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## CASE REPORT

**ENHANCING FOOD TOURISM IN GHANA THROUGH INDIGENOUS DISHES:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE BRONG-AHAFO REGION, GHANA**

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**Abstract:**

Indigenous dishes are the traditional food of a group of people. Indigenous has always been used to refer to those ideas originating or occurring naturally in a particular society. Indigenous Ghanaian dishes are, those foods that traditionally pertain to our various sub cultural societies in Ghana. The Brong–Ahafo Region of Ghana is a region with diverse ethnic and cultural composition with different Ghanaian dishes. These have attracted a lot of people including tourists to patronize the food in the region. The need to conduct a research on the various dishes in the region and use them as a vehicle to promote tourism in the region is long overdue. The paper, therefore, looks at some indigenous dishes in the region and assesses its impact on tourism in the region. The paper was mainly based on field survey, personal observations, literature review and consultations with stake holders. The findings indicate among others, that Ghana has some of the delicious dishes and the Brong –Ahafo is no exception. These hold the key to promotion of tourism in the Brong-Ahafo Region. It is recommended that there should be a strong collaboration between traditional food and tourism development in the region for tourism to achieve its full potentials.

**Key Words:** : Tourism, Brong–Ahafo, Eco-System, Destination dishes

**Introduction**

One of the key features of tourism is the movement of people from one destination to another for a new experience. These experiences can be a combination of the host historical sites, cultural experiences, Eco-system and declinational dishes. Tourism is the temporary movement of people to the destinations outside from the normal places of work and residence including the totality of the activities to be undertaken during their stay in those destinations not only that but also including the facilities created so that the needs of the services receivers will be satisfied (Cook, R & Marqua 2002)

As the world increasingly opens up to become a Global village, tourists seek experiences based on local identity and cultures. The linkages between food and tourism also provide a platform for local economic development, which can be strengthened by the use of food experiences for branding and marketing destinations.

**Concept of food tourism**

Food tourists are tourists who take part in the new trends of cultural consumption, they are travelers seeking the authenticity of places they visit through food and therefore, are concern with the origin of food. (Hall, CM and Sharples, L. 2003).

Food tourism is also known as culinary tourism is experiencing the food of the community, region or area and now a vital Component of tourism experience. Cooking skills are, therefore, important to food tourism which includes the ability to prepare, cook and serve simple regional dishes to greater taste. The World Food travel Association (WFTA) defined food tourism as the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences. The Malaysian Ministry of Tourism 2010 defined food tourism as the travel to specific regions to sample cuisine unique to the area. Food Tourism is therefore a connection between food destination so the food consumed by tourist in a place is part of the tourist memory formation of their experience when visiting a place (Hall and Mitchell, 2001) defined food tourism as visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific location for which food tasting and or experiencing the attributes of specialist food

production region are primary motivating factor for travel. This definition to me indicates that food tourism is a subset of cultural tourism and as simply put culture is a set of behaviors, knowledge and customs that shape a society and on which a sense of belonging is based. The design of any food tourism offering will not be viable if it does not take into account the cultural characteristics of the territory. Food tourism has also been referred to as indigenous tourism since it involves the use of local dishes. This allows for the growth and involvement of locals in the tourism industry. Food tourism has been a tool for rural communities which struggled to develop by use of proximity to food producing lands, rural communities which enjoy a comparative advantage when it comes to serving traditional food. It, therefore allows the local, communities to generate income, provide jobs and develop the local economy. This collaborate what Hall and Mitchell said that it is about experiencing the attributes of specialist food production are primary motivating factor for travel.

There are two types of food tourists

- a. Tourist who consume food as part of their overall travel experience
- b. Tourist whose activities, behaviors and destinations selection is influenced by their interest in food.

Food tourism is therefore expressive of a regional means that can be used to differentiate destinations in a highly competitive globalizing market. The linkages between food and tourism also provide platform for local economic development which can be strengthen by the use of food experiences for branding (Akordor, 2011)observed that when tourism is properly harnessed for the international market, it can generate a lot of revenue for national development.

### **International food tourism**

The world is increasingly becoming a global village making people seek experiences that is based on a unique local identity and culture. This is because every member of the globe is proud of its cultural identity, which includes its food. Manuel Vazquez Montalba says “a person who does not drink his wine and eat his cheese has a serious identity problem”. The cuisine of the destination is an aspect of utmost importance in the quality of the holiday experience. A study of leisure and recreational activities of all U.S.A residents travelers to overseas destinations from the office of travel and tourism industries in 200 clearly indicates that dining is the number one leisure activity with 86% of tourist dining for leisure. UNWTO, 2010, REPORT.

France is a country in the world noted strongly to be associated with culinary tourism for both international and French citizens travelling to different parts of the country to sample local foods and wine. All over the world, a third of tourist spending is devoted to food. (Quan and Wang,2004). Again according to the same research eating in restaurants is the second favourite activity of foreigners visiting the United States and the number one leisure activity for U.S travelers when they visit the country.

Eastern Europe has been over shadowed by Azerbaijan’s food for international travelers in the major restaurants and hotels. This is famous for its variety of meats, fish and vegetable dishes and all supplemented with soft greens and piquant spices.

Again,Azerbaijans kebab called shashlik made from fresh lamb, wild birds and fish with juicy is popular in most restaurant in those regions. This been one of the ancient recipes of the Azerbaijani people.

Southern American countries of Brazil and Argentina also have dishes that are attractive to international travelers. The Brazil cuisine of fruits and fish cooked together in the forest region with vegetables which is a reflexive of Portuguese African legacy which is very popular in most restaurants to international travelers.

The Asian regions continue to be dominated by Korean cuisines. These are all traditional foods of both North and South Korea. Kimchi which is a fermented spicy cabbage with bibimbab which is rice mixed with vegetables and meat is very renowned as healthy food from the region. To promote and sustain the food tourism organizations has developed gastronomic tour in Korea in collaboration with celebrities such as top chefs and famous entertainers, (Quan and Wang, 2004).

Russian traditional porridges, soups, fish, pan cakes, pies with drinks such as berry juice and birch juice has also gain a lot of popularity amongst travelers in Moscow and other cities in the region.

In 2011, UNWTO report indicates that Spain received 56.7 million tourists generating a receipt of 43 billion Euros. Out of the 56.7 million international tourists, more than 5 million said that they enjoy the Spanish food and wine and constitute one of the main reasons for choosing Spain as a tourist destination. Spanish dishes such as Spanish omelet made from eggs, Paella which is made from rice are all internationally recognized foods.

**Food tourism in Africa**

Africa is the second largest continent in the world with over 54 countries. The diversity of culture and its natural resources also reflects its types of recipes. From the continent for culinary tourism Northern African countries based on its location has recipes with a lot of species from Arabian world such as ginger. Egyptian dishes such as Baba Ghannoug which is made of egg plants, chickpeas, lemon juice, salt, pepper and oil and that of kessiah which is a milk of yogurt savoury pudding made with flour sometimes seasoning with fried onions, with boiled chicken. Eastern Africa is home to people who rear cattle, sheep and goat. The dishes are also a collection of corn, rice, lentils, pickles and meats. Ethiopian food known as Enjera is very popular around East Africa is made of pan cake, leavened bread from corn, Sorghum and or barley mixed together with meal.

Central Africa has most of its foods made from heavy starchy with a lot of animal meat such as crocodile, antelope and others. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kwanzaa is one of the popular foods and extends to all other regions. It is made from okra, black eyed peas and pea nut soups eaten with rice or bread.

The Southern African region is dominated by South Africa dishes. Tripe is a traditional dish made from treated flavoured potatoes and fried onions. Morocco is also made from a combination of spinach with butter, braised onions into maize porridge. Another popular food in South Africa is chakalako which is a spicy relish served alongside a main course. It is made from carrots, green pepper, sliced onion, vinegar, chilli and comes up with a strong flavour

**Food tourism in Ghana**

Ghana, located in the tropical West African region is home to a lot of tuber crops and heavy starchy food with a lot of meat and fish. The popular staple food is fufu which is a crashed cassava or yam served with soup. Kenkey and banku made from fermented maize.

The mill and usually served with tomatoes, reddish sauce with fried fish. Another common food is that of jollof rice which is rice cooked with tomatoes sauce and meat or fish. There are some peculiar foods associated with each region or geographical area.

Greater Accra region is the smallest regions but the most populated region in Ghana. As the capital of the country, it still remains a cosmopolitan region with its indigenous tribe which is known as the Gas accounting for only 12% of the population. The Gas in the region has traditional foods which are the populous foods in the region. Banku or kenkey made from fermented corn dough, with pepper and fried fish or okro sauce is one of the commonest foods in the region. Another one is that of the fried yam with turkey tails referred to as chofi and hot spicy pepper.

The Western region of Ghana is home to predominately Akans. Some of the commonest foods are Akyeke with Avocado pear, fufu with light soup or palm nut soup with snails or bush meat. The Volta region is noted for Akpele made from corn with okro soup, fufu with palm nut soup, Abolo with shrimps.

The three Northern regions of Upper East, Upper West and Northern region have the same food in common. Some of the popular foods are Tuozaafi popularly called TZ which is made from millet and Green leaves soups. Also the regions have another food called Tubani which is made from beans or cowpea with shea nut oil and pepper. Another common food is koko which is millet or corn porridge eaten with koose which is fried beans balls. The popular drink/beverage is pito which is brewed from millet.

The central region of Ghana has Fante dorkunu or kenkey which is fermented corn with fish or gravy. Also have Fante-fante which is palm oil stew with small fresh fish with either yam or Fante kenkey is also another popular food in the central region of Ghana.

**Food tourism in Brong-Ahafo region**

The Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana was created in 1959 out of the then Ashanti region of Ghana. It covers an area of 39,557 square kilometers. It has Sunyani as its regional capital with Techiman, Dormaa, Yeji, Atebubu, Kintampo, Berekum, Wenchi and Nkoranza as some of the major towns in the region. The Brong-Ahafo region has a tropical climate with temperatures between 22-24°C. It has two vegetational zones: the semi deciduous forest and Guinea woodland. The forest belt is noted for cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, rubber, tobacco and cashew making the Brong-Ahafo the third largest producer of cocoa in Ghana and a major source of timber. The Guinea woodland area which covers Techiman, Kintampo, Nkoranza, Prang and Kwame Danso are noted for yam production whilst the region produces other crops such as maize, cassava, plantain, cocoyam, rice and tomatoes, garden eggs and pepper. This has influence tourism in the region especially the evergreen natural environment with cocoa, coffee and Cashew plantations a delight to watch. Again the with the region's economic activities dominated by Agriculture food tourism has been greatly enhanced and makes the region to have comparative advantage over others in food tourism. Cassava and plantain together with other vegetables which are in abundance and cheaper in the region is used in the preparation of fufu and soup which is one of the staple and commonest food which is one of the food tourism attraction in the region. The same way cocoyam leaves and plantain is used in the preparation of Ampesi and palava sauce another common and food tourism attraction in the region. The Ethnic composition of Brong-

Ahafo is predominantly Akans constituting about 62%, including Brong's Ashanti, Banda.Mole-Dagbani groups constituting about 16 % namely:Frafra, Dagombas and Mamprusi with the list being other minority tribes such as Wangaras.These has influence cultural tourism activities such as festivals which are mostly celebrated annually. The Wangaras celebrate the kuribe Festival in Kintampo, The Appoo yam festival celebrated in Techiman and the people of Bechem celebrate the Adekyem festival. Again another form of annual religious tourism in the region is the Tijaniya Muslim sect has their annual pilgrimage to Prang for a religious Koranic Reading.

The Brong-Ahafo has a number of tourist attractions ranging from Eco-tourism through to Heritage tourism. There are three very beautiful water falls in the region, the Kintampo waterfalls, Faller waterfalls and the Pumpum falls. The region also play host to the Buabeng-Fiema monkeys sanctuary where monkeys live happily with human beings. Other attractions in the region include Tano-Boase Sacred growth which is the first settling place for the Bono people and the Bui national park.

### **Some types of food in Brong - Ahafo**

The most popular types of food in the region are detailed below:

#### **A.Fufu and Goat Light Soup**

##### Ingredients

Cassava 1big  
Plantain/cocoyam 2fingers/3medium

##### Method of preparation

1. Peel and wash cassava and plantain. Wash severely to get rid of sand or soil.
2. Put cassava first in a cooking pot. Add plantain or cocoyam, cover with plain polythene.
3. Boil for 20 minutes or until soft but no masy.
4. Remove from fire, drain liquid and allow it to cooling for 3 minutes.
5. Pound cassava and plantain separately in a mortar whiles turning to get the soft and smooth ball without lumps.
6. Shape into sizeable balls into bowls.
7. Serve hot with soup.



Picture of Fufu and light Soup,source: Author's field survey (2013)

**B. Apapransa and crab stew**Ingredients

Maize flour (roasted) 1 cup  
Leftover palm nut soup with crabs or  
Palm oil gravy  
Palm nut soup  
Palm Nuts 2 cups  
Meat- 500g  
Onion- 1 medium  
Tomatoes- 2 medium  
Pepper and salt to taste  
Smoked fish (optional) – 1  
Stock cube 1  
Crab 2

**Method of preparation**

1. Boil and pound palm nuts
2. Strain and add to steamed seasoned meat and crab cook on a low heat.
3. Add ground onion, tomatoes and pepper. Wash and add smoked fish (flaked).
4. When done, fetch some down, add roasted maize flour and stir to mix in the soup.
5. Add the left over soup to mix into the right consistency. Do not make it too soft.



Picture of Apaparansa, source: Author's field survey (2013)

### C. Ampesi and Palava sauce

#### Ingredients

Kontomire leaves	1 bundle
Fresh tomatoes	2 medium
Salt fish (kobi)	1 piece
Meat/ smoked fish	400g.
Onion	1 medium
Ground agushi ¼ cup (melon seeds)	
Palm oil	250ml (½ pt)
Water	½ cup

#### **Method of preparation**

1. Wash and cut meat into pieces or flake
2. Season with cube, salt and pepper and simmer gently. Fry slightly.
3. Wash and slice onions and tomatoes
4. Fry the onion and salt fish in the oil, add the pepper and tomatoes and continue to simmer
5. Add salt to the ground melon seeds and blend with a little water before adding to stew. Do not stir till set or curdle
6. Add the meat or fish and continue to simmer
7. Remove unwanted parts of the leaves, wash and shred, add to the stew and add enough water to the desired consistency and cook.
8. Leave to simmer until well flavoured and the meat is cooked (meat should be soft).
9. Serve hot with boiled yam, cocoyam or plantain (Ampesi)



Picture of Ampesi and palava, source: Authors' field survey (2013)

### D. Plain Eto/ Tonkontokon (Eto with okro)

#### Ingredients

Fresh okro (okra)	4 medium
Plantain – (½ ripe)	4 medium
Pepper	
Momoni small size	
Salt	to taste
Onion	1 small
Optional (roasted groundnut)	

#### **Method of preparation**

1. Boil plantain, grind pepper and onion. Smoke the momoni and add.
2. Add and mash the plantain. Mash and add the okro.
3. Season to taste.
4. Serve in earthenware bowl.

Note: With eto (plain), palm oil is added to give a colourful appearance.



Picture of eto, source: Authors' field survey (2013)

## **Methodology**

The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through both formal and informal interviews and the secondary data concentrated mainly on literature review.

### **Literature review**

The secondary data were obtained largely through the analysis of the various documents relevant to the study. This includes Tourism the business of travel by Cook and Marqua, Contemporary Tourism: An international approach to tourism.

### **Primary Data**

A trip was undertaken to most local restaurant known as chop bars in the major towns in the region such as Domaa, Chira, Kintampo, Techiman and Sunyani. Again hotels and restaurants in the region known to be patronized by both domestic and international tourists were also visited. Examples were Eusbert Hotel in Sunyani, Adjeiwaa Hotel in Techiman and etc. were all visited. In all, a total of 50 respondents, 10 from each of the centres answered the author's questionnaire.

### **Focus group Discussions**

Four focus group discussions sessions were held with the following group of people:

1. Management and staff of the regional tourist board,
2. Management and staff of major hotels in the region,
3. Some tourists who visit the region and management
4. Staff of some local restaurants and bars in the region.

### **Field trips**

Another key methodology was the field trips undertaken at the various sites by the authors to some tourist sites, the local restaurants and bars as well as some hotels in the region, for first hand observation, information and pictures. Areas the authors concentrated included the following:

- The types of local dishes prepared in most hotels, restaurant and bars in the Brong –Ahafo region.
- Benefits of those involved in the preparation of local dishes.
- The use of profits from indigenous dishes business.
- Country of origin of the tourist who prefer local dishes.

### **Interview with key Stakeholders.**

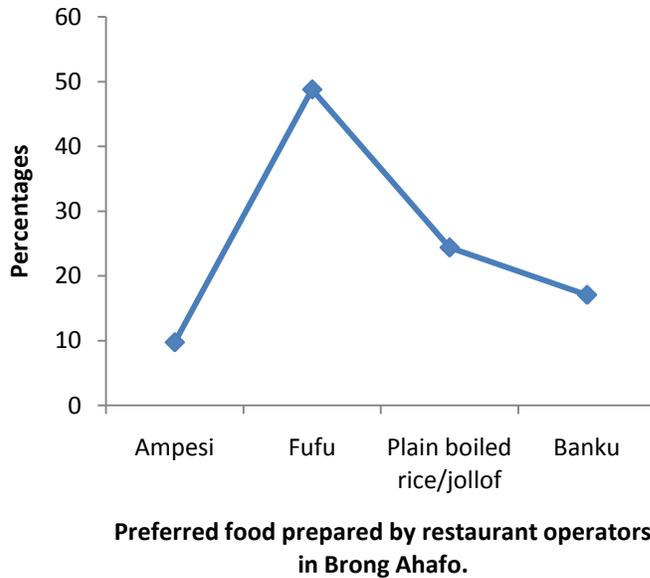
The key stakeholders' interviews were conducted with the food tourism establishment such as owners and staff in places such as Sunyani, Techiman, Dormaa and Kintampo.

## Results and Discussions

### A. Preferred Food

Looking at preferred food prepared by restaurants operators in the region as a way of boosting food tourism in Brong-Ahafo region, 200 questionnaires were administered on the types of indigenous dishes prepared by the restaurants. 164 questionnaires were retrieved. Out of the 164, 16 (10%) respondents prepare Ampesi and palaver sauce, 80 (49%) respondents offer fufu and light soup, 40 (24%) prepare plain boiled rice and jollof, while 28 (17%) respondents prepare banku and okro soup. This shows that fufu is the preferred dish prepared by restaurant operators.

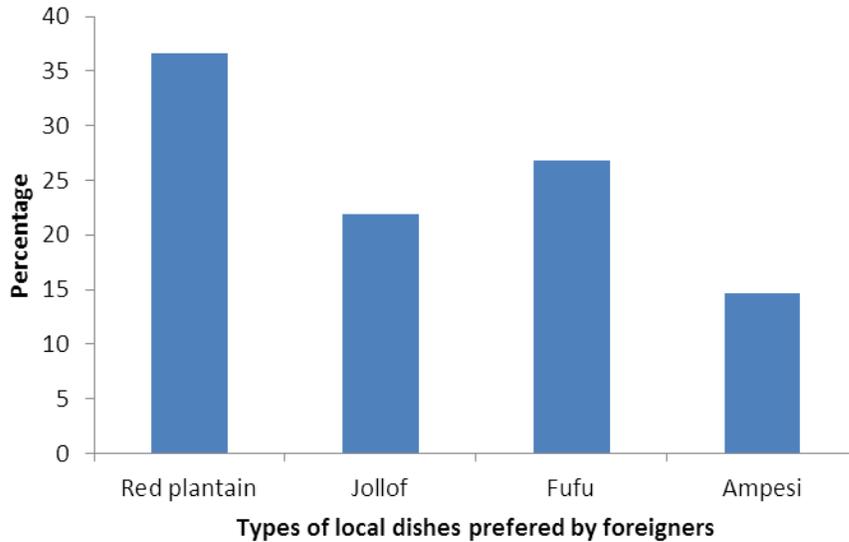
Figure 1:



Fufu is the popular food in the Brong- Ahafo region and the most preferred food of the people hence the commonest food prepared in most restaurants in Brong – Ahafo. Again since cassava and plantain, the main ingredients for the preparation of fufu is very accessible and affordable, it will be easy promoting to tourists who visit the region.

### B. Types of local dishes tourists prefer

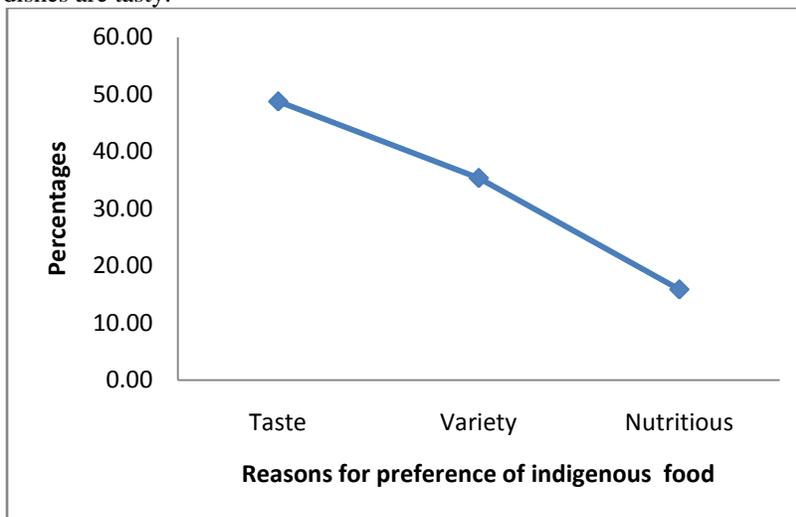
In looking at the types of local dishes preferred by the foreigners a total of 164 questionnaires were sent out, 60(36%) respondents said foreigners preferred red plantain with beans, 36 (22%) respondents said jollof rice, and 44 (27%) said fufu while 24 (15%) said Ampesi. This again shows that foreigners like red plantain and beans stew, followed by fufu.



Red plantain and beans is the most preferred food by tourist as in discussions with some white American tourist agreed and stated that it is very spicy food, and comes with food flavour and the colour itself too is very attractive. Again some hotel restaurants and bar operators said it is very affordable and accessible and also easy to prepare in the Brong –Ahafo region. It being the top preference amongst the tourist means it is easy to use as a means of enhancing tourism in the Brong- Ahafo Region.

**C. Reasons for the preference of food.**

The reasons for the preference of food by tourists, out of a total of 164 respondents, 80(49%) stated that the taste of food, 58(35%) said for variety and 26(16%) said the dishes are nutritious. This again shows that our Ghanaian dishes are tasty.

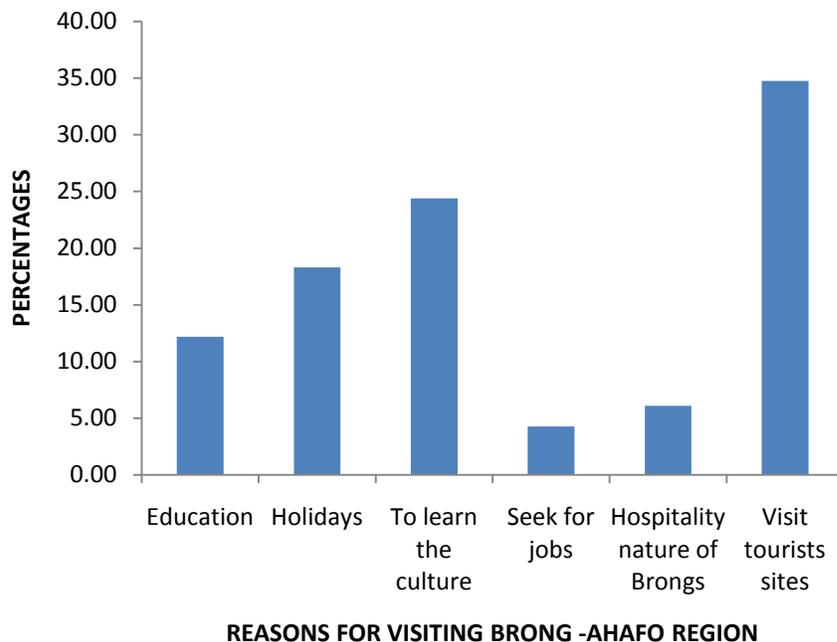


This is an indication that majority of people who prefer indigenous dishes from the region do so because it taste so well. Therefore when promoted it is going to be much easier since majority of the people will not be looking beyond taste which can easily be sustained.

#### D. Reasons for visiting the Brong-Ahafo region

Looking at the responses, 30 respondents attributed their visit to educations, 28 on holidays, 15 to learn about the culture of the Brong-Ahafo, 75 stated to visit tourist attraction, 7 responded to seek for jobs and 45 responded to due to the hospitality nature of indogenous.

Figure 4: Reasons for visiting the Brong-Ahafo region.



What these means is that in all indigenous food which is part of the culture of the people the second highest reason attracting people to the region. These also indicates that the Brong-Ahafo region has comparative advantage over other regions in terms of promoting indigenous dishes amongs tourists.

#### Importance of food tourism to the Brong-Ahafo Region

Food tourism all over the world is supposed to allow the indigenous people to participate in Tourism activities of the location. Food tourism in the Brong-Ahafo region will help boost the local economy through the creation of wealth for the local people who will be engaged in the industry. This will help grow the local or indigenous industry such as Agro processing companies located in most rural parts of the country.

Food tourism through its promotion allows tourist to access the cultural and historical heritage of the destination through tasting and experiencing the food. It therefore allows foreigners to taste Ghanaian dishes from the Brong-Ahafo region. Also historical sites such as Tano Boase will be visited by people who are there to taste the food and the same food tourist can purchase some souvenirs from local people to their family members in their various countries. This can be a boost for local artisans.

Brong-Ahafo region in its quest to promote food tourism will help take into account the emergence of new cultural values which will increase the richness and cultural diversity of the region. The various cultures emerging from other tribes such as Wangaras and their Kuribi festivals, the Dagomba fire festivals in the region.

Food tourism experiences in the Brong-Ahafo can also stimulate local development because tourism is high yield industry can extend the tourism season in the region through diversification which lead to an all year round tourism activities in the region there by diversifying rural economics will food crops farming such as yaw and cocoyam farming.

Food tourism if sustained is capable of addressing cultural and environmental concerns in the Brong-Ahafo region through the promotion of cultural tourism such as the celebration of festivals in Techiman and Wenchi, yam festivals in Badu and Wenchi and Kwafie festival in Dormaa, Berekum and Nsoatre. The recognition and positioning of these on the tourism map of the Brong-Ahafo region can be achieved through the use of food tourism as a tool. Again the growth and sustenance of the foods such as cashew, cocoyam plantain etc. will help protect the environment of the region.

Food tourism will lead to the exposure of the region as well as recognition of the local product in the region to international level. This is because tourists who visit the region will be inspired to gather information and compare in the international tourism market.

Brong-Ahafo region is one of the least developed regions in Ghana in terms of infrastructure. Food tourism will therefore be critical for infrastructural development in the region through the development of food productions and consumption points in the region.

Also food experiences can stimulate local development by extending the tourism season in the Brong-Ahafo region through diversity of the rural economy. The Brong-Ahafo region may not have to limit its self to the wild life in Buabeng-Fiema but may use its yam and other food stuffs in feeding tourists thereby expanding the local economy.

Food tourism can also make the Brong-Ahafo region attractive to other regions and sustain the local environment and the cultural identity of the Brongs and Ahafo people to give them that sense of pride and communality.

Brong-Ahafo region is regarded as the food basket of Ghana. The promotion of food tourism would increase investment in the region due to the labour intensive nature of food production. This would lead to job creation and stimulate growth in the agricultural sector.

Brong-Ahafo region still boost of arts and crafts works in places such as Yamfo noted for kente weaving, Asuaoye noted for Adinkra, Odumase and Tanoso noted for pottery. Since food tourism can be seen as creative tourism (Richard 2011) which allows tourist to develop their creativity through contact with local people, Food tourism would help encourage the expansion of these creative industry in the various towns and cities in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana. This would help improve the gross domestic products of the region and the country as a whole.

### **Challenges faced by food tourism in Brong – Ahafo Region**

The Brong-Ahafo is one of the rural regions in Ghana and therefore the food industry just like any industry faces a lot of problems. As a developing region, the food tourism industry is saddled with infrastructural difficulties. The region has poor roads to link the various food producing communities and the commercial centres where food is consumed on a greater scale. The most part of the region is not connected to the national electricity grade. This has not helped in the processes and preservation of food which is a cardinal point in food tourism industry.

Capital in Ghana and Brong-Ahafo in particular like most developing countries is very difficult to come by. Securing capital through bank loans has been difficult because of high interest rate and lack of collateral security. Most food tourism industry operators in the region are those on small scale such as local restaurants and bars. They are more vests in preparing indigenous dishes that does not deviate from its taste and value. However, they are not assessable to loans for expansion of their industries to meet the growing needs by tourists who visit the region for that unique regional taste.

Another aspect of the problem has to do with poor technological state of the region. Most communities do not have the technical knowhow in the preservation and preparation of food. The food industry in the region still lack behind in the use of modern means of food preparation such as ovens, microwaves blenders, grinding machines, boilers, fryers, bratt pans, mixers, salamanders etc., to prepare indigenous foods on large scale to meet the demand of local and international tourists. Again most food tourists' practitioners have not been exposed to modern means of food preservation in refrigerators and freezers.

High taxes in the sector have also led to the crippling of most players in the food tourism industry. The profit margin of food tourism operators in the Brong-Ahafo region such as restaurants, hotels and bars are too small that the subjection of a clear cut tax has led to the closure of a number of such businesses.

Competition from foreign dishes has been a key threat to the sustenance and growth of the food industry in Brong-Ahafo in particular and Ghana in general, foreign foods are easily prepared and less expensive due the cheap nature of its content which are fertilizer grown and subsidized from the western world as a way of creating employment for their farmers and making the developing countries like Ghana unemployed and dependent. The naturally grown indigenous crops are used in the preparation of local dishes. For example snails and local chicken are expensive compare to the imported poultry products and polished rice which are cheap and not nutritious.

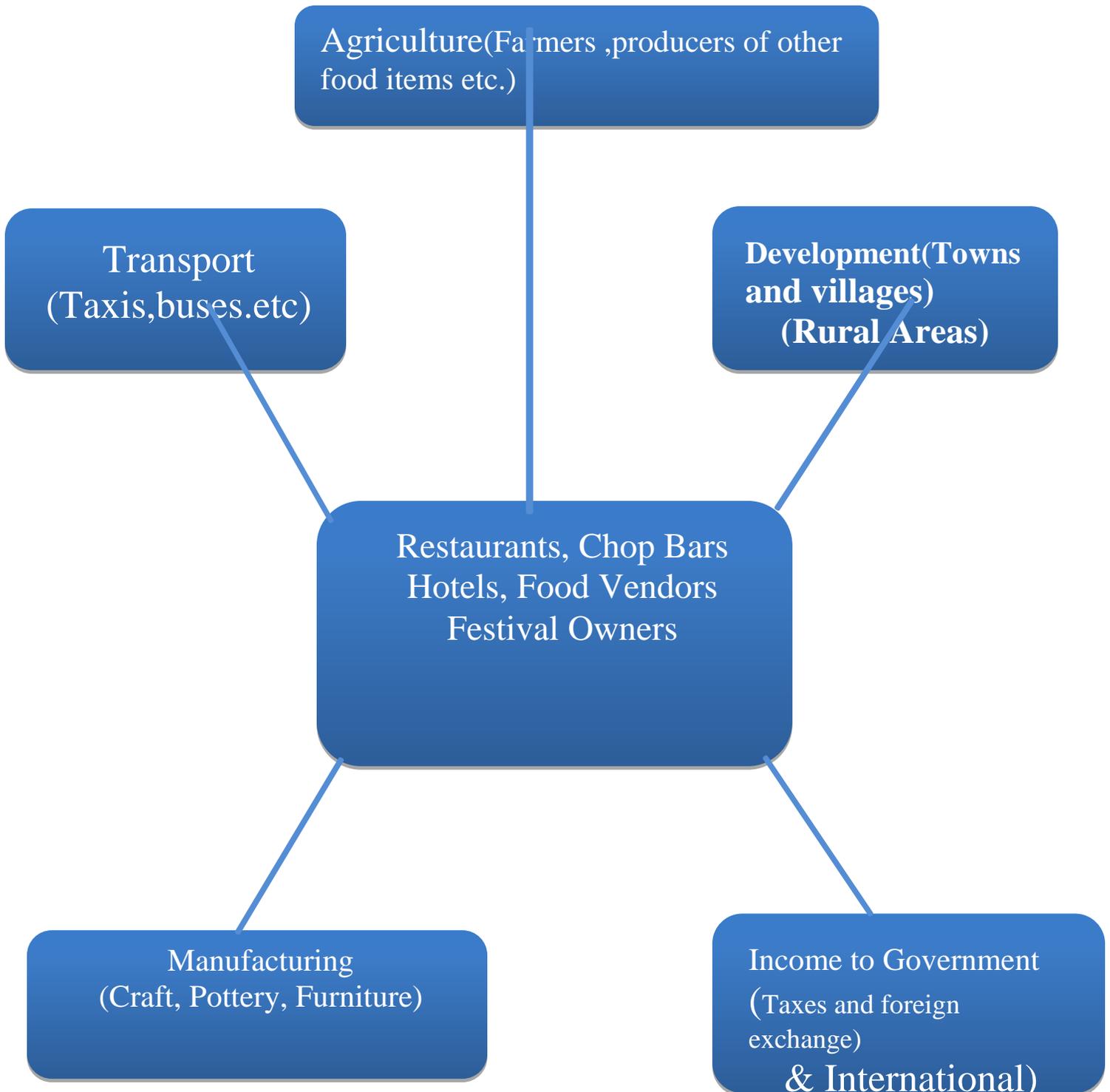
Practitioners in the industry lack the necessary competence in the educational and training skills needed. Most have not had education up to the basic level to help in stock taking, marketing as well as customer communication in order to maintain their clients. The food tourism industry in the region therefore finds it difficult to grow. Also must lack the necessary idea for expansion and the business collapse right after his/her death.

The unstable nature of Ghana's economy is also another difficulty faced by the food industry in the Brong-Ahafo region. The unstable prices of food stuff affects prices of food consumed by the tourist. This leads to fluctuations in the prices of the food. The fluctuation in the currency exchange rates means that naturally prices of indigenous food will change leading to surprise by tourist.

Another very important issue has to do with and security. The environments under which some of these crops are grown are questionable. Crops such cocoyam leaves used for palaver sauce and other vegetables are normally grown near gutters which are unhygienic. Again the preparation of local dishes such as fufu, banku, tuozafi sometimes do not meet international hygienic conditions. This makes it difficult for international tourist to accept and consume such indigenous dishes.

Figure 5:

DIAGRAM ON THE BENEFITS AND IMPORTANCE OF FOOD TOURISM



## Recommendations

As one of the emerging and ever-growing industries with the potential of transforming the economies of most rural communities in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana recommendations for its improvement will be a step in the right direction are long overdue. The first thing that the sector needs is the proper and reliable laws and regulations from the local or district assemblies that represent the central government in that region. A number of these restaurants bars and hotels that serve indigenous dishes are normally located in the rural parts where monitoring and evaluation to see to the adherence of the industries laws and regulations are absent. The authority invested in the government can influence the tourism industry's efficiency through various governmental sectors dealing with tourism matters at national, regional and local level.

Effective education and training of human resource base of the sector by governmental and non-governmental agencies can also help improve the performance of the food tourism sector in the Brong-Ahafo region. This can be through training workshops and seminars to train practitioners in the restaurants, bars and hotels in the region on how to prepare and serve indigenous dishes in a hygienic and acceptable manner.

Again there should be a strong collaboration between indigenous food operators such as bars restaurants and hotels and that of formal educational institutions such as universities polytechnic and technical and vocational education in the region. For example Sunyani Polytechnic and Catholic universities just to mention a few may collaborate with industry to achieve the maximum results.

Promotion, marketing and branding of indigenous dishes that are associated with the region could go a long way to make the rest of the world know the uniqueness of the dishes and their nutritional values. The creation of a brand name through vibrant promotion of the food industry in the Brong-Ahafo region in both international and national levels by exhibition, broadcasting, flyers, and brochures could in a way help to up lift the image of the food tourism industry in the region.

The safety and security of the food tourism industry in the region needs to be ensured. This can be done through setting up standards for the industry to live up to. It can range from preservation, preparation, environmental safety and taste.

Again Brong-Ahafo region is agricultural base. It is therefore prudent that there should be an effort to integrate technology transfer and innovations in both the preservation and preparation of indigenous dishes in the region. There can be research centres in the districts to coordinate the establishment of appropriate technology food processing centres such as food pounding machines, ovens for preservation and bread and other food that are associated with indigenous dishes.

## 5.0. Conclusion

The Brong – Ahafo region as an agricultural base region and noted as the food basket of Ghana needs ways of making use of its naturally endowed resources to maximize the use of its food. Therefore, enhancing food tourism in the region would be a step in the right direction to use food tourism as a vehicle for economic growth that will turn the economy of the region round for the better.

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