving shed at Adanwomase. Other physical interventions include the construction of modern washrooms for Ahwiaa and Ntonso tourist centres and the construction of a craft village at Ahwiaa for the carving industry. Moreover, training programmes have also been organised for craftsmen in the cultural tourism industry by the District Assembly in conjunction with the Business Advisory Centre (BAC) in the District. The training regimes often included financial and business management training. The artisans have also been assisted to form cooperative societies and given technical assistance in writing a constitution. There have also been skill training programmes for the physically challenged in the various touristic activities (kente weaving, wood carving and Adinkra making) by the District Committee on Culture. As part of empowering inhabitants to take advantage of craft industry, there were regular community gatherings especially at Adanwomase to educate the inhabitants on how relate to visitors.

Moreover, conversations with the craftsmen revealed that, visit to the tourist sites was seasonal and irregular. Some craftsmen received tourists on daily basis while others did on weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis. The magnitude of tourists at Adawomase was very high as compared to that of Ahwiaa. About 80 % of craftsmen and traders at Adawomase received tourists on daily basis whereas the artisans and traders at Ahwiaa received the majority of their customers/tourists on monthly basis. Records at the Adanwomase Tourists Centre showed that, on the average, 85 people visited the Adanwomase. In 2009, total international and domestic tourists at Adanwomase were 883 and 146 respectively. This is not surprising as the Adanwomase site was more developed, well managed and enjoyed more advertisement than that of the Ahwiaa site. However, estimates by the craftsmen indicated that, between 46 and 50 tourists visited Ahwiaa every month. These tourists as well as other local visitors were a major customer base for the artisans.

However, these interventions were not popular among especially the people of Ahwiaa. For instance, about 36.7 % of the craftsmen were not aware of some of policy initiatives to promote cultural tourism in the community. One carver therefore stated that;

*“They are not doing anything....I do not believe they even know we exist.... We do not get any help from them...We need wood for our work but they are not doing anything to help us.....instead they levy our meagre incomes. I do not think they are actually interested in what we do here.”*

This was hugely attributed to the lack of coordination between the leaders and the craftsmen especially at Ahwiaa where 60 % of the craftsmen expressed utter ignorance on some of the interventions geared at their development especially the craft village (see also Amoah, 2014). To some extent, this is in line with the assertion that, *“local residents are frequently under-represented in the tourism development, both as investors and decision makers. This is because, they lack knowledge of tourism and associated skills, and because of the priority placed upon economic growth by the policy”* (Liu & Wall, 2006, p. 159).

#### 1.4 The Cultural Tourism Development and Employment Creation Nexus

The two touristic activities are also major economic activities aside from their cultural significance in Ghana. Thus, any attempt to boost the tourism sector in the district subsequently creates more employment avenues. This assertion is also shared by Kreag (2001, p. 2) who states that; *“For decades, tourism industry growth has been a major contributor to increased economic activity throughout the.....world. It has created jobs in both large and small communities and is a major industry in many places”*. Due to the presence of the various employment opportunities in the agriculture (crop farming), service and commerce sectors as well as industrial activities such as saw-milling and other forms of wood industries, 87 % of participants in the household survey who were also in the economically active age group in the two study areas were employed living only 13 % unemployed. Table 1 shows the employment status of respondents.

**Table 1: Employment Status of Respondents**

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Ahwiaa</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Adanwomase</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total</b>
Employed	113	86.9	61	87.1	174
Unemployed	17	13.1	9	12.9	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>

*Source: Kwabre East District Baseline Survey; February, 2011*

The majority (49.4%) of participants were employed in the industrial sector especially the carving and weaving activities either as artisans or traders. Moreover, 86.0% of those employed in the industrial sector had their occupation either directly or indirectly related to kente weaving or wood carving. Furthermore, 56.0% of households had at least one member directly or indirectly involved in the weaving or carving industry. These statistics show the immense contribution of the two cultural and touristic activities towards employment creation.

##### 1.4.1 Forms of Employment Created through the Wood Carving Industry

According to the estimates by the participants from the Ahwiaa community, about 391 people were directly and indirectly employed in the wood carving industry in Ahwiaa. The employment avenues created by the wood carving industry at Ahwiaa could be categorised into four main groups. These groups are described below:

###### **Carvers:**

The skill of carving is traditionally part of the lives of indigenous Ahwiaa inhabitants. The skill was informally taught to young males. However, modernisation opened the activity into a fully fledged economic industry. Acquiring the skill therefore require the same process as learning any other economic trade. Traditionally, females are not allowed to carve as it is deemed indecent for a woman to spread her legs and place a block of wood between them for carving (Adu-Agyem et al., 2013; Amoah, 2014). The females were however actively involved in the carving activities. They were often traders in carving related items as well as the carvings itself.



**Figure 1: A Carver at work at Ahwiaa**

Source: Fieldwork, January, 2010

However, owing to continual drop in market for the products over the years, the industry has lost considerable number of carvers (Okrah, 2002). There were a lot of inactive carvers in the town:

*"All those boys there know how to carve (points to a group of boys sitting not far from where interview was held)...They are no more interested in the carving business because it does not pay much these days. At first, almost every young man in this town carved" (Mofa, 55 year old carver)*

Estimates by the all the participants from the Ahwiaa community disclosed that, there were approximately 58 full time carvers who were actively working in the community. There were however over 100 part time carvers. Of those actively working, 66.6 % of them earned between GH¢150 and GH¢300 per month (\$55.6 and \$111.1 monthly). A significant number of carvers representing about 16.7 % also earned an average of GH¢800 (\$296.3) a month. These were carvers who had already market through their connections with exporters and other high earned traders. This profit levels was appropriate with respect to the current daily minimum wage in Ghana which stood at GH¢5.24 (approximately \$1.92) (WageIndicator, 2014). To some extent, the economic gains to the carvers therefore contradicted the assertions of some schools of thought that tourism related jobs may be less beneficial and demeaning (Baum, 2007; Choy, 1995).

#### **Makers/Sellers of Input Materials**

Wood is the primary input material for wood carvers. However, aside from wood, carving requires other essential inputs (Okrah, 2002). Such inputs were often sold and even manufactured within the community. There were thus a number of blacksmiths (see figure 2); merchants of essential white glue, special carving polish, beads, brass plates and wood which are used in designing the artefacts and sandpapers. In all, there were approximately 11 people involved in this kind of job.



**Figure 2: A blacksmith at work at Ahwiaa**

Source: Fieldwork, January, 2010

Among the people employed in this area, 83.3 % earned between GH ₵100 and GH ₵250 (\$37 and \$92.6) as profit monthly. Moreover, due to absence of requisite wood for carving in Ahwiaa, some individuals had found employment by arranging for wood for the carvers from relevant sources. Some carvers also liaised with authorised timber contractors to ascertain wood (Adu-Agyem et al., 2013). The carvers estimated that there were at least 5 people involved in this business including some of the carvers themselves.

#### **Product Finishers:**

This activity constitutes the final stages of the carving process. The duty of the carvers entailed moulding the wood into the desired shape. The process was then left in hands of 'finishers' who completed the activity. The main activities involved in the *finishing* stage included: sandpapering, designing, and polishing. The designers made special forms of art or designs on the sculptures right after carving. They often used beads and brass plates and made special inscriptions and arts using special knives and tools. This was then followed by sandpapering and polishing to end the process. Although, many of the carvers could do the work of the finishers, the cumbersome nature of the carving itself left them with little time to finish the product themselves. They thus often contracted the finishers complete their products. Owners of carving shops as well as traders who ordered products from carves had the responsibility to finish their products themselves. They also hired some of these finishers to have their products ready for the market. These finishers often ranged between the ages of 15 and 50 years. There were thus children of school going age who used the activity to supplement their family income and to support themselves in school as explained by one of the young product finishers:

*"...I do this almost every day....I do it after school. My uncle is a carver so he gets me a lot of works.....Sometimes I give part of my income to my mother. I use the rest as pocket money for school and to buy other personal items " (Bref, 17 year old boy).*

According to the estimates by the carvers and shop owners, there were about 128 people employed as finishers in the community. Although this employment category did not fetch enough income as compared to the other ones, many of them survived solely on the income generated from this activity. The majority (42.9%) of the finishers earned between GH ₵80 and GH ₵150 (\$29.6 and \$55.6) monthly. However, the designers often earned a more decent income of an average of GH ₵350 per month.

#### **Traders:**

This category consisted of traders involved in the end product of the carving industry. There were basically three kinds of traders when it comes to the marketing of the products namely: Local store owners, retailers and exporters. The local store owners consisted of community members who kept artefact shops within the community. These shop owners often contracted the carvers for the artefacts; finished them and either kept them in their shops or sold to retailers and exporters. On the one hand, the retailers moreover dealt with customers from other towns and cities within the country especially Kumasi, Takoradi and Accra. The exporters on the other hand consisted of both local and international companies as well as individuals within and outside Ahwiaa. These companies included: Mar/Maxx, T.K Maxx, Target Group and, Cost Plus. Some individuals within the District also exported products either by themselves or in their capacity as agents for foreign organisations. Estimates by households and craftsmen in the community revealed an average of 189 traders involved in the industry. Moreover, the work of the exporters provided jobs in form of carton making. These people made cartons using cardboards. The cartons were specially made to prevent damage to the products while being exported. On the average, the local store owners earned GH ₵250/\$92.6 monthly. While this may not be enough for some of these workers, many of them relied solely on this income for their survival. The activity therefore offered them and even their households a livelihood. Although estimates of the retailers and exporters could not be ascertained, it was expected that their incomes would be higher than that of the local traders as they had wider customer base.

#### **Handicraft Drying**

Although the carving activity was dominated by males, the females were not entirely left out. Aside from trading, a number of the older women were involved in the drying of the handicrafts. The process of carving required that the handicrafts be dried to a particular moisture level in order to prevent them from cracking. Drying was necessary before the product finishers could process it further. They often used one or more of solar powered drying equipments, ovens and sometimes sunlight to dry the sculptures. This job was undertaken mostly by petty traders who needed to supplement their income with less demanding jobs. About 5 women undertook this activity in the community. These women received between GH ₵20 and GH ₵50 (\$7.4 and \$18.5) per month depending on the method of drying and the volume of work required. Although the amount of income generated through this activity was less given the daily minimum wage of Ghana, the women involved expressed satisfaction with their income since it required less effort.

### **1.4.2 Forms of Employment Created through the Kente Weaving Industry**

The District Assembly moreover estimates that, about 10,000 people are either directly or indirectly involved in the textile industry (Kwabre East District, 2010). Moreover, based on the investigations conducted, it could safely be postulated that the *kente* weaving industry was the main stay of Adanwomase's economy. The industry employed approximately 1453 workers in the community. However, the number of people employed in the industry at a given time was dependent on the market season (either lean or peak season). Seventy percent of respondents had at least a member of their household whose occupation was either directly or indirectly related to the *kente* industry. People were involved in the industry often as weavers, input material traders, product finishers and product sellers. The employment avenues created through the *kente* weaving industry at Adawomase are described below:

#### ***Kente Weavers:***

The act of weaving was the most common and visible employment opportunity created by the *kente* weaving industry in the community (see figure 3). The weavers used a combination of either different or same colour of yarns to weave *kente* using the loom. The Weaving was however dominated by males including both young and adult males from the ages of 14 to 70 years. Some of the weavers were therefore school children who weaved during the weekends, holidays and in the afternoons and early evening during weekdays. The dominance of males was attributed to the traditional history and culture of male dominance in the societies in relation to gender roles as echoed by one of tourism management team members. The females therefore participated more in the marketing and distribution of the clothes.



**Figure 3: A Young Kente Weaver at Work**

Source: <http://www.ddr2013.com.gh/images/KUMASI/venue.html>

Unlike the situation at Ahwiaa where the majority (86.7%) of craftsmen learned the wood carving skill through apprenticeship for three years, people at Adanwomase often acquired the *kente* weaving skill by assisting their skilled relatives and friends.

*"I learnt it from my uncle. I just assisted him to work every day after school and during weekends. I took advantage of his break periods to practice"* (Tett, 15 year old weaver at Adanwomase)

However there were others (13.3 %) who acquired their skill after serving as apprentice for the same duration as those in Ahwiaa. Weavers who learnt the skill through apprenticeship were often immigrants from the other regions in Ghana especially the Volta region. There were approximately 868 active weavers in the community based on the estimations of the craftsmen, household members as well as the key informants from the community. The majority (62.5%) of the weavers, consisting mostly the young weavers earned an average of GH¢ 227/\$841 monthly whereas the remaining 37.5 % consisting of the experienced weavers earned an average of GH¢ 642/\$237.8 monthly.

### ***Sellers and Makers of Kente Input Materials/equipments***

This form of employment avenue entailed people who sold or fabricated some of the key input materials and tools for the production of kente. Major inputs in the industry include loom, bobbing winder, heddles, shuttle, beater, pulley, breast beam, spool rack, yarns/thread (cotton, nylon, polyester and embroidery) (see also Frimpong & Asinyo, 2013). All these inputs were sold or made by people with special skill set within the community including carpenters—as many of these tools and equipments were made from wood. Others also specialised in making cotton yarns from the scratch for weaving. In all, about 9 people dealt in input materials in the community. The input traders operated in shops which were commonly known as '*thread shops*' where all sorts of input materials were sold. The income levels of these workers differed based on the size of their business. In this wise, most (75.0%) of the employees earned an average of GH 408.3/\$151.2. However, those with larger businesses earned as high as GH 2,000/\$740.7 per month. Part of their earnings was however ploughed back into their businesses.

### ***Tour Guides:***

The community of Adanwomase in conjunction with the District Assembly and their development partners such as the European Union have established a Tourists' Centre. Comparatively, the Adanwomase tourist centre was more organised and vibrant than others in the district. With the assistance of American Peace Corps, the Adawomase Tourism Management Team had trained some of the youth on techniques and etiquettes in receiving and hosting tourists. Figure 4 is a picture of foreign visitors at Adanwomase with a tourist guide (second from right).



**Figure 4: Foreign Visitors at Adanwomase with a Tour Guide**

Source: Fieldwork, February, 2010

The Tourist Centre employed 3 permanent workers. There were also about 10 part time tour guides who were called upon during peak periods. The permanent staff earned allowance averaging GH 80/\$29.6 monthly. However due to the flexible nature of the job, these people also worked as weavers and traders in the kente industry which fetched them additional income.

### ***Kente Artefact Makers:***

Kente is one of the most prestigious cultural assets in Ghana. Ghanaians, most especially the Akans endeavour to be identified in one way or the other with the cloth especially during special occasions. Some artisans have therefore taken advantage of its prestigious and endearing appeal to design various kinds of artefacts/items with the strips of kente cloth. Such artefacts included products such as slippers, purse, mobile phone covers, ladies and gents bags and men ties and bowties. The kente cloth was thus a major input for the economic activities of other skilled workers in the community. Approximately 8 people including females used strips of kente to manufacture assorted items at Adanwomase. Estimates revealed that, these group of artisans earned from GH 200 to GH 400 (\$74.1 to \$148.1) monthly depending on the state of the market which often depended on foreign visitors. Some of these artisans however earned higher incomes by retailing their products to sellers who have access to bigger markets in Ghana and even abroad.

### ***Traders:***

Similar to the traders at Ahwiaa, there were local shop owners who traded only in *kente* cloth. These shop owners sometimes hired store keepers as well. The *kente* retailers in the community supplied kente to shops and



individual traders in major Ghanaian cities such as Kumasi, Takoradi and Accra. Some of the retailers however were also involved in foreign trade. They dealt with customers abroad as well as with companies and individual exporters of Kente. These retailers and exporters particularly made the industry vibrant as they constituted a greater source of market for the weavers. The retailers and the exporters often went in for contract weaving by taking care of the financial component of the production due to the quantity and variety of designs needed to boost their market chances. It was estimated that there were over 500 of these traders. Some of whom had moved into bigger cities and yet conducted business in the community. From the survey conducted, 60% of the traders earned an average of GH¢342/\$126.7 a month as profit whereas the remaining 40% earn as high and GH¢1150/\$425.9 monthly from their activities. There were a good number of such traders in the community most of whom especially the retailers, were women.

### **Product Finishers**

The process of making kente into a whole cloth consists of several procedures. Kente is originally weaved into a number of small but lengthy strips of cloths. These strips cannot be worn and therefore have to be processed further. This is where the job of the product finishers becomes relevant. The finishers could be grouped into three main categories namely: designers, seamstresses and knitters. The designers made various forms of designs—*adinkra*<sup>2</sup> and *jolomi* (embroidery) designs on the cloth upon request of the weaver or customer. This was an innovation as traditional kente cloths do not have any of such designs. The reason behind this innovation was explained by one of the participants as:

*"...this is a new style. These days there are a lot of competition on the market. The idea behind the adinkra and jolomi designs is to attract new market sources by introducing variety of designs to suit the taste of diverse (potential) consumers" (Afiya, Kente shop operator)*

Some weavers also produced plain kente cloth (kente without any special pattern or designs and often in one colour) to be used by the Adinkra makers at Ntonso; a town in also in the Kwabre East District. This arrangement also created an employment opportunity for skilled workers at Ntonso. Seamstresses in the community were also largely involved in the kente industry. The most common role played by the seamstresses, was combining of the kente strips to form larger clothes that could be sewn into different kinds of attire. Other seamstresses also specialised in embroidery making. The knitters also knitted the clothes in order to keep the shape intact. Excluding the jobs created for the artisans at the Ntonso community, the *finishing* activities employed about 15 people at Adanwomase. In their estimation, the *finishers* earned between GH¢200/\$74.1 and GH¢400/\$148.1 monthly from their respective activities.

### **Spinning and Warping:**

Before the yarns or thread could be used for weaving, it had to undergo certain processes such as warping and spinning. The spinning and warping consisted of stretching, straightening, arranging cotton fibres into yarns or thread and folding to make them ready for weaving. The cotton fibres were hand spun or machine-spun (see also Frimpong & Asinyo, 2013). The process required ample amount of time and expertise which made it cumbersome and technically excluded some residents from undertaking them. There were therefore people who undertook the warping and spinning for the weavers and some of the input material traders in exchange of a fee. There were about 13 people who were permanently employed in this job category. However, there were many other residents who possessed the skill but were either inactive with their skill or worked privately. The monthly income of the active workers ranged between GH¢90/\$33.3 and GH¢150/\$55.6 monthly.

### **Accommodation Operators**

Availability of accommodation represents one of the key components of a good tourist destination. Efforts have thus been made to encourage the provision of accommodation facilities especially within communities with viable touristic activities. There were 4 hotels/guest houses at Ahwiaa. These inns employed an average of 6 people each. The staff received monthly salary ranging between GH¢150/\$55.6 and GH¢400/\$148.1 depending on the nature of work of the person. The majority of the staff in these institutions worked on part time basis. However, there was neither any hotel nor guest house within the Adanwomase community. The tourism management team had therefore liaised with the landlords of some houses with adequate facilities to make provisions for tourists who wished to stay over. The leaders labelled this provision as '*home stay*'. These landlords therefore supplemented their incomes through this arrangement.

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<sup>2</sup> *Adinkra* are visual symbols, originally created by the Akan ethnic group that represent concepts or aphorisms. *Adinkra* are used extensively in fabrics, pottery, logos and advertising (Appiah, 1993)

### 1.5 Adverse effects of the Craft industry

Irrespective of the numerous job avenues created through the wood craft and kente weaving activities, the industries were somehow detrimental to other aspects of the respective communities'. Firstly, the ease with which people could enter into the industry lured numerous young ones into early economic maturity by engaging in one or more of these economic activities. Although one may argue that a significant number of adults successfully transitioned into the venture, the situation does not permit a normal human development pattern among some of the youth in the community. Without much consideration with regards to their future possibilities, they quickly indulge in the craft industry. This situation was largely attributed to high incidence of poverty among some households which forced their young ones into fending for themselves. The District Assembly thus recognizes that, "...poverty situation of the people has compelled children to engage in some commercial activities such as iced- water selling, numerous activities related to the kente and adinkra production, wood carving, driver's mates and while others move to Kumasi to do some hawking" (Kwabre East District, 2010, p. 39). To some extent, the presence of the activities therefore served as destruction to holistic human development.

Moreover, although vast land was available for crop farming at Adanwomase, the majority (about 53.3%) of the residents, especially the male, preferred to work as weavers and traders in the weaving industry instead of farming. In this regard, farming was left mostly to older women as the young women also endeavored working in the weaving industry. The majority of those involved in the craft industry attributed their choice to the fact that, the weaving industry fetched more income as compared to crop farming which was the main alternative economic activity in the community.

*"...my extended family has numerous farming lands around the village. I could farm if I wanted to but in the end one gets almost nothing out of it. I cannot fend for my family only through farming....the weaving does not generate much income but I think it is better than farming....My wife supplements my income with her subsistence crop farming" (Kyei, 46 year old weaver)*

The worrying side of this occurrence was the fact that, for a community that is typically expected to be agrarian, some basic food stuffs were brought onto their market from nearby communities. This therefore led to higher prices of food stuffs. However, in line with the assertion of Kreg (2001, p. 7) that tourism creates "a significant number of low-paying jobs which are often seasonal, causing underemployment or unemployment during off-seasons...", the seasonality of market for the kente cloth and the wood crafts, had persuaded some of the artisans to engage in alternative livelihood activities. At Adanwomase, some of the older weavers were involved in plantation farming of crops such as palm tree and cocoa which were gradually taking over their arable lands.

### 1.6 Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the empirical discussions above, it is an undeniable fact that, aside from their cultural values, the two crafts industries were also a source of livelihood for many households. Per the discussions above, the two industries created about 14 kinds of employment avenues within communities as summarized in box 1.

**Employment Avenues through Wood Carving:**

- i. Wood Carving
- ii. Makers and Sellers of Input materials/tools (wood sellers, Blacksmiths, input shop keepers)
- iii. Handicraft shop owners and shop keepers
- iv. Product Finishers (Designers, sandpapering and Polishing)
- v. Traders (Exporters, Retailers and store keepers)
- vi. Handicraft Drying

**Employment Avenues through Kente Weaving:**

- vii. Kente Weaving (consisting of all weavers)
- viii. Sellers and makers of kente input materials/equipments (Loom makers, bobbing winder making, store keepers, thread shop keepers)
- ix. Tour guides
- x. Kente Artefact Makers (slippers, bags, ties)
- xi. Traders (Local kente store owners, Retailers, Exporters)
- xii. Product Finishers (Adinkra and Embroidery designers, Seamstresses and Tailors)
- xiii. Spinning and Warping
- xiv. Accommodation providers

*Box 1: Employment avenues created through the touristic activities  
Source: Authors' Construct*

In this period of rapid urbanisation (Baker, 2008; UNFPA, 2007; WSP, 2009) and continual call for diversification of economies of developing countries, it is pertinent that potential income generating avenues such as the ones discussed here are given the needed attention. In a related study in the former Kwabre District in Ghana (now Kwabre East District), Gyimah (2006, p. 101) opined that;

*“The major implication of the synoptic view of the District’s economy is that the arable lands available for future meaningful agricultural development is severely threatened. This will inevitably affect future production levels if the District remains as an agrarian economy-producing mainly agricultural produce. There is therefore the urgent need for shift of emphasis in development policy from agricultural production towards non-agricultural/non-farm productive activities. The diversification of the District’s economy with particular emphasis on the traditional craft-based tourism industry which is indigenous to the people is seen as the right policy for the development of the District.”*

There is the need for more tourism product development not only in the Kwabre East district but also in other applicable contexts especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This is to develop an integrated tourism product which is competitive and offer tourists the maximum satisfaction by enhancing the components of the cultural tourism industry. Furthermore, there is the need to improve and upgrade existing essential facilities and services while providing non-existing services and infrastructure such as roads to spur the tourist sites. Honey and Gilpin (2009, p. 8 ) forward that, *“solid infrastructure is a precondition for any country [or district] wishing to establish a tourism industry. Poor countries/districts/communities need to prioritize the search for capital investment to help them build the roads, hotels, and leisure facilities needed to attract visitors in large numbers”*. With regards to the Kwabre East District and other applicable areas, provision and improvement in these facilities will spur rapid diversification of the economy from agrarian into a secondary and/or tertiary economy. This paper is thus in the right direction as it also highlights to need to pay more attention to economic value of the cultural assets of the study district and that of many other localities in Ghana and in other developing countries.

However, regardless of the numerous positive impacts on the socio-economic livelihoods of the people [in the study district], the cultural tourism and especially the touristic activities were fraught with numerous challenges which need to be decisively addressed in order to make the sector sustainable. For instance, at the district level, the kente weaving and the wood carving activities were associated to about only 7% only of the total employment (Kwabre East District, 2010). However, the employment generation potential of the industry cannot be downplayed given the empirical situation elaborated above. Efforts should thence be channelled towards addressing the challenges. The challenges facing the artisans and the district in maximising the benefits accruing from the industries emerged from the empirical study as follows:

- Financial Constrains

Comparable to the state of many other development interventions in developing countries, cultural tourism in the study area was constrained with inadequate financial support. The majority of the artisans and the administrators of the District as well as community leaders attested to the fact that, there was financial constrain with regards to the ongoing and even potential development initiatives. Financial difficulties had rendered some ongoing projects into a stalemate while plans for further interventions had remained in shelves. Although the majority of the people involved in the industries earned incomes averaging over the stipulated daily minimum wage of Ghana, their earnings were not enough to expand their businesses as desired. They spent a chunk of their earnings on living expenses. Moreover, access to credit was woefully challenging for the artisans. For instance only 20% of artisans had ever received financial assistance. Owing to the unreliable market and seasonality of the business, the majority of the artisans abstained from acquiring loans irrespective of the source. It is thus suggested that, the relevant authorities should aid in forming co-operative societies which could improve their chances of attaining soft loans/credit. Such associations will also challenge the individuals to sustainably manage their meagre earnings and loans. In Ghana, the Business Advisory Centres (BAC) at the district levels could lead in the implementation of this initiative.

- Seasonality of activities and Inadequate Market:

One of the many criticisms of tourism led-development over the years has been the issue regarding the seasonality and inconsistent nature of the activities (Baum, 2007; Choy, 1995; Kreag, 2001). Since access to market for the artisans depended largely on both local and foreign visitors, the entire activities went down during regular days/periods and especially during the winter periods in Europe and America. These lean periods left some of the craftsmen especially those without access to the bigger local markets underemployed. Moreover, the majority of the stakeholders assessed that, the tourism potential and production in general had fallen due to inadequate visitors and merchants. Efforts should therefore be intensified to create market for the craftsmen throughout the year. The District Assembly together with the traditional leaders as well as the national and regional commissions on culture can help by frequently organising cultural exhibitions within the various communities especially during the lean seasons. These initiatives will promote the potential tourist sites among locals which will inevitably be spread among foreign visitors. Moreover, relevant government institutions should make advertising of the various tourism sites a priority on their annual agenda. In an attempt to attract more foreign visitors and interest in the local industry, it is prudent that the use of internet is made pivotal information dissemination medium.

- Difficulty in accessing essential input materials:

The rapid development of the Ahwiaa community over the years has led to rigorous transformation of land use. Owing to its closeness to the Kumasi Metropolitan Area, the community has recently become the home of many people who would have previously chosen to live within the Kumasi Metropolitan Area. There is therefore less land for any form of plantation. Access to wood for carving was therefore an enormous challenge for the artisans. Many of them had to depend on unreliable timber contractors as well as individuals who had to travel long distances to fetch requisite wood. As at 2005, the carvers physically accessed the wood from places over 60 miles from their community (Cudjoe, 2005). Aside from the inconvenience and time lost, the scarcity of wood increased their production cost appreciably. Consequently, some of the committed carvers had moved to areas with abundant carving wood species which were often outside the district boundaries while many others were seriously considering doing same. However, it is suggested that, in order to improve access wood for carving without depleting the current wood lot, it is proposed that, the district should initiate a tree plantation project consisting of the requisite species for carving. It is anticipated that this project will also create employment for a few people who will be charged with the project. Moreover, the plantation could take the form of mixed cropping farming practice at the initial stages of the project. In this case, selected farmers can continually grow annual food crops until the trees mature enough to hinder the crop farming. Special invitation should also be extended to the relevant non-governmental organisations in the afforestation project. Wood carving is criticised on the front of deforestation. For instance, Obeng, Mensah, and Pentsil (2011, p. 85) postulates that, "...wood carving is one indigenous craft tradition that remains vigorously pursued worldwide but can contribute to loss of biodiversity and forest cover". This suggestion will thus not only ensure the sustainability of the carving industry but reduce the rate at which the activity depletes the vegetation

- Lack of protection by the Patent Act of Ghana

Ghana's textile industry has over the years been faced with an uphill challenge of competing with those of many other nations. The situation has been worsened recently by the introduction of similar styled foreign and local textiles onto the Ghana textile and apparel market. These are often in the form of printed versions of *kente* and its related artefacts. They often appear with virtually the same designs and patterns as the traditional *kente* cloth. On

the market, these printed *kentes* were comparatively cheaper as compared to the traditionally produced ones. The printed *kente* textiles served as a reputable alternative for especially the poor in society. This situation does not only reduce the market for the traditional cloth but also demeans its prestige. Calls have thus been made to protect the designs, names, patterns and other important components relating to these craft industries (Joy News, 2012; Modern Ghana, 2012). Moreover, attempts at patenting these designs and patterns to prevent duplications by both foreign and local textile manufacturers remained cumbersome and expensive especially for the ordinary weaver. To some extent, the carving industry also suffered the same problem as many other carving sites in the country could easily reproduce the special designs and sculptures particular to the Ahwiaa industry onto the market. The state of the implementation of the patents act, 2003 (Act 657) (Government of Ghana, 2003b) and the industrial design Act, 2003,(Act 660) (Government of Ghana, 2003a) with regards to these crafts industries in Ghana therefore leaves less motivation for artisans to develop new patterns and designs. The tenets of these protective mechanisms should therefore be enforced to the latter. It is thus strongly suggested that, the District Assemblies in collaboration with the Ghana National Commission on Culture, Tourist Board, National Board for Small Scale Industries and Business Advisory Centre in the District and pertinent NGOs should assist the craftsmen in registering and patenting their designs and patterns. This initiative will not only help in protecting their intellectual properties and reducing the competition on the market but also serve them well in the future through the potential royalties from their products. These institutions can also foster further and regular training regimes for the craftsmen by equipping them with both theoretical and practical knowledge on marketing as well as on etiquettes in tourists handling. It is contested that, "...people who work with [foreign] visitors be culturally aware of and sensitive to the expectations and foibles of a wide range of nationalities" (Honey & Gilpin, 2009, p. 8). Such training programs will adequately prepare the relevant people to interact with people from all walks of life.

Moreover, it is recommended that, the artisans and community leaders should be involved in all relevant decision making processes regarding cultural tourism development. There are numbers of empirical evidence to suggest that, when the locals and more especially the direct actors in a given socio-economic activity are ignored in the planning and implementation of projects, the projects tend to yield less benefits than anticipated or may even fail entirely (see for instance, Amoah, 2014). Representatives from relevant communities and the craftsmen therein should be made part of committees and boards responsible for the management of culture related tourism/economic activities. This will help to ensure a sustainable cultural tourism—*tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that, economic, social and aesthetic needs [of people] can be fulfilled while maintaining the cultural integrity...*". The approaches outlined here will thus help to meet the needs of present tourists, host communities (and districts) and the direct actors whilst protecting and enhancing needs in the future (UNEP & Forum, 2002; UNWTO, 1998, p. 1; 2013). The culture of a given place distinguishes it from all others. With the increasing interest in the uniqueness of different parts of the world among the world's population, it is prudent that nations and districts package their culture in a way that could attract the attention of the rest of the world. In developing economies, this will not only increase tourist arrivals but also spur the diversification of their economies while relieving people from impoverished lives as evidenced by the two case studies.

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