



Stakeholder Engagement in Tourism Development: Exploring the Perceptions of Residents of the Ahanta West Municipality in the Western Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Although tourism policies are essential for guiding industry growth, their effectiveness ultimately depends on meaningful local engagement, which remains limited in practice despite policy commitments, as seen in the Ahanta West Municipality. This study addresses the gap between policy and implementation by examining how residents perceive their role in tourism governance and identifying the institutional and political barriers that hinder their active participation. The study employed a pragmatic philosophy where mixed method approach with stratified random sampling, using a sample size of 365. SPSS (version 27.0) was used to analyse data collected across six communities in the AWMA, using means, standard deviation, exploratory factor and thematic analysis. The study revealed some notable gaps in inclusivity, communication, and representation among stakeholders in the development of tourism in the municipality, especially with regard to the exclusion of women, youth, NGOs, and private sector actors. In order to overcome these shortcomings, the study recommended that AWMA implements a more participatory governance model that promotes cultural and environmental values, incorporates a variety of viewpoints, and use digital means to improve transparency and community responsiveness. In addition to ensuring long-term sustainability in tourism governance, these reforms were thought to be crucial for offering other districts dealing with comparable issues a reproducible model.

Keywords: Ahanta West Municipality, Development, Residents, Stakeholders, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important component of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries where it contributes to employment, local livelihoods, cultural exchange, and infrastructure development (Adu-Ampong, 2018). However, these benefits do not occur automatically; they depend largely on how tourism is planned, governed, and implemented at the local level. Effective tourism development therefore requires policies and institutional arrangements that enable relevant stakeholders to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting tourism resources, development priorities and local outcomes.

In Ghana, this principle is reflected in the National Tourism Development Plan (2013-2027), which recognises stakeholder and community participation as important elements of sustainable tourism development. Similarly, the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), provides a framework for participatory local governance through Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Ideally, these frameworks should enable residents, traditional authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to tourism planning, decision-making, and implementation. In the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly (AWMA), effective stakeholder engagement is particularly important because the municipality possesses tourism resources



whose development has implications for local livelihoods, cultural heritage, environmental management, and community wellbeing.

Despite these policy and institutional provisions, a gap appears to persist between formal commitments to participatory tourism governance and their practical implementation at the local level. Previous studies suggest that stakeholder participation in tourism development may remain limited, with some groups having little influence over decisions concerning tourism planning and resource management (Hammond, 2022; Ahinsah-Wobil, 2024). The existence of policies and decentralisation structures does not necessarily guarantee meaningful participation because implementation may be affected by institutional capacity, limited financial and logistical resources, inadequate consultation mechanisms, political interests, unequal access to information, and differences in the influence of stakeholder groups (Dangi & Petrick, 2024). Consequently, engagement may occur only after major decisions have been initiated rather than being integrated throughout the tourism planning and policy process.

This policy-practice gap creates an important empirical problem within AWMA. While existing frameworks emphasise participation and inclusive governance, limited empirical attention has been given to how stakeholder engagement actually occurs within the municipality, whether existing engagement mechanisms are effective, and the extent to which cultural and environmental considerations are incorporated into tourism development. There is also limited understanding of the institutional, social and political factors that may facilitate or constrain inclusive engagement among residents, traditional authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, women and youth groups and other relevant actors. Addressing these issues is important because meaningful stakeholder engagement can strengthen local ownership, improve the relevance of tourism policies, protect cultural and environmental resources and contribute to more sustainable tourism outcomes.

Against this background, the study aims to examine stakeholder engagement in tourism development and governance in the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) assess the extent of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning and decision-making in the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly; (2) examine the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for stakeholder engagement in tourism development in the municipality; (3) examine the extent to which cultural and environmental considerations are incorporated into tourism development in the municipality; (4) identify the institutional, social, and political factors that influence inclusive stakeholder engagement in tourism development; and (5) explore strategies for strengthening inclusive and effective stakeholder engagement in tourism governance in the municipality. The study was expected to provide empirical evidence to support more participatory, inclusive and context-responsive tourism governance within the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Legislative Frameworks Guiding Tourism Development in Ghana

The legislative framework for tourism development in Ghana is anchored by the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2013–2027 and the Tourism Act, 2011 (Act 817). The NTDP outlines strategic initiatives to position tourism as a key driver of economic growth, emphasizing infrastructure development, heritage conservation, and capacity building within the sector. It serves as a comprehensive roadmap for sustainable tourism, aiming to enhance Ghana's appeal as a competitive tourist destination (Ghana Tourism Development Plan, 2013). Act 817 complements this by establishing the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), which is mandated to regulate and oversee the implementation of tourism policies, ensuring adherence to standards and promoting best practices within the industry (Tourism Act, 2011).

Recent analyses highlight the effectiveness of these legislative instruments in fostering tourism growth. The NTDP's emphasis on public-private partnerships has been instrumental in mobilizing investment for tourism infrastructure, leading to the development of new attractions and the enhancement of existing ones (Ghana Tourism Development Plan, 2013). Additionally, the establishment of the GTA under Act 817 has streamlined regulatory



processes, facilitating a more conducive environment for tourism enterprises (Tourism Act, 2011). These developments have contributed to a notable increase in tourist arrivals and revenue generation, underscoring the efficacy of the legislative framework in achieving its objectives (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2023).

However, some scholars argue that while the NTDP and Act 817 provide a solid foundation, there is a need for periodic reviews to address emerging challenges and trends in the global tourism landscape (Pleisch, 2024; Preko, 2020; Ahiawodzi, 2019). For instance, the rise of digital tourism and the sharing economy presents new regulatory considerations that were not envisaged during the formulation of these instruments (Oxford Business Group, 2024). Furthermore, issues related to environmental sustainability and community involvement require more explicit legislative attention to ensure that tourism development aligns with broader socio-economic and environmental goals (Ghana Tourism Development Plan, 2013).

In response to these concerns, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts has initiated efforts to update the existing legislative framework. The introduction of new regulations, such as the Tourism (Registration and Licensing of Accommodation) Regulations, 2016 (LI 2239), aims to address specific operational aspects within the sector (Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, 2023). Additionally, the development of a multi-stakeholder heritage strategic framework for Ghana (2022-2029) reflects a commitment to preserving cultural heritage while promoting tourism (Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, 2023). These initiatives indicate a proactive approach to legislative adaptation, ensuring that the framework remains relevant and effective in a dynamic global context.

Overall, the legislative frameworks guiding tourism development in Ghana have been pivotal in shaping the sector's trajectory. The NTDP and Act 817 have provided clear directives for growth and regulation, contributing to the sector's expansion and increased economic significance (Pleisch, 2024). Ongoing legislative updates and strategic initiatives demonstrate a recognition of the need for continual adaptation to maintain the sector's momentum and address emerging challenges. As Ghana continues to position itself as a premier tourist destination, the evolution of its legislative framework will play a crucial role in sustaining and enhancing this progress.

Mandates and Responsibilities of District Assemblies under the Local Governance Act (Act 936)

The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) of Ghana delineates the mandates and responsibilities of District Assemblies, positioning them as the primary administrative and political authorities at the local level. According to the Act, District Assemblies are entrusted with the overall development of their respective districts, which encompasses the preparation and submission of comprehensive development plans and budgets to relevant central government agencies (Local Governance Act, 2016). This legislative framework underscores the decentralization policy aimed at promoting participatory governance and enhancing service delivery at the grassroots level (Gow & Van Sant, 2019). The Act mandates District Assemblies to facilitate the active involvement of residents and stakeholders in decision-making processes, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and accountability within local governance structures (Menon & Hartz-Karp, 2019).

In fulfilling their developmental mandate, District Assemblies are responsible for initiating and managing infrastructure projects, including the provision of municipal works and services such as water, sanitation, and roads (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2023). They are also charged with the development, improvement, and management of human settlements and the environment within their jurisdictions, ensuring sustainable urban and rural planning (Local Governance Act, 2016). Furthermore, the Act empowers District Assemblies to promote and support productive activities and social development, aiming to remove obstacles to local economic growth and enhance the well-being of their communities (Gow & Van Sant, 2019). This comprehensive scope of responsibilities positions District Assemblies as pivotal agents in the national development agenda.

Financial management and resource mobilization constitute critical aspects of the responsibilities of District Assemblies under Act 936. They are authorized to generate revenue through local taxes, rates, and fees, and are also beneficiaries of the District Assemblies Common Fund, which is a central government transfer aimed at supporting



local development initiatives (Adu *et al.*, 2020). The Act stipulates that District Assemblies must ensure prudent financial management practices, including the preparation of annual budgets and financial statements, to promote transparency and accountability in the utilization of public funds (Local Governance Act, 2016). Additionally, they are required to coordinate and facilitate internal audit activities to strengthen financial oversight mechanisms (Gow & Van Sant, 2019).

The Act also assigns District Assemblies the responsibility of maintaining security and public safety in collaboration with national and local security agencies. This involves the enforcement of by-laws, regulation of public spaces, and ensuring compliance with national laws at the local level (Local Governance Act, 2016). Moreover, District Assemblies are tasked with preserving and promoting cultural heritage within their districts, recognizing the importance of culture in social cohesion and identity (Adu *et al.*, 2020). They are also expected to facilitate access to justice by ensuring the availability of legal and judicial services to residents, thereby upholding the rule of law and protecting citizens' rights (Gow & Van Sant, 2019).

To effectively execute these mandates, District Assemblies operate through a structured system comprising various sub-committees, including those focused on development planning, social services, works, justice and security, and finance and administration (Owusu-Dankwah, 2021). This organizational framework is designed to enhance efficiency and ensure a comprehensive approach to local governance (Local Governance Act, 2016). The Act also emphasizes capacity building and the need for continuous training of Assembly members and staff to equip them with the requisite skills and knowledge for effective service delivery (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2023). By delineating these mandates and responsibilities, Act 936 seeks to promote accountable, transparent, and participatory governance at the district level, thereby contributing to the broader objectives of national development and democratic consolidation.

Concept of Stakeholder Engagement in Tourism

Stakeholder engagement in tourism is essential for ensuring the sustainable development of the sector, as it involves the active participation of various groups with an interest in tourism activities, including local communities, government authorities, tourism businesses, and visitors. According to Amoako *et al.* (2022), stakeholder engagement provides an opportunity for different stakeholders to voice their concerns and collaborate on tourism-related decisions. This process helps align the goals and expectations of diverse groups, fostering mutual understanding and enhancing the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations.

Engaging stakeholders in tourism planning and management allows for a more inclusive approach, where the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism can be effectively addressed (Prayudi, 2018; Gössling *et al.*, 2021). As tourism continues to expand globally, it becomes increasingly important to recognize the role of stakeholder engagement in fostering resilient and sustainable tourism systems (Pyke *et al.*, 2021).

The importance of stakeholder engagement is further reflected in the evolving nature of governance in the tourism sector. Traditionally, Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018) posit that decisions regarding tourism development were made without consulting local communities or other key stakeholders. However, as the sector has grown, there has been a clear shift towards more collaborative, participatory methods. This change in approach highlights the growing recognition of the need for a more inclusive governance model. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of giving stakeholders at all levels the opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes (Amoako *et al.*, 2022).

This participatory governance model has proven effective in improving tourism policy outcomes by integrating diverse perspectives and reducing potential conflicts (Prayudi, 2018; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2024). Furthermore, this collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering stakeholders to sustainably manage resources and preserve cultural heritage (Aureli & Del Baldo, 2023).



An essential component of stakeholder engagement is its ability to promote sustainable tourism development. Stakeholder engagement helps mitigate negative social and environmental impacts by ensuring the equitable distribution of tourism's economic benefits. Amoako *et al.* (2022) argue that local communities, when involved in the planning and management of tourism activities, gain a better understanding of the potential benefits and challenges, leading to more informed and responsible decision-making. Engaging communities directly also enhances the preservation of local traditions and resources, as they are more likely to protect their cultural and environmental heritage when involved in the process (Prayudi, 2018). Moreover, local communities play a critical role in enhancing the authenticity of tourism experiences, which in turn enriches tourism products and better reflects local identities and traditions (Guerra *et al.*, 2022).

A key benefit of effective stakeholder engagement is its facilitation of public-private partnerships (PPPs), which play a crucial role in addressing key challenges in tourism development. Amoako *et al.* (2022) highlight that PPPs are instrumental in overcoming obstacles such as funding, resource allocation, and balancing diverse stakeholder interests. These partnerships enable the pooling of resources and expertise, fostering the development of infrastructure and services beneficial to both tourists and local populations (Prayudi, 2018). By aligning tourism policies with the needs of all stakeholders, PPPs ensure more equitable and sustainable outcomes. Additionally, these collaborations help destinations manage tourism growth while mitigating the negative impacts of rapid development (Richardson, 2021).

In the digital age, technology has introduced new ways for stakeholders to engage in tourism governance (Lalicic, 2018). The rise of digital platforms and social media has transformed communication, enabling more interactive and timely feedback between stakeholders (Amoako *et al.*, 2022). These tools allow stakeholders to voice their opinions, report issues, and participate in decision-making processes in real-time, enhancing the responsiveness and adaptability of tourism management strategies. However, as Prayudi (2018) notes, the digital divide remains a challenge for certain groups, especially those in rural or underserved areas. To ensure inclusive engagement, it is essential to address this divide, ensuring that all stakeholders have equal access to these platforms (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2024).

Effective leadership is central to fostering successful stakeholder engagement in tourism. Amoako *et al.* (2022) stress the importance of strong leadership to guide the engagement process, build trust among stakeholders, and ensure that marginalized voices are heard. Effective leaders facilitate communication, mediate conflicts, and ensure that engagement efforts are transparent and inclusive. For stakeholder engagement to be effective, leaders must be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate complex relationships and promote collaborative decision-making (Prayudi, 2018). Capacity-building initiatives for both leaders and stakeholders are therefore essential, ensuring that all participants are equipped with the tools and resources necessary to contribute meaningfully to tourism development (Eyisi *et al.*, 2021).

The Relevance of Stakeholder Engagement

Numerous studies highlight the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships in advancing sustainable tourism (Xingzhu *et al.*, 2022; Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2019). Ferdian *et al.* (2024) examined stakeholder collaboration in Europe, emphasizing the role of partnerships in fostering sustainable tourism. Their research underscored the importance of integrating local communities with private sector firms to achieve balanced and sustainable tourism growth. Their findings suggest that tourism programs are more likely to address environmental, social, and economic objectives successfully when a wide range of stakeholders is involved, from private enterprises to local government entities. The study also found that partnerships among local government agencies, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), and community organizations lead to increased funding for environmentally sustainable projects, cultural heritage preservation, and the empowerment of local communities to manage tourism-related activities. However, Ferdian *et al.* (2024) also noted that environmental initiatives may not yield long-term benefits if local communities are not actively engaged in the process, highlighting the need for deeper community involvement.



Moving to Southeast Asia, Ismail *et al.* (2025) explored the role of multi-stakeholder cooperation in community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives. Their research emphasized the critical role of collaboration between NGOs, local government agencies, and grassroots communities in the success of these initiatives. These partnerships enabled local communities in Malaysia and Indonesia to manage tourism resources effectively, providing both financial opportunities and the knowledge to protect their natural and cultural heritage. Ismail *et al.* (2025) also pointed out the significant role that NGOs play in advocating for sustainable practices, facilitating communication between local people and government officials, and offering technical support to tourism operators. Their research concluded that stakeholder collaboration fosters local accountability and investment, which are essential for the long-term success of tourism projects.

Shifting focus to the Philippines, research on sustainable tourism has primarily centered on environmental concerns and policy frameworks. Olszewski-Strzyżowski (2022) conducted a comprehensive analysis of national policies promoting environmentally friendly travel behaviours, particularly the government's initiatives to support sustainable tourism through regulations and incentives. Their study reviewed key legislative frameworks such as the National Ecotourism Strategy and the Tourism Act of 2009, which aimed to balance environmental conservation with economic growth. However, Olszewski-Strzyżowski (2022) noted that the role of local stakeholders, particularly at the provincial level, was often overlooked in the implementation and success of sustainability initiatives. While national policies provide overarching sustainability goals, their impact largely depends on their adaptation to local contexts.

Furthering this point, Salvador and Sancho (2021) stressed that local governments play a critical role in translating national policies into actionable local strategies. Moreover, the role of private enterprises, educational institutions, and community leaders, especially in regions like Ilocos Norte, remains understudied. Their contributions are crucial in addressing local needs and harnessing opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Recent work by Issac and Newell (2025) highlighted the necessity for stronger collaboration among multi-level stakeholders at the provincial level. This involves government agencies, local communities, tourism businesses, and academic institutions, which together can implement locally relevant and impactful sustainable tourism initiatives.

The Implications of Stakeholder Engagement for the Overall Tourism Development Effort

Stakeholder engagement is critical for community-based tourism development as it incorporates diverse perspectives into tourism policies and strategies (Pyke *et al.*, 2021). Involving local stakeholders such as businesses, residents, and cultural groups establishes a foundation for sustainable tourism development (Edgell Sr, 2019). This participatory approach ensures that initiatives are culturally sensitive, economically beneficial, and collaborative, reducing conflicts and fostering trust (Sisto *et al.*, 2022; Barrane *et al.*, 2021). As a result, tourism strategies are more effective and balanced, preserving both growth and cultural values.

Complementing local stakeholders' efforts, private-sector involvement drives economic growth through investments in infrastructure and the development of attractions (Khan *et al.*, 2020). Partnerships between private enterprises, municipalities, and local stakeholders ensure projects meet community needs while adhering to sustainability goals (Marx, 2019). Additionally, the private sector contributes creative solutions and resources that enhance a destination's competitiveness and promote responsible tourism (Kubickova, 2019). The synergy between local and private efforts maximizes the impact of tourism initiatives.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role by advocating for sustainable practices and representing marginalized communities. Acting as intermediaries, NGOs bridge gaps between policymakers and local groups, ensuring that tourism policies address environmental, social, and cultural concerns (Clausen, 2019). Their capacity-building programs and technical expertise support municipalities in creating inclusive and sustainable policies (Franco & Tracey, 2019). By promoting equity and minimizing adverse impacts, NGOs complement the work of



other stakeholders. At a broader level, international organizations provide frameworks and platforms that enhance stakeholder engagement and align local efforts with global best practices (Kiss *et al.*, 2022). These collaborations help municipalities attract global investments and develop holistic tourism strategies that are competitive and sustainable.

Finally, technology enhances stakeholder engagement by facilitating real-time feedback, improving communication, and informing adaptive policymaking (Kaluvarachchi, 2022; Giuffrida *et al.*, 2019). Digital tools enable municipalities to disseminate information and raise awareness about sustainable practices, creating responsive and inclusive policies. By integrating technology into stakeholder engagement, municipalities ensure that efforts remain cohesive and forward-looking. Together, the contributions of local stakeholders, private enterprises, NGOs, international organizations, and technology form a robust framework for sustainable tourism development. This collaborative approach balances economic growth, cultural preservation, social equity, and environmental concerns, ensuring the long-term success of tourism initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, specifically a convergent mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected to provide complementary evidence on stakeholder engagement in tourism development in the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly (AWMA). The quantitative component measured residents' perceptions of stakeholder engagement and identified underlying dimensions of engagement, while the qualitative component provided contextual explanations of the institutional mechanisms, consultation processes, inclusiveness, feedback mechanisms and use of technology in stakeholder engagement. The integration of the two strands enabled triangulation of findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon than either approach could provide independently.

The study was conducted in six tourism-oriented communities in the Ahanta West Municipality: Butre, Busua, Dixcove, Akwida, Cape Three Point, and Princess Town. The communities were purposively selected because they are associated with established tourism resources, cultural heritage, hospitality activities, and community-based tourism interactions within the municipality. Their selection also provided variation in the nature and intensity of tourism activities and enabled the study to capture residents' experiences across communities with different levels of exposure to tourism development. However, the purposive selection of tourism-oriented communities may limit the generalisability of the findings to other communities within the Ahanta West Municipality that have lower levels of tourism development or limited exposure to tourism activities. The findings should therefore be interpreted primarily within the context of the selected tourism-oriented communities rather than as fully representative of all communities in the municipality. The target population comprised residents of the six selected communities who were sufficiently familiar with tourism activities and developments in their respective communities.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed within the six purposively selected communities for the quantitative component. The six communities constituted the primary strata, while respondents within each community were further considered according to relevant demographic characteristics where necessary. The number of questionnaires allocated to each community was determined proportionately according to its accessible resident population, after which eligible respondents were selected randomly. This procedure ensured that communities with larger populations contributed more respondents while smaller communities were not excluded from the study. Although random selection of respondents strengthened representation within the selected communities, it did not eliminate the limitation arising from the purposive selection of the communities themselves. A total of 365 residents participated in the quantitative survey.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to select participants with direct knowledge of tourism planning, policy implementation, and stakeholder engagement in the municipality. The participants included representatives of the Ghana Tourism Authority, the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly, and traditional authorities from the selected communities. These participants were chosen because of their institutional,



administrative, and cultural responsibilities and their ability to provide information that could explain and contextualise the quantitative findings. Fourteen key informants were purposively selected and interviewed for 30-45 minutes each, with the sample size determined by the participants' relevance to the study and the adequacy of information obtained to address the research objectives. The questionnaire was developed from the study objectives and relevant literature on stakeholder participation, sustainable tourism governance, community engagement, and inclusive tourism development. The instrument comprised 14 closed-ended items addressing community consultation, cultural promotion, inclusiveness, collaboration, empowerment, tourism benefits, and related aspects of stakeholder engagement. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The items were reviewed for contextual relevance and clarity through consultation with individuals knowledgeable in tourism governance, including relevant Municipal Assembly officials, traditional authorities, and tourism stakeholders. The instrument was subsequently pretested among residents who were not included in the final sample and necessary adjustments were made to improve clarity, wording, and suitability of the items.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected institutional and traditional stakeholders to obtain deeper explanations of the quantitative findings. The interviews focused on institutional mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, the frequency and depth of consultation, inclusion of different stakeholder groups, integration of community feedback, conflict resolution, and the role of technology in stakeholder engagement. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent to ensure accurate capture and transcription of the responses. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically through systematic coding. Initial codes were developed from the research objectives and emerging responses, after which related codes were grouped into broader themes. Trustworthiness was enhanced through careful transcription, repeated review of the transcripts, comparison of emerging themes across participants, and triangulation of qualitative findings with the quantitative results.

Quantitative data were coded, edited and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27.0. Descriptive statistics, particularly means and standard deviations, were used to summarise residents' perceptions of stakeholder engagement. In addition, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions of stakeholder engagement represented by the questionnaire items. The use of EFA was appropriate because the study sought to empirically establish the underlying structure of residents' perceptions rather than assume that the 14 items represented predetermined dimensions. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity before factor extraction and interpretation. Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw, and the procedures for protecting their information before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and no personally identifying information was used in reporting the findings. Questionnaire and interview data were treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS

Reliability of the Scale

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the 14 questions used to gauge stakeholder involvement perceptions in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Measure	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	0.884

Source: Fieldwork, 2025



The dependability result displays a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.884, as seen in Table 1. The scale items are closely correlated and consistently measure the same underlying construct, as indicated by this high value. This reliability score indicates that the scale is statistically trustworthy for further analysis, such as factor analysis and the generation of composite indices, as it exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.7.

Residents' Perceptions of Stakeholder Engagement in Tourism Development

The primary tendencies and variations in residents' perceptions of stakeholder participation were examined using descriptive statistics. As presented in Table 2, the mean scores for the 14 items ranged from 2.28 to 3.60, while the standard deviations ranged from 0.82 to 1.12. The results therefore indicated a mixed pattern of stakeholder engagement, with residents perceiving some evidence of participation but also identifying important weaknesses in communication, inclusion, empowerment, and responsiveness. The relatively moderate mean scores across most items suggest that stakeholder participation in tourism development is present but remains uneven and does not consistently translate into meaningful community involvement.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Residents' Perception

Items	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	The Ahanta West Municipal Assembly consults community members before making tourism-related decisions.	25	87
2	Local residents are aware of the Assembly's tourism policies and initiatives.	10	02
3	Community suggestions are taken seriously by the Assembly when developing tourism projects.	95	08
4	The Assembly works closely with traditional leaders to promote local tourism.	60	82
5	Tourism initiatives in the municipality respect and promote local culture and heritage.	30	9
6	The Assembly collaborates effectively with local businesses to improve tourism in the area.	15	95
7	The Assembly involves youth and women's groups in discussions about tourism development.	98	01
8	Environmental concerns are addressed in the Assembly's tourism policies.	20	98
9	The Assembly educates residents about how tourism benefits the community.	28	92
10	Stakeholders like NGOs and cultural organizations are actively involved in the Assembly's tourism projects.	12	04
11	Local residents feel empowered to participate in tourism decision-making processes.	85	12
12	The Assembly uses appropriate methods (e.g., community meetings) to gather feedback from residents about tourism.	05	93
13	Tourism projects in the municipality provide tangible economic benefits to local residents.	18	89
14	The Assembly ensures fairness and inclusiveness when involving different groups in tourism-related decisions.	00	94

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The findings indicated that stakeholder participation in tourism development within the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly (AWMA) was moderate and uneven. The highest-rated item was D4 ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.82$), which showed that collaboration with traditional leaders had been the strongest perceived aspect of stakeholder engagement. Other relatively positive areas included respect for local culture and heritage (D5: $M = 3.30$), consultation with community members (D1: $M = 3.25$), consideration of environmental concerns (D8: $M = 3.20$), and perceived economic benefits from tourism projects (D13: $M = 3.18$). These findings suggested that AWMA had established some mechanisms for engaging local interests, particularly through traditional leadership structures and attention to cultural considerations.

However, significant weaknesses had been identified in communication, empowerment, and inclusive participation. D9 recorded the lowest mean ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.92$), indicating that residents had perceived limited efforts by the Assembly to educate them about the benefits of tourism. Similarly, residents had reported relatively low levels of



empowerment in tourism decision-making (D11: $M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.12$), while community suggestions had not been perceived as being sufficiently considered (D3: $M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.08$). The involvement of women and youth had also been limited (D7: $M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.01$), while perceptions of fairness and inclusiveness had remained moderate (D14: $M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.94$). The standard deviations, which ranged from 0.82 to 1.12, indicated moderate variation in residents' perceptions, particularly regarding empowerment and the extent to which community suggestions had been considered.

These findings were consistent with the stakeholder participation literature, which had emphasised meaningful, inclusive, and collaborative engagement in sustainable tourism development (Pyke et al., 2021; Edgell Sr., 2019; Sisto et al., 2022; Barrane et al., 2021). The relatively low ratings for empowerment, community input, and the involvement of women and youth suggested that participation within AWMA had remained largely consultative rather than providing residents with substantial influence over tourism decisions. Greater involvement of NGOs, community organisations, and private-sector actors could have broadened participation and ensured that diverse community interests were represented, consistent with Clausen (2019), Franco and Tracey (2019), Khan et al. (2020), and Marx (2019).

Overall, the findings suggested that AWMA needed to move beyond limited consultation towards a more coordinated and inclusive stakeholder engagement framework. Priority areas included improving public education and information sharing, strengthening feedback mechanisms, increasing the participation of women and youth, enhancing collaboration with NGOs and local businesses, and providing residents with greater opportunities to influence tourism decisions. The use of digital platforms could also have improved transparency, communication, and feedback, as suggested by Giuffrida et al. (2019) and Kaluarachchi (2022). Such measures, together with the collaborative multi-stakeholder approach advocated by Kubickova (2019) and Kiss et al. (2022), could have strengthened stakeholder participation and contributed to more equitable, locally responsive, and sustainable tourism development in AWMA.

Qualitative Results on Tourism Policy Stakeholder Engagement

To complement the quantitative findings and gain deeper contextual insight into tourism policy stakeholder engagement, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key institutional and traditional leaders. This included representatives from the Ghana Tourism Authority (G1), the Municipal Assembly (M1), and six traditional leaders (T0-T5). Participants were purposefully selected to provide institutional, administrative, and cultural perspectives on the nature and quality of stakeholder engagement within the context of the Assembly's tourism policy processes. The qualitative data were analysed using a deductive thematic approach, with themes drawn from the research questions and informed by trends and gaps identified in the quantitative results.

The analysis was organised around five pre-determined themes: (1) institutional mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, (2) frequency and depth of consultation, (3) inclusion of diverse stakeholders, (4) feedback integration and conflict resolution, and (5) the role of technology and innovation in engagement. The following sections present the thematic findings, supported by illustrative quotes and interpreted in relation to the survey data.

Institutional Mechanisms for Stakeholder Engagement

The interviews revealed distinct roles and responsibilities at the national and municipal levels in shaping stakeholder engagement. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) described its mandate as primarily supervisory and technical, with the expectation that Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) would take the lead in executing engagement processes. As one GTA representative noted: *"We provide the technical support and policy guidelines. But the actual engagement depends on the Assembly. Our job is to make sure engagement is inclusive and not just about ticking boxes."* (G1)

At the local level, the Assembly representative (M1) acknowledged the existence of several engagement platforms, such as community durbars, stakeholder forums, and public consultations. However, the timing and depth of these



engagements were often problematic. As M1 explained: *“We engage stakeholders, yes. But many times, it is after we have already decided. The challenge is getting everyone involved from the start”*. (M1)

These responses highlighted a gap between national-level expectations and local implementation, particularly in terms of the timing and authenticity of engagement. This qualitative insight reflects the quantitative finding that community members perceived limited inclusion in decision-making processes, as reflected in the low mean score for item B5 (“Community opinions are valued,” $M = 2.84$).

Frequency and Depth of Consultation

The infrequency and superficiality of consultations emerged as a recurrent concern, especially among traditional leaders. Several described their involvement as reactive rather than proactive, with consultation typically occurring only when decisions were already in motion. One traditional leader remarked: *“They only come when something is about to happen. We are not part of the planning table.”* (T2). Another stated: *“Our knowledge of the land and the culture should be used, not ignored.”* (T4). The Assembly official (M1) acknowledged the shortfalls, attributing them to resource constraints: *“We would like to consult more often, but we lack the logistical support to do regular forums.”* (M1)

These findings suggest that engagement follows an event-driven model, rather than being systematically embedded throughout the policy cycle. This corresponds with the moderate rating for item B1 (“The Assembly actively engages the local community,” $M = 3.12$), pointing to room for improvement in both the frequency and quality of consultation efforts.

Inclusion of Diverse Stakeholders

Interviewees identified several challenges in ensuring the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholder groups, including local businesses, NGOs, youth associations, and women’s groups. G1 pointed out that access to engagement processes was often uneven, favouring more connected or influential actors: *“Private sector involvement depends on whether they’re connected to the Assembly. Smaller operators often get left out.”* (G1). This sentiment was echoed by M1, who noted that while engagement aims to be broad, conflicting interests among stakeholder groups often complicate the process: *“We have business people, chiefs, youth groups, and NGOs. Sometimes their interests’ conflict. That makes it hard to move forward smoothly.”* (M1)

These institutional and political dynamics appeared to shape whose voices were heard and whose were excluded. The challenges described reinforced the low mean score for item B2 (“Local businesses are adequately included,” $M = 2.95$), underscoring the limited and uneven inclusion of diverse actors in tourism policy development.

Feedback Integration and Conflict Resolution

A major theme emerging from the interviews was the lack of clear mechanisms for integrating stakeholder feedback into final decisions. Traditional leaders reported that although they were occasionally invited to provide input, there was little transparency about how or whether their suggestions were considered. As one traditional authority noted: *“We give our views, but what happens after that is a mystery. They rarely report back”* (T1).

The Assembly representative admitted that feedback integration was inconsistent and sometimes politically influenced: *“We do collect feedback, but integrating it depends on the stage of the policy. And sometimes, politics takes over.”* (M1). While the Ghana Tourism Authority occasionally acted as a mediator in disputes, particularly those involving land and cultural issues, its role remained informal and underdeveloped. *“We often mediate between parties, especially when traditional land issues are involved. But it needs to be formalised more.”* (G1). These findings illustrate a weak feedback loop and ad hoc conflict resolution structures, which help explain community frustrations reflected in items B3 and B5, related to the alignment of policies with local needs and the value of community input.



Role of Technology and Innovation in Engagement

Stakeholders widely acknowledged that technology has become an essential tool for facilitating stakeholder engagement, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. M1 reported that the Assembly started using digital platforms, but effectiveness was limited by uneven adoption: *“Zoom and WhatsApp helped us survive during COVID. But most local stakeholders don’t use these platforms effectively.”* (M1). G1 emphasised the need for greater investment in digital tools and training: *“Technology is the future of stakeholder engagement, but we need capacity-building at the municipal level.”* (G1). Traditional leaders expressed interest in using digital tools, but also pointed out structural barriers: *“We would use digital tools if training and support were available. Many of our elders are not familiar with them.”* (T3)

These responses confirmed the broad community support for digital engagement tools, consistent with the highest-rated survey item, B9 (*“Digital tools would enhance involvement,”* $M = 3.85$). However, they also revealed a persistent digital divide, suggesting that without targeted support and capacity-building, digital engagement may inadvertently reinforce exclusion rather than reduce it.

Triangulated Results on the Tourism Policy Stakeholder Engagement in AWMA

The triangulated analysis revealed both areas of convergence and divergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings. On the side of convergence, the quantitative results in Table 3 showed moderate agreement that collaboration with cultural organisations ($M = 3.41$) and sustainable development initiatives ($M = 3.38$) were important aspects of tourism policy. This aligned with qualitative evidence, where both traditional leaders and Assembly officials emphasised the role of cultural institutions in reinforcing authenticity and the need for environmental conservation. Likewise, moderate agreement on environmental protection ($M = 3.35$) and heritage site preservation ($M = 3.30$) corresponded with interview insights that acknowledged ongoing efforts but also noted limited visibility and weak communication. Together, these complementary perspectives suggested that sustainability and cultural preservation are widely recognised, although the depth and consistency of implementation remain insufficient. At the same time, triangulation also exposed areas of divergence. Quantitative results showed low mean scores for community participation in decision-making ($M = 2.84$) and local business inclusion ($M = 2.95$), pointing to weak stakeholder engagement. This was reinforced qualitatively by traditional leaders, who described consultations as reactive, irregular, and superficial, and by Assembly and GTA officials, who admitted that resource constraints limited inclusivity. However, a divergence was observed in relation to digital tools: while survey responses ($M = 3.85$) indicated optimism about technological solutions, interviews highlighted challenges such as uneven digital access and limited literacy, particularly among traditional leaders. These findings, when triangulated, demonstrate that although inclusive and technology-enabled engagement is acknowledged in principle, its practice remains uneven underscoring gaps between policy intent and lived community experience.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Given the data’s suitability for factor analysis, as confirmed by the KMO and Bartlett’s tests, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions within stakeholder perceptions of tourism governance. This analysis aimed to uncover distinct, empirically supported constructs in the absence of a predetermined theoretical framework.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Test	Value
KMO Measure	0.811
Bartlett’s Test Sig.	0.000

Source: Fieldwork, 2025



The findings of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy, which evaluate the data's eligibility for factor analysis, are shown in Table 3. The meritoriously high level of sampling adequacy is shown by the KMO value of 0.811. Kaiser (1974) classified scores between 0.8 and 0.89 as "meritorious", indicating that the variables in the dataset had enough variance in common to warrant factor analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity's significance value ($p = 0.000$) verifies that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, indicating that there are enough correlations between the variables to move forward with factor extraction.

These tests serve as precondition checks before exploratory factor analysis, which provides a scientific rationale for their reporting and interpretation. A substantial Bartlett's test indicates that there are significant patterns in the correlation matrix, while a high KMO value indicates that the data is compact and likely to produce trustworthy and unique components. The methodological validity of the factor analysis carried out subsequently in the study is confirmed by these figures taken together. Because they verify that the study's dimensions or constructs originate from statistically meaningful interrelationships within the dataset rather than arbitrary grouping, these tests are particularly important when there is no conceptual framework. This strengthens the findings' dependability and encourages their application in guiding future studies, stakeholder engagement plans, or legislative initiatives in the regulation of tourism.

Table 4: Factor Structure

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.56	32.6	32.6
2	2.13	15.2	47.8
3	1.34	9.6	57.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The findings of the exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 4, where three components were identified and extracted with eigenvalues higher than 1.0, signifying their statistical significance and recommendation for retention. With an eigenvalue of 4.56, the first component accounted for 32.6% of the total variance, followed by the second at 15.2% (eigenvalue = 2.13), and the third at 9.6% (eigenvalue = 1.34), for a cumulative variance explanation of 57.4%. In social science research, when a cumulative variance explanation of more than 50% is typically seen as adequate to support the dependability and interpretability of the factors recovered, this percentage is appropriate. These findings imply that the fundamental framework of stakeholder perceptions in tourism governance is multifaceted and consists of various unique elements.

The reason for this is that, especially in the lack of a predetermined conceptual framework, this factor structure offers empirical support for comprehending important aspects of stakeholder involvement and tourism governance. The study has great contextual relevance because it has determined its structure based on participant replies rather than validating pre-existing theories. This is important because it enables the study to provide unique insights derived from the field, reflecting the objectives and experiences of actual stakeholders. Based on what stakeholders genuinely believe to be significant, the findings can therefore direct future research and policy by emphasizing the most pertinent areas for intervention and capacity building in tourism governance.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix for Retained Items (Factor Loadings ≥ 0.40)

Items	Community Engagement	Cultural and Environmental Promotion	Inclusive Governance
D1 – The Ahanta West Municipal Assembly consults community members before making tourism-related decisions.	0.72		



D3 – Community suggestions are taken seriously by the Assembly when developing tourism projects.	0.69		
D4 – The Assembly works closely with traditional leaders to promote local tourism.	0.67		
D6 – The Assembly collaborates effectively with local businesses to improve tourism in the area.	0.64		
D5 – Tourism initiatives in the municipality respect and promote local culture and heritage.		0.75	
D8 – Environmental concerns are addressed in the Assembly's tourism policies.		0.68	
D9 – The Assembly educates residents about how tourism benefits the community.		0.65	
D10 – Stakeholders like NGOs and cultural organizations are actively involved in the Assembly's tourism projects.		0.62	
D11 – Local residents feel empowered to participate in tourism decision-making processes.			73
D12 – The Assembly uses appropriate methods (e.g., community meetings) to gather feedback from residents about tourism.			71
D14 – The Assembly ensures fairness and inclusiveness when involving different groups in tourism-related decisions.			69

Note: D2, D7 and D13 were excluded from the final factor solution because their factor loadings were below 0.40.

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Given the suitability of the data for factor analysis, as indicated by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying dimensional structure of the 14 items measuring stakeholder participation in tourism governance. The KMO value was 0.811, indicating meritorious sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and that sufficient relationships existed among the variables to justify factor analysis.

The analysis resulted in a three-factor solution. Factors were retained based on eigenvalues greater than 1.0, consistent with the Kaiser criterion. As shown in Table 4, the first factor had an eigenvalue of 4.56 and accounted for 32.6% of the total variance, the second had an eigenvalue of 2.13 and accounted for 15.2%, and the third had an eigenvalue of 1.34 and accounted for 9.6%. Collectively, the three factors explained 57.4% of the total variance. This indicated that the retained factors accounted for a substantial proportion of the variation in respondents' perceptions of stakeholder participation in tourism governance.

The rotated component matrix presented in Table 5 showed that 11 of the original 14 items met the minimum factor-loading criterion of 0.40 and were retained in the final factor solution. Items D2, D7, and D13 were excluded because their factor loadings were below the predetermined threshold of 0.40. Their exclusion was therefore based on the statistical criterion established for the EFA rather than an omission in reporting. The final factor structure was consequently based on 11 items.

The first factor, labelled Community Engagement, comprised D1, D3, D4, and D6, with factor loadings ranging from 0.64 to 0.72. These items reflected consultation with community members, consideration of community suggestions, collaboration with traditional leaders, and cooperation with local businesses. The factor therefore represented the extent to which local stakeholders were involved in tourism-related planning and development.

The second factor, labelled Cultural and Environmental Promotion, comprised D5, D8, D9, and D10, with factor loadings ranging from 0.62 to 0.75. These items captured the promotion of local culture and heritage, consideration of environmental concerns, education of residents about tourism benefits, and involvement of NGOs and cultural



organisations. The factor reflected the extent to which tourism governance incorporated cultural, environmental, and broader stakeholder considerations.

The third factor, labelled Inclusive Governance, comprised D11, D12, and D14, with factor loadings ranging from 0.69 to 0.73. These items addressed residents' empowerment in tourism decision-making, mechanisms for obtaining community feedback, and fairness and inclusiveness in tourism-related decisions. The factor therefore represented the participatory, equitable, and inclusive dimensions of tourism governance.

The three-factor structure provided empirical evidence that stakeholder participation in tourism governance was multidimensional within the study context. The identified dimensions; Community Engagement, Cultural and Environmental Promotion, and Inclusive Governance represented distinguishable aspects of residents' perceptions of tourism governance. However, because the analysis was exploratory and based on the study sample, the findings provided empirical support for the dimensional structure rather than definitive confirmation of the theoretical framework. Further validation using confirmatory factor analysis with an independent sample would be necessary to establish the stability and generalisability of the identified structure.

The findings were broadly consistent with the literature on sustainable tourism governance, which emphasised meaningful stakeholder participation, cultural and environmental responsibility, and inclusive decision-making. Edgell Sr. (2019) and Pyke et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of local stakeholder engagement in developing sustainable tourism policies, while Sisto et al. (2022) and Barrane et al. (2021) highlighted participatory approaches that incorporated local perspectives and strengthened stakeholder trust. The Community Engagement factor identified in the present study was therefore consistent with the broader emphasis on involving local residents, traditional leaders, and businesses in tourism planning.

The Cultural and Environmental Promotion factor further demonstrated the importance of integrating cultural heritage and environmental considerations into tourism governance. The inclusion of community education and NGO and cultural organisation involvement within this factor also suggested that these activities were perceived as related aspects of broader tourism promotion and stakeholder engagement. Similarly, the Inclusive Governance factor highlighted the importance of empowerment, feedback mechanisms, fairness, and inclusiveness in tourism decision-making. These findings were broadly consistent with the literature advocating collaborative approaches involving communities, government institutions, private-sector actors, and civil-society organisations (Clausen, 2019; Franco & Tracey, 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Kubickova, 2019; Marx, 2019).

Overall, the EFA suggested that stakeholder participation in tourism governance within the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly was multidimensional rather than a single homogeneous construct. The final three-factor solution, based on 11 retained items, accounted for 57.4% of the total variance and provided empirical support for examining stakeholder participation through the dimensions of Community Engagement, Cultural and Environmental Promotion, and Inclusive Governance. The exclusion of D2, D7, and D13 because their factor loadings were below 0.40 should be considered when interpreting the final factor structure. These items assessed residents' awareness of tourism policies, the involvement of women and youth groups, and the perceived economic benefits of tourism projects, respectively. Their exclusion indicated that the items did not load sufficiently on the retained factors within the study sample, but did not necessarily diminish the substantive importance of the issues they represented in tourism governance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that stakeholder engagement in tourism development within the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly remained present but was insufficiently inclusive and institutionalised. The evidence indicated that engagement was characterised by stronger relationships with traditional authorities than with other stakeholder groups, while women, youth, local businesses, NGOs, and other community actors had comparatively limited influence. The findings further demonstrated that effective tourism governance extended beyond consultation alone



and required meaningful community participation, protection and promotion of cultural and environmental resources, and inclusive governance structures that enabled stakeholders to influence decisions and receive feedback. The study therefore established that sustainable tourism development in AWMA depended on a shift from largely reactive consultation towards continuous, inclusive and participatory governance.

The study made a theoretical contribution by empirically identifying three interrelated dimensions underlying residents' perceptions of stakeholder engagement: community engagement, cultural and environmental promotion and inclusive governance. The factor structure demonstrated that stakeholder engagement in tourism governance extended beyond conventional consultation to include cultural and environmental responsibilities, fairness, empowerment, feedback and representation. These dimensions provided a context-specific framework for understanding stakeholder engagement in tourism governance and offered a basis for future research on participatory tourism development in similar local government contexts.

The findings had important implications for tourism planners, local government authorities, and policy makers. For the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly, the findings indicated the need to institutionalise stakeholder engagement throughout the tourism planning cycle rather than relying mainly on consultations after projects or decisions had been initiated. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) was identified as having an important role in providing technical guidance and monitoring support to strengthen participatory tourism governance. Traditional authorities remained important sources of cultural and local knowledge but needed to support broader community representation. Tourism operators and local businesses needed to be incorporated into tourism planning and investment discussions, while NGOs and community organisations had an important role in community mobilisation, awareness creation, capacity building, and representation of less-involved groups. These measures had the potential to improve transparency, strengthen local ownership and support more sustainable tourism development.

Based on the findings, the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly should establish a structured stakeholder engagement mechanism comprising representatives of traditional authorities, women's groups, youth organisations, local businesses, NGOs, tourism operators, and community representatives. The Assembly should conduct stakeholder consultations at the planning stage of tourism projects, document stakeholder recommendations, and provide feedback on how those recommendations were considered. It should also establish accessible digital and non-digital feedback channels, including community meetings, WhatsApp platforms, suggestion mechanisms, and periodic stakeholder forums.

The Ghana Tourism Authority should provide technical support and periodic monitoring of stakeholder engagement practices within the municipality. It should develop practical guidelines for inclusive tourism consultation and support capacity-building programmes for Assembly officials and community stakeholders. Traditional authorities should facilitate broader community participation by mobilising residents and ensuring that traditional and cultural knowledge informs tourism planning without becoming a substitute for wider community representation.

NGOs and community organisations should support awareness creation and capacity building, particularly among women and youth, to strengthen their ability to participate effectively in tourism decision-making. Tourism operators and local businesses should participate in municipal tourism forums and collaborate with the Assembly and communities in developing tourism initiatives that generated local economic opportunities while protecting cultural and environmental resources. Collectively, these stakeholders should support a continuous engagement system rather than relying on occasional consultations.

Finally, future research should examine whether the three dimensions identified community engagement, cultural and environmental promotion, and inclusive governance remain consistent across other municipalities and tourism destinations in Ghana. Comparative and longitudinal studies should also examine whether improvements in stakeholder engagement lead to measurable changes in community participation, tourism benefits, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability and local support for tourism development.



Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Takoradi Technical Ethical Review Committee prior to the commencement of data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily after providing informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study and the information collected was used solely for academic purposes.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest associated with the study.

Data Availability

The data generated and analysed during the study are not publicly available because they contain information obtained from human participants and are subject to confidentiality and ethical considerations. However, the data may be made available by the corresponding author upon request, subject to relevant ethical and institutional requirements.

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