

Event Waste Management: A Study of a Religious Event in Ho

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Abstract

Events attract large numbers of visitors across the globe as it serves as a motivation for travel and tourism. Travel to attend religious events is a common trend as different types of religious celebrations attract pilgrims annually. Whatever the type, all events generate waste, litter and trash both on the venue and its surrounding environments. This study evaluates a crusade organized by the Christ Embassy church held at the Ho Sport stadium on the 20th May, 2017 attended by about 15,000 visitors across Africa. A descriptive design was adopted to assess waste management at the event. Data was obtained from the five (5) members of the event organizers waste management sub-committee in a focus group discussion who were purposively selected in addition to a semi-structured interviews with five (5) event attendees sampled at random and analyzed using the conversation and narrative analytical techniques based on emerging themes. From the study, it was revealed that ZoomLion Ghana Ltd, Volta region was contracted to manage waste at the event. Their functions were to fumigate the venue before the program and manage the waste during and after the program. ZoomLion Ghana Ltd, Volta region provided mobile toilets, dustbins and personnel to empty the bins to avoid spillage. However, there were challenges of indiscriminate littering and defecation on the premise. It is concluded that event waste management was less satisfactorily in the case of the Ho religious Crusade. It is recommended that forecasting event attendees should be done taking into consideration all the factors that are likely to affect attendance and if could also be contracted to an event professional.

Keywords: event, waste, attendees, waste management, religious events, tourism, cultural event

1. Introduction

Event has increasingly become inseparable from the tourism industry; it is described as an emerging segment of the business tourism sector. Swarbrooke (1995) in his classification of attractions identified special events as a tourism attraction. According to Pearce (1991) tourists are losing interest in the traditional sight-seeing experience and are seeking for opportunities to participate in the tourism experience. Events such as festival provides the opportunity for tourist to participate in the rituals and activities of the destination region which enriches their experiences. Events are therefore increasingly becoming a preferred attraction for tourists who desire participatory experience. In Ghana, major festivals like Hogbetsotso, Homowor, Oguaa Afahye, Abokyier, kwahu Easter festival, Tedudu (Yam festival) and Panafest attract both intentional and domestic visitors to participate in activities like games, procession, paragliding and hunting (Gyasi, 2013; ghana.travel, 2016).

Events attract large numbers of visitors across the globe (Getz, 2007) as it serves as a motivation for travel and tourism (Oklobdzija, 2015). According to the Tourism Organization of Serbia (2005) as cited by Pivac, Blesic, Stamenkovic and Besermenji (2011) the main motivation for inbound tourism in Serbia is events. Regions that do not have tourism attraction either man-made or natural do entice visitors to their region through investment in events and its related facilities (Hernandez-Mogollon, Folgado-Fernandez & Duarte, 2014). Event is therefore a motivation for travel and tourism and is useful when planning for the development and marketing needs of destinations (Getz, 2007).

Events also play pivotal roles in the development of tourists' destinations, image formation and attraction of investment to boost the local economy (Pivac et al, 2011). Destinations that hosts major events attract investors and investment to the accommodation, food, beverage and entertainment sector. Huge investment also goes into the building of events centers and venue to host thousands of attendees. More, also, the expenditure of attendees has positive effects on the local economy (Moscardo, 2007) as tourist at events are high yield tourists whose average daily spending are higher than an average tourists Getz (1997).

Cities/destinations that host events are also perceived to be hospitable and this translate into positive image in the international scene (Pivac et al, 2011). Tourist destinations like Dubai and cities like Greece were made popular through hosting major events: events thus open up economies. More also, like other tourism, the events product are experiences which are unique from everyday life activities (Berridge, 2007). Events products are also

intangible, heterogenous and consumed in-situ as other tourism product. Most analysis of events of touristic significance focus mainly on the socioeconomic and physical environmental implications. Even those focusing on the physical environment focused on carrying capacity excesses, meanwhile, sanitation implications are equally imperative. There is the need to evaluate sanitation outcomes of social events.

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Events are central issues in our daily life and culture, however their attractiveness is dependent on their uniqueness, originality and timing. Events are exclusive and special celebrations planned and held at a place either by public or private bodies (Getz, 1997). As such, any celebration that can be described as special and consist of diverse activities open either to the public or with restricted access is an event. Events involves large gatherings of people within a given period of time, within a given geographical space to participate in an activity to gain experiences (Eckerstein, 2002, Silvers, 2004).

The activities of all events are intended to serve diverse purposes being it social, cultural/religious, corporate among others (Argan, 2007). Getz (1989) concludes that an activity that is termed event should have these five characteristics: the activity need to open to the public, it should have an objective, it should held at predetermined dates, possess an organized program outline and it should be held in an area with tourism appeal. This implies that every event has a theme, venue, time, activity and a target audience either a segment of the general public or accessible to all.

According to Goldblatt (2005) events are unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs. Bowdin (2006) further describes events as rituals, presentations, performances or celebrations that are planned and created to mark special occasions with social, cultural and corporate objectives. Getz (2008) also classified events to include: arts and entertainment, business and trade, sport competitions, recreational, educational and scientific, political and state private events, and cultural celebrations. Cultural celebrations encompass festivals, carnivals, commemorations and religious events. It could be deduced from the definitions by Goldblatt (2005) and Bowdin (2006), that “conventions or crusades” organized by churches and other Christian religious set is a cultural event.

Travel to attend religious events is a common trend as different types of religious celebrations attract pilgrims annually. These celebration include Christmas and Easter conventions, Hajj, coronations, rites at shrines and temples across the world. As far back as the Middle Ages, people undertook trips to religious sites mostly Jerusalem and Rome for divine healing and forgiveness of sin (Fridgen, 1996, Bull, 1997). The attendees to these celebrations could be referred to as religious tourists (Rinschede, 1992) as the main purpose of these celebrations is to worship and to fulfill a religious obligation (Fleischer, 2000). The religious tourist whilst at their destination may also visit friends and relatives, shop and have some recreation. Destinations such as Jerusalem, Rome and Mecca have obtained a competitive advantage by positioning themselves as religious tourist destinations.

Conventions/crusades are events organized by Christians to celebrate and perform rituals related to their worship specifically to celebrate the birth and death of Christ Jesus and also to win souls for Christ Jesus. These events could span from a day to about a week and they attract people from Christian sect within a geographical region. Members of the sect have to lodge mostly in hostel facilities, school buildings or even spend the night in the open space at the event center. In reference to the five characteristics outlined by Getz (1989) all conventions have themes (religious objectives), held at venues (open space, auditoriums, church buildings), time (Christmas and Easter seasons, regular intervals) and target audience (Christians and unbelievers).

All events generate waste, litter and trash both on the venue and its surrounding environments (Moray Council, 2007); events attract food vendors (Facevents, 2012), exhibitors and other vendors who wish to attract visitors' spending. Waste generated at events impact negatively on the events as well as the environment. The waste generated are visible which cause the venue and host environment to be unsightly, have offensive odour and in extreme cases pose health problems.

Managing of waste and hygienic conditions at events has become a challenging issue.

According to a report by the northeast recycling council (2006) an aspect of event management that is often neglected or given the least attention, is the planning for and management of waste generated. This may be an intentional act since waste management is an additional cost to the organizers. However, the roles and euphoria of events are attained and sustained through effective and efficient management of events (Pivac et al, 2011). It is therefore a paramount responsibility of the event planner/organizer to plan for waste reduction and management in order to create a safe and hygienic environment for attendees.

Event waste management entails conscious steps to reduce waste, control the waste stream and develop a waste team (Robin, 2017). Waste management during events requires careful planning to get it right, it should not be left to chance. It also requires a forecast of the waste need (Moray Council, 2007) of the event so as to put in the necessary measures and provide the equipment needed to control waste. Waste need is a prediction of the quantity of waste likely to be generated and the measures to be put in place to reduce those waste. The waste need is determine through an assessment of the environment, the vendors the events is likely to attract, realistic forecast of attendees and the type of waste most likely to be generated. In the absence of any environmental assessment, maintaining a hygienic environment becomes more challenging.

Waste need of events vary by the number of attendees, venue/location and the activities to be engaged in. Factors that determine the waste need of events include accessibility; whether access to event is open to the general public or is restricted to paying attendees has implication on waste generated and waste management. Secondly, is the weather; waste management plans can be interrupted by bad weather especially the rain. The rain water fills up waste receptacles and makes it difficult to collect plastic materials which usually becomes heavier and get stuck to the ground. Event organizers have to encourage attendees to dispose waste responsibly especially solid, urine and fecal waste (Facevents, 2012). Some of the measures include tasking staff with the duty of emptying trash bins and educating attendees on where to dump each kind of waste in order to ensure proper waste separation.

Planning for waste in event therefore, impact the quantity of waste generated which may mar the existing sanitation situation in the host community/venue and also affect visitor satisfaction. A study by Pivac et al, (2011) outlined hygienic conditions and safety of the environment as the second factor that affects the satisfaction of event attendees (pg. 13244). In spite of the crucial role of waste management in enhancing customer satisfaction, health and safety, literature on event management focus on issues of budgeting (Goldblatt, 2002), ticketing (Thamnopoulos & Gargalianos, 2002) marketing/public relation (Wagen, 2005; Eriksson & Hjalmsso, 2000), human resource management (Wagen, 2007; Tassiopoulos, 2005) and risk management (Silvers, 2008) with a lethargic attention to the sanitation question. How effective has hygiene and sanitation been at social events and conventions?

This study assessed waste management at a cultural event (crusade) in Ho.

Specifically, the study seeks to

- Identify the stakeholders involved in managing waste at the cultural event (crusade) in Ho.
- Evaluate the equipment and facilities for waste management at the cultural event (crusade) in Ho.
- Assess the waste management strategies adopted to manage waste at the cultural event (crusade) in Ho.

3. Methodology

The research adopted the descriptive design which aims at describing the situation or the phenomenon as it exists. The descriptive study design is concerned with conditions or inter-relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, and trends that are developing (Creswell, 2003). It focuses on addressing the “what” questions with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Sarantakos, 2005). This study basically seeks to describe the processes and strategies devised to manage waste at a cultural event (crusade) in Ho.

The study was grounded in the interpretive philosophy and qualitative data was collected using interview guide and direct observation. Some members of the waste management subcommittee of the central planning committee in addition to some ordinary event attendees were purposively engaged in a focus group discussion and an unstructured interview respectively. The sample size for the focus group and unstructured interviews was five (5) in all both cases. Information obtained from them was explored using conversation and narrative analytical techniques including respondent’s own words, photos and generalities detected from field notes based on emerging themes.

3.1 Study Area

The study area is Ho the capital city of the Volta Region of Ghana as well as the Ho Municipality. It lies between Mount Adaklu and Mount Galenukui (Togo Atakora Range) and is the sixteenth most populous settlement in Ghana. It has a population of 96,213 people (GSS, 2010). The cultural event in this study is a crusade organized by the Christ Embassy church. The crusade was held at the Ho Sport stadium on the 20th of May, 2017. It was attended by visitors across all the regions of Ghana and also some international visitors from Nigeria. The international visitors lodged in accommodation facilities in Ho and beyond. The event was attended by 15, 000 visitors (Field Work, 2017). The event also attracted vendors, however the vendors that registered with the organizers were allowed access into the stadium while the un-registered vendors stayed outside the premise. This

event is suitable for this research because it is a cultural event (Getz, 2008), religious tourism (Rinschede, 1992) and it attracted both domestic and international visitors to consume the experience.

4. Results

The waste management sub-committee was tasked with the responsibility of ensuring an effective management of waste before, during and after the crusade. They were to plan for all aspect of waste specifically solid, food and fecal waste. The committee consisted of five (5) members consisting of a female and four (4) males headed by a pastor and they used three (3) months in planning for waste management at the crusade. The respondents were of the view that waste management was of major concern for the organizers and the main speaker of the program. More also, per the regulation of the management of the stadium, it is required of the users of the facility to clean the place after their programs.

To inculcate utmost professionalism in the management of waste, the committee on behalf of the church had a formal contract with ZoomLion Ghana Limited, Volta region. The respondents were of the view that ZoomLion is a competitive option with regards to waste management and this choice shows their commitment to government since ZoomLion is recognized by the state. The personnel of ZoomLion were however augmented by three (3) staffs of the stadium and some church members who voluntarily offered themselves to help in such capacity.

ZoomLion Ghana Limited, Volta region did an assessment of the venue to determine the waste need for the event. Per the contract, the main duties of ZoomLion was the provision of mobile toilet during the program, fumigation of the stadium before the program and cleaning the stadium during after the program. ZoomLion Ghana Limited, Volta region was also to provide dust bins and personnel to empty the dustbins intermittently or when they are full. The church members and the stadium staffs cleaned the stadium before the program and ZoomLion was responsible for the post-program cleaning. In relation to the equipment provided, ZoomLion provided 15 mobile toilet, six (6) dustbins.

We visited the manager of ZoomLion in Volta Region and signed a contract with the company to provide dustbins, mobile toilet and personnel who would ensure that the attendees do not litter the venue with waste. (A member of the event waste management committee)

There were also some toilet facilities on the stadium premise and the mobile toilets were stationed near the former and the basketball court. The dustbins were situated at vantage places. Furthermore, in managing food waste; announcements were made prior to the event and interested vendors had to register with the food committee at a fee. Tents were mounted for these vendors and waste from their ends were collected around these tents. However some intruders had their way since the gates were opened.

When we were doing our routine check-up, we saw some vendors who were not with our official receipts and card. When confronted, some got angry and were aggressive towards us whilst others claim they did not know they had to register to sell their goods (A member of the event waste committee)

In evaluating the adequacy of the waste equipment the waste facilities (15 mobile toilet) per attendees' (15,000) ratio was about 1,000 persons to one (1) mobile toilet. The dustbins (6) per attendees would be about 2,500 persons to one (1) dust bin. The respondents attributed this high ratio to the capacity of ZoomLion Volta region. The branch had only 15 mobile toilet and limited dustbins.

The manager of ZoomLion in Volta Region said they had only 15 mobile toilet and asked us to contact ZoomLion in the Eastern Region of Ghana. However, we had to consider the cost of transporting this equipment since we were working with a financial budget. We therefore had to use the limited number of equipment available. (A member of the event waste management committee)

To create awareness, stickers were pasted on the mobile toilet but the organizers did not make any announcement on the presence of these facilities; dustbins and mobile toilet. Data from the event attendees also shows that they were not aware of the presence of any waste management equipment. When asked whether they were aware of the presence of the waste equipment (mobile toilet and dustbins) or personnel these were some of the responses of the attendees

I know there would be dustbins but I can't sight any from where am sited. I guess they would be stationed behind the audience (An event attendee)

I did not see any toilet around and had to pass urine outside the stadium wall (An event attendee)
Another attendee said *“my child had to defecate in a polythene bag which I threw in the dustbin since I did not find any toilet around.*

I am not so sure I heard any announcement on the presence of toilets or dustbins, however those are not the reason for being at this program. (An event attendee)

I have not seen any one in the attire of ZoomLion Ghana Ltd but as you can see, there are a lot of people gathered here and it would be difficult to identify people. (An event attendee)

The head of the waste management committee admitted they did not make the needed publicity.

Due to the overflowing number of attendees, we had to the help the protocol committee in arranging the chairs and setting the place and I forget to make the announcement (The head of event the waste management committee)

The challenges that faced waste management at the crusade was inadequate mobile toilet, absence of dustbin at eatery and limited personnel from ZoomLion hence some dust bins were overflowing. The major cause of these challenges was the deviation in forecasting attendee numbers. The actual number (15,000) of attendees exceeded the expected numbers (2000 – 5000) which was used in planning for waste thus the equipment were inadequate.

We were shocked with the number of attendees, since Volta region and precisely Ho was not a big geographic space, we were expecting only a limited number of people around 2000 and 5000 (A member of the event waste management committee)

Another member of the waste management committee also said *we had to hire extra chairs for the attendees.*

However in relation to waste, there was absolutely nothing we could do but to pray that the spillage would be manage to the barest minimum.

5. Discussions

The results of the study revealed that the committee awarded the management of waste at the crusade to a reputable waste management company, ZoomLion Ghana Ltd. However, church members and staff of the venue also helped in managing waste at the event. Notwithstanding, the capacity of the ZoomLion Volta region in relation to the number of mobile toilets and dustbins was inadequate for the number of attendees at the crusade. This led to littering and people easing themselves on the premise as evident in Figures 1, 2 and 3



Figure 1: Waste littered at the venue



Figure 2: Waste littered at the venue

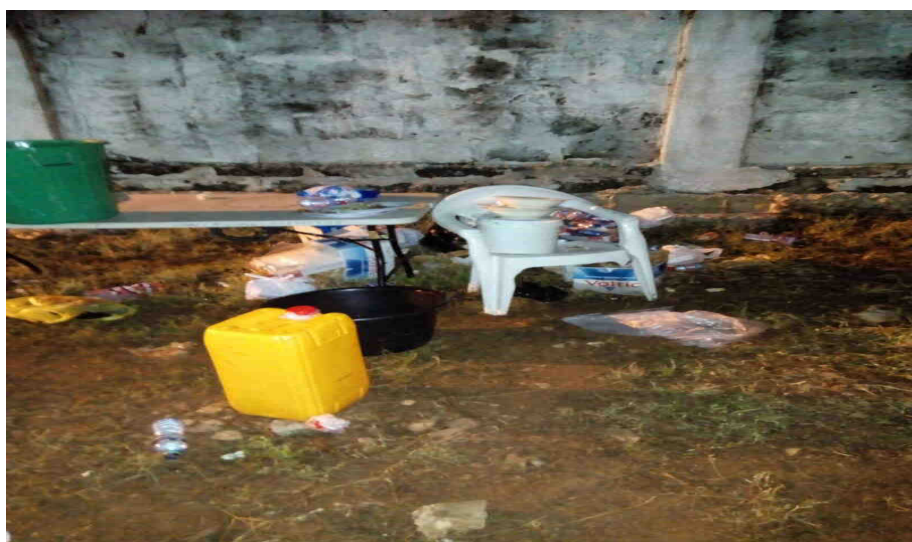


Figure 3: Waste littered at the venue

More also, the waste equipment provided were not publicized, attendees were not made aware of the availability of such facilities. Hence some attendees resorted to other means of managing their waste by dropping it on the floor and easing themselves indiscriminately on the premise.

According to Facevents (2012), events attract food vendors, exhibitors and other vendors who wish to attract visitors' spending. The crusade also attracted food vendors some of whom were registered by the food committee whilst others were unregistered. Those registered were not even provided with dustbins to collect their food waste. They resorted to pouring the waste on the floor.

According to the Moray Council (2007) the waste need is determine through an assessment of the environment, the vendors the events is likely to attract and realistic forecast of attendees. More also, a factor that determine the waste need of events include accessibility; whether access to event is open to the general public or is restricted. Access to the crusade in the study was free and opened to the general public, this greatly impacted the attendee's numbers. There was a great variation between expected numbers (2,000 – 5,000) and the actual (15,000) and this could be described as unrealistic forecasting. As such, it actually mar during-program waste management's strategies. This unrealistic forecasting could be likely due to the fact that the waste management committee and the organizing committee did consider all the factors that affect event attendance such as timing, activities, guest

speaker and accessibility issues.

6. Conclusion

Waste management at the crusade was well planned as far as expert in waste management was contracted for such purpose. However, the challenges of waste spillage, indiscriminate urinating and defecation on the premise was common. Waste management was less satisfactory. This could be attributed to unrealistic forecasting of attendees numbers and the capacity of the ZoomLion Ghana Ltd, Volta region. It is recommended that forecasting attendee's numbers should be given utmost importance taking into consideration all factors that affect event attendance. If possible, the forecasting should be done by professionals in event management.

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