

Hotel location decision-making in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana: with whom and why?

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Abstract

Knowledge on the people involved in hotel location decision-making and why they are involved is key to destination planning and development. Insights gained into this subject are useful to future destination planners. Despite its importance, the subject of whom to involve in the hotel location decision and why they should be involved, has received limited research interest in Ghana. This study identifies the people involved in hotel location decisions and assesses the reasons why they are involved. Data was collected from hotel owners in the Kumasi Metropolis and analysed with the chi-square test of independence. Extended family members were mostly involved in the hotel location decisions and for mainly personal reasons. It was concluded that hotel owners in the Kumasi Metropolis involve their family members in the location choice for non-professional reasons.

Keywords: Ghana, location decision, Hotel location, Hotel owner, Kumasi Metropolis.

Introduction

It has been well recognized that hotel location selection has important strategic implications (Yang & Lee, 1997). Specifically, the location choice for a hotel facility may have a significant impact on the hotel's strategic competitive position in terms of delivery speed performance, and firm's flexibility to compete in the marketplace as well as enhancing guests' satisfaction. Therefore, the final selection of a facility location must contribute to the success of corporate strategic plans for financing, marketing, human resource, and production objectives (Mount, 1990).

As Hickson (1986) noted in a study of strategic investment decisions, location decisions were ranked as taking the longest to make and having the most significant consequences for the organisation. The influence of key decision makers on the corporate strategic decision process has been the subject of considerable management research

(Papadakis&Barwise, 1996; Papadakis, Lioukas& Chambers, 1997). Recent studies on high- tech business location also indicate that there is a strong relationship between the preferences of key personnel and the location decision (Sommers & Carlson, 2000; Beyers, 2002). Therefore, in a study of hotel location decision-making, identifying the characteristics of key decision makers is an important issue.

Location decision-making is a core strategic decision, hence the need to involve appropriate personnel in the decision-making process (Hanson, 2001). Pen (2000) highlights this assertion by indicating that location decision-making is important, because any location pattern is the result of numerous individual decisions/strategies taken over varying periods of time. Site location decisions are driven by many corporate goals however these goals are all evaluated by humans.

Despite these observations, the location decision-making process has no formal approach and individual firms and organisations tend to approach them differently. The nature of the firm as well as the ownership structure, coupled with the firm's corporate vision may determine how the initial location decision is carried out. For instance an individually owned hotel may approach location decision-making different from a hotel that is jointly owned as well as a limited liability hotel. It is important to acknowledge however, that whereas in developed countries there may professionals who will be consulted to make the initial location decision, these professionals are virtually non-existent in most developing countries (Akyeampong, 2007).

Even though literature on location decision-making abound in economic geography (Meester, 1999; Yang, 2003), evidence suggests that most of the literature is centered on manufacturing industries (Storper, Chen & De Paolis, 2002; Yang, 2003). These industries are generally strongly sensitive to raw material supplies, transport infrastructure, low and medium labour requirement and to fairly substantial land, infrastructure and capital needs (Hayter, 1997). To this end, the service industry which includes the hotel industry has seen relatively few studies in the area of location decision-making (Chou *et al.*, 2002).

Further, the little studies on location decision-making is focused on western countries with little reference to developing countries. With regards to hotel location decisions, most of the studies have focused on the location factors instead of the location decision-making itself. For instance Baum and Haveman (1997), Egan and Nield (2000), Kalnins and Chung (2004), Shoval (2006) and Chou *et al.* (2007) have all studied the hotel location factors from different perspectives without a recourse to the decision makers and decision-making. In addition to this, researchers have also used mathematical algorithms to model hotel location decision-making (Adam, 2011). However, hotel location decision-making is initiated

and carried out by people connected to the hotel and hence involves human evaluations of scenarios which goes beyond mathematical estimations. Subsequently, Shoval (2006) suggested that future research works should focus on the people and the reasons why such people are selected to make such locations decisions.

This view is shared by the behavioural location theory as it assumes that location choice is part of a strategic or long-term investment decision (part of a general body of investment decisions), which is complex, uncertain, inherently subjective, and conducted by individuals or groups of decision makers, who do not have the capabilities of the '*Homo economicus*' (Hayter, 1997).

This implies that a more humanistic approach to studying hotel location decisions is useful and hence instead of focusing on the location factors, efforts should be made to understand the people involved in the location decision-making process. Thus, urban tourism researchers should be concerned with the processes by which decisions are made, as well as the whole range of factors influencing such processes. Subsequently, this study aims at identifying the people who aided the hotel owners in the hotel location decision-making in the Kumasi Metropolis and assessing the reasons why the people were involved in the hotel location decision-making.

This research contributes to both theory and practice in several crucial ways. In terms of practice, the study has the likelihood of informing potential investors in the hotel industry in the Metropolis of the pattern of location decision-making process. Thus, potential investors will get to know the relevant people who matter in hotel location decision and the various reasons why they matter. Subsequently, such people can be contacted for their knowledge on hotel location decisions to aid the potential investors in making location choice in the Metropolis. In terms of contribution to theory, this study seeks to add to existing literature by delving into

the people in the decision-making process and why such people are involved. This represents a departure from previous research works in the area of hotel location decisions which mostly considered the location factors and not the people behind the decisions. This study will therefore add that dimension to the hotel location literature. Further, this study will contribute to literature by revealing the issues concerning hotel location decision-making in the context of a developing world nation such as Ghana.

Most studies on hotel location decisions in general have been carried out in the context of developed countries with little emphasis on Africa and Ghana. However, location decision-making occurs within a broader macro environment and hence certain broader factors may cause the decisions to differ. In this sense, such a study will lay bare the peculiar issues in the context of Ghana that may influence the location decision-making process which existing literature is short of.

Theoretical framework

The behavioural theory on industrial location was used as the guiding framework for this study. The behavioural perspective focuses on the decision-making process and the influence of the decision-makers on the location choices.

This theory advocates for a more humanists approach to the study of location decisions by arguing, that since it is humans who make the actual location decisions, the understanding of the 'why' and 'how' firms locate where they do, can be understood by exploring those involved in the decision-making and the reasons why they have been involved (Hamilton, 1974; McDermott & Taylor, 1982; Townroe, 1991; Badri, Davis & Davis, 1995; Papadakis & Barwise, 1996; Papadakis, Lioukas & Chambers, 1997).

In other words, this theory argues that the other people involved in the decision-

making will ultimately have large roles to play in influencing the final location choice of a firm (Sommers & Carlson, 2000; Beyers, 2002). This therefore goes on to imply that in terms of hotel location decision-making, insights into the other people involved in the decision-making process as well as the reasons why they were involved could serve as the basis for understanding why a hotel was located to its current position. (O'Sullivan 2003).

Study area

The Kumasi Metropolis is the regional capital of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Ghana has ten administrative regions with the Ashanti Region as one of them. The Kumasi Metropolis is located between latitudes 6.35°N to 6.40°N and longitudes 1.30°W to 1.35°W.

The Metropolis covers a land area of approximately 254km². Currently, the Kumasi Metropolis is ranked second in Ghana in terms of land area, population size, social life and economic activity to Accra (the national capital). The Metropolis is also home to the Ashanti kingdom, one of the famous historical kingdoms in Africa and famous for its importance as a trading post in gold. Presently, the Metropolis serves as a major traversing point in the country where most of the major roads in the country converge (Figure 1).

Travellers to both the northern and southern parts of the country transit through the Metropolis. The Kumasi airport also plays a major role in serving business travellers to and around the Metropolis. Again, it continues to play a major role in commerce in the country and the West African Sub Region. These attributes of the Metropolis has endeared it to many hotel owners. The metropolis has therefore witnessed an upsurge in the growth of hotels in the country and is hence deemed to be an appropriate setting for this study.

occupation engaged in by the hotel owner before the establishment of the hotel. The results indicated that most of the hotel owners in the Metropolis were males (80.4%). This shows the general trend in the entrepreneurial skills of men in Ghana. Asiedu (2002) observed that due to the general gender roles of females in Ghana which doesn't allow them to be very adventurous, and also that women are not naturally risk takers, there are more male entrepreneurs in the tourism industry than females.

In terms of age distribution, it was revealed that most of the hotel owners in the Metropolis were aged less than 50 years (55.9%). Also, 39.9% of the owners were aged between 50 to 60 years and a few of them (4.2%) were above years.

Thus, the hotel market is represented by mostly middle aged entrepreneurs should not be surprising as the huge financial outlays may require that people work through their youthful days to accumulate capital for investment later in their lives. Meanwhile, most of the hotel owners (79.1%) were married. Again, given their age groups it is expected in Ghanaian societies that they would be married. Secondary education was the most attained (64.7%) by the hotel owners, while 19.6% of them had no formal education and 15.7% attained tertiary education institutions. Most, 61.4% of the hotel owners indicated that original occupations were in other fields such as being business men/women, trading (26.1%), civil servants (6.6%) and teachers (5.9%).

Table 1: Socio-demographics of hotel owners

Socio-demographic characteristics	N	Percent
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	123	80.4
Female	30	19.6
<i>Age</i>		
<50	80	55.9
50-60	57	39.9
>60	6	4.2
<i>Marital status</i>		
Married	121	79.1
Single	32	20.9
<i>Educational attainment</i>		
No formal education	30	19.6
Secondary education	99	64.7
Tertiary education	24	15.7
<i>Main occupation</i>		
Trading	40	26.1
Teacher	9	5.9
Business man/woman	94	61.4
Civil servant	10	6.6

This finding is consistent with Akyeampong's (2007) observation that most hotel owners in Ghana are actively engaged in other jobs and only see the hotel investment as a means of diversifying their sources of income.

People involved in location decision-making and reasons for involving them

Location decision-making, apart from being a product of the individual decision makers characteristics, also involves making a careful evaluation of location factors by seeking and involving as many

people as may be perceived to be important (Hayter, 1997). Table 2 represents the people who were consulted by the hotel owners to assist them in

choosing a suitable location as well as the various reasons that made the hotel owners consult them.

Table 2: People consulted and reasons for consulting

People consulted	*N	Percent
Husband	17	5.7
Wife	108	36.2
Siblings	31	10.4
Parents	51	17.1
Friends	31	20.5
Business partners	19	6.4
Children	11	3.7
Reasons for consulting		
Advice	77	40.5
Norm to consult individual	52	27.4
Consider the person as a family	41	21.6
Supported with funding	20	10.5

*N = multiple response

Seven categories of individuals were consulted by the hotel owners in making their location decisions. These included the husbands, wives, siblings, parents, friends, business partners and children of the hotel owners.

The people consulted most by the owners were the wives (36.2%). This finding should not be surprising as most of the hotel owners were found to be males. Other people consulted included friends (20.5%), parents (17.1%) siblings (10.4%), business partners (6.45%), husbands (5.7%) and Children (3.7%). The most commonly cited reason for consulting others by the hotel owners was to get the advice (40.4%) of those consulted in choice a suitable hotel location. Given the nature of the hotels in the Metropolis which are mostly small scaled, it was expected the services of experts may not be sought by the owners since that will represent cost which the owners are not ready to bear and hence may have explained why the advice was sought from such people.

Some of the owners indicated that it was a norm for them to consult those they did (27.45%) since they have always engaged them in all their major decisions. Other

reasons included the fact that the owners considered those people they consulted as part of their family (21.6%) and those consulted having supported with some finances (10.5%) towards the establishment of the hotels.

Background characteristics and reasons for involving others

It is an established fact that most human experiences with decision-making are influenced by socio-demographic aspects (Amuquandoh, Boakye & Mensah, 2011). Specifically, the literature on location decisions particularly the behavioural thought, suggests that the explanation to the 'why' and 'how' firms choose their locations can be sought in understanding the background characteristics of the location decision makers (Hamilton, 1974; McDermott & Taylor, 1982; Laulajainen & Stafford, 1995). In this vain, the socio-demographic characteristics of the hotel owners who were the location decision makers were considered. The chi-square test independence was used to test the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of hotel owners and the reasons why they consulted the people they did (Table 3).

Table 3: Socio-demographic characteristics by reasons for consulting

Demographic characteristics	*N	Reasons for consulting (%)					P Value
		Advice	Norm to consult in all decisions	Consider the person as a family	Supported funding	with	
<i>Sex</i>							
Male	226	20.9	67.6	2.7	8.8	0.000	
Female	36	14.2	17.2	11.1	57.4		
$X^2 = 20.94; df = 3$							
<i>Age</i>							
<50	112	39.3	27.7	23.2	9.8	0.209	
50-60	73	41.1	28.8	20.5	9.6		
>60	45	40.0	20.0	22.0	18.0		
$X^2 = 8.42; df = 6$							
<i>Marital status</i>							
Married	167	15.3	62.5	10.2	12.0	0.006	
Single	43	66.6	11.0	14.4	8.0		
$X^2 = 12.35; df = 3$							
<i>Educational level</i>							
No formal education	36	62.4	20.9	5.6	11.1	0.000	
Secondary education	182	48.4	35.2	1.1	15.4		
Tertiary education	44	24.4	9.1	13.6	52.9		
$X^2 = 8.83; df = 6$							
<i>Main occupation</i>							
Trading	58	39.7	31.0	22.4	6.9	0.712	
Teacher	76	41.2	15.3	21.4	22.1		
Business man/woman	121	42.1	24.8	20.7	12.4		
Civil servant	49	41.7	22.8	20.2	15.3		
$X^2 = 6.37; df = 9$							
<i>People consulted</i>							
Husband	30	33.3	16.7	20.0	30.0	0.000	
Wife	153	15.1	61.2	17.2	6.5		
Siblings	43	11.6	11.6	69.8	7.0		
Parents	74	39.2	28.4	23.0	9.5		
Friends	85	72.9	9.4	11.8	5.9		
Business partners	53	13.0	20.1	4.3	62.5		
Children	35	20.3	13.3	59.7	6.7		
$X^2 = 24.32; df = 3$							

*N = multiple response, Significant at P < 0.05

It was noted that there was significant relationship ($P = 0.000$) between hotel owners' sex and the reasons why they consulted other people in their location decision-making. The results indicated that most hotel owners who were males consulted other people because they considered it a norm to consult (67.6%) them in all their decisions. This finding is consistent with the assertion made by Gray and Ligouri (1998) that male hotel owners tend to consult their wives as part of their regular consultations with their wives as their life partners in their location decision-making. Most of the female hotel owners however indicated that they consulted other people because those people supported them with some funding (57.4%) in establishing the hotel. This finding may be due to the fact that women in Ghana often look up to their husbands for support in anything they do and hence their husbands might have been those who supported them with the funds.

Further, significant relationship was observed between the marital status of hotel owners and the reasons why they consulted other people in their location decisions ($P = 0.006$). Evidence from Table 3 indicates that most hotel owners who were married consulted other people because it was a norm for them to consult them (62.5%) in all of their decisions and hence appropriate for them to consult them in their choice of locations. Meanwhile, most hotel owners who were single intimated that they consulted other people just to get their advice on a suitable location (66.6%).

A marked relationship ($P = 0.000$) was also observed between the educational level of hotel owners and the reasons why they consulted other people in their location decisions. Most hotel owners who had no formal education consulted other people in their location decision just for their advice on a suitable hotel location (62.4%). However, those owners with tertiary education consulted others because they have helped them with funding (52.9%) to establish their hotels.

The chi-square test of independence however, revealed that there was no significant relationship between the age of the hotel owners and the reasons why they consulted others ($P = 0.209$) as well as main occupation and of the hotel owners and the reasons why they consulted others in their location decision-making.

The chi-square test of independence was also used to test whether there was any significant relationship between the people consulted and the reasons why they were consulted (Table 3). People have different perceptions of their fellow humans and so depending on how the hotel owner perceives someone; the owner might consult the person for different reason than consulting another. The test showed that there was significant relationship ($P = 0.000$) between the people the hotel owners consulted and the reasons why they consulted them (Table 3). It was revealed that most of the hotel owners consulted their wives in their location decision-making because it was a norm for them to consult them on all decisions (61.2%). Again, most of the owners consulted their friends just for the friends' advice (72.9%) on choosing a best location. The test also revealed that most hotel owners consulted their siblings in the quest to choose a hotel location because they thought their siblings were family members (69.8%) and needed to consult them in the decision-making. The same reason was cited by the hotel owners for consulting their children in their location decision-making (59.7%). As expected, business partners were involved in the location decision-making by hotel owners because they contributed financial capital (62.5%) towards the establishment of the hotel.

Discussion

The study finding that most hotel owners are males conforms with the general investment trend in Ghana. Thus, most small to medium scale investment in Ghana is championed by males (Mensah, 2009). This perhaps is related to the societal roles that are associated with

being a female. Traditionally women are expected to be “keepers of the home” by being house wives. This implies that there is little opportunity for them to work and subsequently save to invest in establishing businesses such as hotels. This finding might also be related to lack of general investment interest in hotels since hotels are traditionally seen as places where “immoral” behaviours such prostitution are perpetrated in Ghana. It is however, interesting that most of the hotel owners are married. It is generally anticipated that the demands of working in the hotel industry does not make it favourable for married couples and most often leads to marriage breakdowns (Mensah, 2009). Perhaps this contrary finding may be explained by the fact that most of the hotel owners themselves are not involved in the daily operations of the hotels but rather employ others to manage the hotels.

The main revelation of the study is that with the exception of the business partners who were consulted in the location decision-making, all the other people consulted are at least members of the extended family shows the nature of Ghanaian decision-making process. It is common for most people to consult those that are closer to them for the purposes of trust (Boakye, 2010) and it is for this reason that people of the extended family system have a responsibility towards the other individuals and vice-versa.

The study indicated that hotel owners mostly consulted others for their advice. This indicates that the owners themselves are novices in entrepreneurship in general and the hotel business in particular. This finding is consistent with the observation made by Yang (2004), Chank and Kalnins (2001) that most hotels owners are usually not experts in the hotel business and for that matter usually involve others in the decision-making process especially the initial investment decisions. It is however, interesting to note that the idea of consulting others and the fact that the owners considered those they consulted as family members in the hotel location decision-making (as indicated in the study finding) shows the importance of the family

system especially the extended family system.

The study finding that there is a relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of the hotel owner and the reasons why they consulted other people in their hotel location decisions conforms with the behavioural thought on industrial location (Sommers& Carlson, 2000) which guided the study. Thus the final decision on a choice of hotel location can be understood by exploring the decision-makers’ characteristics and how it impact on the location decision. The characteristics of the location decision-maker therefore impacts on how the person evaluates the alternatives in reaching on a final decision as to where to locate a business. It was also not surprising that there was a significant relationship between the people the hotel owners consulted and the reasons why they were consulted. It is generally expected that since different categories of people are consulted on an issue, the reasons why each category of person is consulted will differ.

Conclusions

Most of the people consulted by the hotel owners in the Metropolis were members of the family in the local Ghanaian sense. Thus most of people consulted by hotel owners in their location decisions were members of the extended family (siblings, wives, children and husbands). This confirms the assertion that made by Asiedu, (2002) and Akyeamong (2007) that the extended family is the single most important unit for the hotel owner in Ghana in terms of major decisions. The extended family members are seen as close and trusted associates who have genuine interest in the personal development of the individual and hence considered the appropriate person to consider.

Hotel owners involved other people in their location decision-making for four main reasons namely to seek advice, it is a norm to consult others, because they consider others as family and they may be supportive with financing a venture. This

shows that hotel owners in the Metropolis mostly involved others in their location decisions for non-professional reasons but rather personal reasons. However, in terms of location decision-making, it is most appropriate to involve people with expertise in industrial location due to the long term consequences of the location on the business (Adams, 2002).

Finally, there is sufficient evidence from the study to conclude that reasons for involving others in the hotel location decision-making was influenced by socio-demographic characteristics of the individual hotel owners. The reasons

considered by hotel owners for involving other people in their hotel location decision-making thus to an extent, depended on the hotel owners' personal attributes and characteristics. This implies that the understanding as to the why and how hotel owners chose to locate in certain locations can be sought by exploring the background characteristics of the owners. Also, different people were involved in the decision-making for different reasons as demonstrated by the study- hence the people involved in the study may be useful in hotel location decisions in the Kumasi Metropolis.

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