Beyond Entrenched Positions: Towards a more Comprehensive Understanding of Methodological Choices in Tourism Research in Ghana

Gabriel Eshun, Seebaway Zakaria and Alexander Yao Segbefia

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the overarching reasons that prompt researchers to particular methodological traditions and choices in tourism research in Ghana. Using purposive sampling, the study selected university tourism lecturers and final year undergraduate students at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The data collection process involved in-depth interviews with the respondents as well as focus group discussions towards filling the above-mentioned knowledge gap. Using thematic analysis, this paper shows four main results inter alia: 'external pressures on choice of methods'; 'issues of positionality, technology and alternative approaches'; 'perceptions of knowledge on quantitative and qualitative research traditions'; and 'nexus of industry, society and academia'. The study concludes by heralding undertones for a paradigmatic shift from the continual dominance of tourism research by neopositivism to considering alternative methodological approaches that promote sustainable development in Africa.

Keywords: methodological choices, research methods, African researchers, Ghana, Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

The continual dominance of a quantitative paradigm in the field of tourism is underscored by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) attempts to document tourism's growth in its annual publications titled 'Tourism Highlights and Compendium of Tourism Statistics'. Similarly, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)

measures the economic impact of travel and tourism for the world and its regions (Goeldner and Ritchie 2012). Bryce et al. (2015, 579) add that the study of tourism continues to be largely filtered through Western institutional lenses, which favours quantitative approaches over qualitative approaches. Increasingly, researchers are critiquing the dominance of particular categories of research perspectives in social research and how they themselves produce and circulate knowledge in a global academic context (Airhihenbuwa 2006; Chilisa 2005; Cloke et al. 2004; Decrop 1999; Echtner and Prasad 2003; Eshun 2011; Eshun and Madge 2012; Eshun and Tagoe-Darko 2015; Hall and Tucker 2004; Hollinshead 2004; Phillips 2005; Sharp 2009; Sundberg 2014; Tembo 2003).

To authors such as Jazeel and McFarlane (2007) and Raghuram and Madge (2005), there is an urgent need for researchers to counter Eurocentrism in academia by contesting why and how researchers produce knowledge, and for whom. Ashcroft et al.'s (1989) *magnum opus* 'Empire Writes Back' thus draws the attention of researchers, especially from Southern countries, to the need for articulating their voices in their works. Also Chakrabarty's (2000) 'Provincialisation of Europe', seeks to lead scholars to what Sidaway (2001, 51) refers to as 'alternative world picturing' i.e. the exploration of alternative epistemologies and methodologies to complement the hegemony of the hypothetico-deductive paradigm in social research.

Ahluwalia (2001) also tasks African scholars with the need to abrogate 'Afro-pessimism', which is shown in the way that African scholars largely borrow Northern theories in their research without contesting their appropriateness and relevance to African situations. In tandem with Ahluwalia's assertion, Airhihenbuwa (2006, 10) warns African researchers to unravel "the assumptions inscribed in the theories, frameworks and models designed for research in Africa". Airhihenbuwa's stance will involve African scholars finding new ways to "investigate, interrogate, make visible and validate other knowledge and ways of knowing, particularly those that have served and still serve African communities" (Okolie 2003, 236). Lopez (1998), however, asks:

> "If research is a tool of the 'master' and all we are doing tinkering with the tool is to make it more adaptable to marginalised populations, then can we truly hope for

substantive social and epistemological change in our research practices?" (Lopez 1998, 230).

Whilst acknowledging the philosophical and practical significance of Lopez's argument, what remains to be asked is: how exactly have researchers sought to draw upon the same sorts of resources as researched communities in making sense of the phenomena their investigations seek to explain, thus producing local perspectives on lived experiences? Currently, African researchers have been largely silent on issues of methodological traditions and choices in the field of tourism (Eshun 2011). Ghana, as an emerging tourism destination in Africa, continues to receive research attention (Afenyo 2012; Amuquandoh et al. 2011; Asiedu 2002; Eshun 2014; Eshun and Tettey 2014; Eshun and Tonto 2014; Eshun & Tagoe-Darko 2015; Mensah 2015; Owusu 2001; Teye 1999; Yeboah 2013). Nevertheless, the plethora of literature on tourism research in Ghana and to some extent Africa, appears to be overly mechanistic, whereby researchers seek to present grand quantitative facts without necessarily contesting whether the methods used are in consonance with the problems under study or presenting fresh arguments based on the data collected (Chilisa 2005; Decrop 1999; Eshun 2011; Eshun and Madge 2012). Eshun and Tagoe-Darko (2015) refer to this scenario in Africa as 'epistemological dromophobia', where researchers illustrate fear in considering lesser-known methods in their works, and maintaining blind acquiescence to mainstream methodologies. Indeed, there is an overt knowledge gap in tourism research in Africa, concerning what underscores researchers' proneness to particular methodological traditions. This paper therefore seeks to fill this overt knowledge gap in Africa by exploring the overarching reasons that prompt researchers to adopt particular methodological traditions and choices in tourism research. More specifically, the study seeks to unravel the reasons why researchers employ their current approaches to tourism research in Ghana – and the 'South' more widely – and the barriers to adopting these approaches.

The remaining part of the paper is divided into four interlinked sections. The immediate section throws hues on methodological approaches in social research. The next section provides insights into the paper's methodological stance, with focus on sample frame, data collection techniques and analysis tool. Section four presents the results and discussion, with overt focus on reasons that prompt researchers to adopt particular methodological

choices in tourism research in Ghana. The concluding section echoes the need for alternative approaches in tourism research, and its embedment in issues of sustainable development in Ghana, and to a large extent Africa.

2. ISSUE OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

Riley and Love (2001) argue that tourism research is still largely characterised by the use of quantitative research methodologies. Eshun (2011) suggests there is the need for African tourism researchers to consider especially qualitative methodologies to complement the hegemony of neopositivist methodologies. To Jack and Westwood (2006), quantitative research implies invariably the gathering of data to quantify them, and is more akin to realist ontology and objectivist epistemology. Qualitative research, however, is often enshrined in interpretivism, and draws on a constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology (Saunders et al. 2009).

Qualitative research has been used to study different aspects of tourism experiences through an in-depth understanding of tourists' behaviour, attitudes, expectations, participation and perceptions (Decrop 1999; Raghuram and Madge 2006). Riley and Love (2000) present three types of qualitative approaches in tourism research namely: 'precursor', 'multi method' and 'sole method'. Precursor design involves the use of qualitative research to develop questions for subsequent quantitative research. If the research uses both qualitative and quantitative techniques concurrently in the findings, then that research is a multi-method approach that can also be referred to as a mixed-method approach. The sole method employs qualitative technique exclusively in the research findings. To Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research has undergone several stages as shown in Table 1. Richards and Munsters (2010) add that qualitative tourism research has followed basically this typology of qualitative research, and has not gone beyond the third phase.

Table 1. The Historical Development of Qualitative Research

Period	Methodological Shift
Traditional Period (1900 to WWI)	Objective account reflecting the positivist accounts
Modernist phase (Post WWII to 1970s)	Familiarisation of qualitative methods, rigorous qualitative studies of important social processes
Blurred Genres (1970-1986)	Employment of wide range of paradigms, methods and strategies
Crisis of Representation (Mid 1980s)	Search for new models of truth, method and representation.
Postmodern period of experimental ethnography	Making sense of crisis of representation through new compositions of ethnography and representations of the
Pre-experimental Enquiry (1995-2000)	Experimentation with novel forms of expressing lived experience including literary, poetic and autographical multi-
Methodological Contested Period (2004-2005)	Tension, conflict, methodological retrenchment
The future 2005—	Methodological backlash with evidence-based social movement

Source: Denzin and Lincoln (2005).

Traditional qualitative techniques include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, projective techniques and observation methods (Crang 1997; Eshun 2011; Goeldner and Ritchie 2012; Hussey and Hussey 1997; Saunders et al. 2009; Yin 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) highlight major qualitative approaches such as case studies, ethnography, participant observation, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, grounded theory, biographical method, historical method, clinical method and participative enquiry. These reflect post-modern arguments that critique traditional social science approaches. Furthermore, there is some increasing innovation to the qualitative tradition *inter alia* nethnography (net-based or online ethnography), investigative poetics (poetic analysis), semiotics, critical humanism, performance ethnography and Foucault's methodologies (Cloke et al. 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Eshun 2011; Eshun et al. forthcoming; Mkono 2013; Prendergast et al. 2009; Sherry and Shoulten 2002). However, the call for alternative approaches in tourism research is focused predominantly on data collection techniques at the expense of data analysis techniques. Decrop (1999) also adds that qualitative researchers often fail to explain how and why their methods are sound, which results in confusion and misunderstanding. Eshun (2011) therefore argues that there is the need to consider analysis techniques in the call for alternative methodologies. Towards addressing this challenge, Eshun (2011) and Eshun and Madge (2012) for example, courageously built on the works of Richardson (1994) and Furman et al (2007), to position poetry as an analysis tool *par excellence* in tourism research in Africa. Similarly, Mkono (2012) used nethnography in the data collection on a research on hospitality in Zimbabwe, but went further to show clearly how thematic analysis can show cogently the eating experience of tourists to the country. Wu and Pierce (2014) employed the same method to tease out Chinese recreational vehicle tourists to Australia.

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the adoption of methodological approaches in research is ineluctably intertwined with the issue of positionality (Eshun and Madge, 2012). To Eshun (2011) issues of positionality of a researcher includes invariably the financial status, institutional and educational affiliation, race and personal values of the researcher among others. In Africa, an insider's positionality is often an aggregation of

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factors such as economic status, educational level, age, gender, marital status and ethnicity (Cloke et al. 2004; Eshun 2011).

According to Chereni (2014), the debates on positionality are couched in the 1960s notions of researchers as being either emic or etic. Emic refers to a researcher who has gained a personal and first-hand experience of a society. The emic researcher often shows similar cultural makers (e.g. language, beliefs and attitudes) and somatic features (e.g. skin colour and physiognomy). Etic denotes the opposite and refers to the viewpoint of a researcher who lacks the lived experience of the culture and society under study (Cloke et al. 2004; Crang 1997; Goeldner and Ritchie 2012; Yin 2009). As a consequence, the discourses on the emic and etic dichotomy match the contemporary binary of insider and outsider respectively.

To Eshun (2011), although there is sparse literature on positionality and its import in tourism research in Africa, it deserves major attention since it influences researchers on the methods they choose and even the analytical approaches they adopt. As a point in case, during his doctoral research on pro-poor tourism in Ghana, the Ewe heritage of one of the authors helped him to have relatively easy access to the Ewe respondents at the fieldwork locations. As a consequence, positionality situates a researcher in the production of knowledge by highlighting the capacities and incapacities, which might generate particular insights or perspectives on phenomena and their context (Cloke et al. 2004; Eshun 2011; Eshun and Madge 2012; Eshun and Madge forthcoming). Furthermore, in conducting this research, the selection of the topic itself was prompted by the positionality of the authors as lecturers in Ghana and also being involved in tourism research. The paper now proceeds to address the methodological approach adopted with particular emphasis on methods of data collection and analysis.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The data collection took place between January and March, 2015. The study used purposive sampling to select seven lecturers with research focus on tourism from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and one from University of Ghana.

Furthermore, 40 final year undergraduate students in tourism for the 2014/2015 academic year from KNUST were selected. In total, 48 individuals were engaged in unstructured interviews for the data collection. Anderson (2009, 202) notes purposive sampling is where a sample of participants is chosen for their experience and perspectives relating to the investigation. Also, Goeldner and Ritchie (2012) argue that interviews help researchers to discover the 'reasons' behind the data collected. Two focus group discussions were also held separately with the lecturers and undergraduate students. Guest et al. (2006) argue that sample size in qualitative research is far outweighed by the importance of 'saturation' i.e. the point where no differences in perceptions are identifiable in subsequent responses. The interviews lasted less than 30 minutes and, with prior permission from the interviewees, some of their responses were audio recorded. According to Creswell (2008), it takes about four hours to transcribe a one hour interview. The major modules for the study were: training of researchers and their import on research topic selection and methodological choice; methods often used by researchers; perceptions on dis/advantages of qualitative research and quantitative research; training in research methods; what informs the method(s) used in research and why; challenges associated with using particular research methods; challenges associated with using lesser-known methods; skills and talents of researchers and positionality on choosing particular methods in social research.

Although the very politics of alternative methodologies tilts towards primary research, documentary data may complement primary data towards a more eclectic and useful research (Cloke et al. 2004; Crang 1997; Raghuram and Madge 2006). For example, Tantow (2009) employed both primary and secondary data in his doctoral research to unpack how governmental agencies have officially endorsed representations of heritage and tourism policy guidelines in Singapore. Coterminous with the above-mentioned stance, the study evaluated the methodological choices in dissertations submitted for the degree of Culture and Tourism Programme between 2011 and 2015 at KNUST. This was to ascertain the type of methods employed by student-researchers and also to detect changes in their methodological choices through the years. This available secondary data was to add further credence to the primary data collected for the study. In all, 257 dissertations were located for assessment. In addition, the lecturers involved in the study, were asked to submit copies

of their published articles from between 2011 to 2015 so as to ascertain their methodological choices. A total of 41 articles were submitted by the selected lecturers for assessment.

The study employed thematic analysis in identifying patterns of meaning and experience in the collected qualitative data (Crang 1997; Dey 1993; Gupta and Levenburg 2010; Mkono 2011). In this study, the transcribed data from the unstructured interviews and focus group discussions were read through several times to gain an overall perspective of the data. The authors employed the emergent theme approach instead of the pre-set approach. The authors did not find the use of the pre-set approach useful for this study. The pre-set approach involves a researcher identifying a set of themes, often from literature reviewed and then looking for data that agree or disagree with these pre-determined themes. This approach may overlook unexpected themes that could possibly be an integral contribution to the knowledge creation process. Dey (1993) explains that there is the need for a qualitative researcher to be directly involved in the data to get himself or herself soaked in the data to be able to unravel the multiple layers of meaning from the collected data.

Richardson (1994) re-emphasises that social research should not seek simply to "write up" research (i.e. a mechanistic format akin to a plot summary) but as a creative production of knowledge, an open strategy of discovery enacted through intuition that leads to producing a holistic work cohering at multiple levels of meaning. As a result, the authors employed the emergent theme approach, where the transcribed data were read through several times to look for categories of themes that highlight recurrent patterns, representing emergent themes on methodological choices (Cloke at al. 2004; Kusi 2012). Next, the themes were then coded, which involved labelling the text to form descriptions in the transcribed database. Subsequently, the related codes were then aggregated under the dominant themes identified (Creswell 2008). These themes were then related to the study question itself for more nuanced analysis (Cloke at al. 2004; Gupta and Levenburg 2010; Kusi 2012; Mkono 2013).

Our positionality as insider-researchers helped in our methodological approach to the study in two main ways. First, being insider-researchers helped in having access to the dissertations submitted to the various lecturers on the Tourism Programme at KNUST.

Currently, the dissertations submitted to the University are not available online for downloading. Secondly, our familiarity with the issues in the context of the research helped us to infuse our own experiences and also to interpret the responses accurately. However, there are assertions that insider-researchers are often tempted to precede their research analysis with pre-conceived notions about the problems under investigation (Crang 1997; Hussey and Hussey 1997; Saunders et al. 2009; Yin 2009). To overcome this temptation, the authors approached the study with open minds and were willing to seek for clarifications about issues during the data collection process. Ahmed (2004) cautions that qualitative researchers must not take things for granted by teasing out the multiplicity of meanings based on the collected data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSSION

Through the thematic analysis of the primary data collected through the interviews and focus group discussions, four main themes emerged. The results and discussion section therefore presents these themes, and then intersperse and situate them within larger discourses on methodological issues in social research, and more specifically tourism research in Ghana and to some extent Africa.

4.1 External pressures on choice of methods of data collection and analysis

Spivak (1995) thus asks: "can the subaltern speak", to re-echo how European theories have been largely neglectful of non-Western articulations of realties and the uphill task towards alternative approaches in undertaking research. Mroz (2010, 5) avers: "the cornerstone of the academy is the liberty to pursue ideas and knowledge without constraint". However, academic institutions have 'traditionalisms', which may include use of language, specific topics for theses, location of research, and orbit of research execution that subtly demand adherence, and may trivialise 'alternative epistemologies' or saddle them with difficulties in getting accepted and published in scholarly publications (Nagar 2002). Jazeel and McFarlane (2007,786) therefore indicate that social research still shows

that "the only kinds of knowledge that are taken seriously are those that conform to Euro-American formats of writing, citation and history".

Consequently, a researcher may be wrought with ambivalences as to whether to address the 'concerns' of the research fully or conceal them under layers of academic icings, characterised by fixations on what would be considered as 'legitimate knowledge' (Chilisa 2005; Eshun and Tagoe-Darko 2015; Mowforth and Munt 2003). Indeed, academic institutions in Africa to a large extent still promulgate Euro-centric ideas in research by way of use of language, referencing style and presentation style, which subtly demand adherence to what would be considered as 'legitimate knowledge' (Airhihenbuwa 2006; Chilisa 2005; Raghuram and Madge 2006). In addition, international sponsors of tourism research often accept research proposals that tout mainstream orthodoxies for generalisable comparisons across different research locations (Eshun 2011; Goeldner and Ritchie 2012; Serpell 1999). For example, Conservation International sponsored a five-year research project in Kakum Conservation Area in Ghana, which involved over 30 different research projects; however these were overly neopositivistic in perspective (Eshun 2011). Indeed:

"While the desires of the individual researcher to make a particular intervention in a certain set of academic debate will play a part in determining what gets written, a larger factor will be the needs and the requirements of the funding bodies" (Cloke et al. 2004: 373).

The generalisable outcomes may include: visitor numbers, revenue size, market segment size, hotel categories, fare structure, accommodation rates, and tourists' purchasing power (Goeldner and Ritchie 2012; Yin 2009). Despite tourism being positioned as an integral part of achieving sustainable development, research approaches still appear overly top-down in approach in Africa (Airhihenbuwa 2006; Akama et al. 2011; Briggs and Sharp 2004). Sayer (1999) adds emphatically that the very methods of research and governance are not well suited to the challenges of sustainable development. Indeed, social research in Africa is still solely conducted within departmental consuetudes that may frustrate the advancement of useful scholarly work on sustainable development (Eshun and

Madge 2012; Eshun and Tagoe-Darko 2015). This standpoint was eloquently elaborated on by a respondent:

> *There is the need for cross-cutting research themes to help engender more interactions among disciplines. This needs a proactive approach, where members should be encouraged to participate. There should be an overt focus on research topics that all the members in a group can contribute to; if not it will be a one horse-race, masquerading as an interdisciplinary research or group (A Tourism Lecturer, Interview transcripts 2015).*

Furthermore, for student-researchers' in Ghana, the major sub-themes under external pressure include: supervisors dictating research topics, financial constraint, group members' influence (for group-based dissertations) and time available for research execution. It is also worth adding that embarking on alternative approaches in Africa can be a risky option, particularly for a student-researcher and less-established academics. Currently, most external examiners and supervisors are conveniently attuned to mainstream research methodologies. This is shown in the way that some supervisors consciously or unconsciously usher their student-researchers into the same methodologies they employed during their postgraduate studies. Hence, many lecturers and student-researchers often choose mainstream research methodologies, with the anticipation that their works will face the least critique from publishing houses and external assessors, and for student-researchers' from their supervisors. Despite the sometimes overt influence of research supervisors, many are now publishing vigorously with their student-researchers. This scenario contributes synergistically to supervisors' publications, whilst student-researchers also gain and hone their skills of publishing in journals.

4.2 Positionality, Technology and Alternative Approaches in Tourism Research

To Cloke et al. (2004) and Tribe (2005), positionality helps towards showing and abandoning the god(dess)-trick in favour of a full disclosure of the researcher and his or her identity in a wider societal hierarchy of power, status and influence. However, in contesting the insider and outsider positionality, it is worth noticing that researchers in any culture are multi-

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situated, which demands avoiding homogenising positions that favour essentialist narratives (Cloke et al. 2004; Eshun 2011; Lopez 1998; Lapum 2008; Yin 2009). For example, tourism researchers trained in Ghana often show penchant for quantitative methodologies and epistemologies (Eshun 2011). As insider-researchers, we have also realised that lecturers trained in Britain often prefer qualitative approaches in their research, compared to those trained in USA and Germany. However, those trained abroad who gain employment in universities in Ghana, are subtly re-oriented towards the quantitative paradigm because of its dominance within the universities. A tourism lecturer elaborates on this:

The predominance of quantitative research in Ghana is undeniable and sometimes internecine to useful academic work. However, the untrammelled acceptance of this paradigm compels a researcher to often focus on quantitative research paradigms. The advent of SPSS as almost the default software for social research analysis, contributes to researchers opting for research topics that they can easily engage in calculating and generating frequencies, graphs, charts and testing hypotheses. There are few cases where supervisors have asked their students to consult other colleagues who are more familiar with certain qualitative methods. However, qualitative analysis is seen as involving 'thick descriptions' which may seem obfuscating and may wane a researcher's confidence on the quality of a study (A Tourism Lecturer, Interview transcripts, 2015).

Another interesting issue, but often silent in discourses on positionality, is how researchers do appropriate their talents in their research (cf. Ateljevic et al. 2009; Cloke et al. 2004; Crang 1997; Eshun 2011; Kusi 2012; Yin 2009). To illuminate this point further, one of the co- authors of this paper provides a personal insight:

Having performed some of my academically-focused poems in University of Birmingham and University of Leicester, UK, the feedback convinced me that I could leverage my skill and talent as a performing poet in my postgraduate research in tourism. The encouragement and the constructive criticisms from my open-minded supervisors at University of Leicester, led me to serious studies into poetic analysis and its relevance in tourism, which became the ultimate novelty of the study (Author, Personal Insight).

A respondent also adds in a forthright statement:

I see myself as somebody with much interest in quantitative statistics and research; it comes so naturally to me. If things are not in quantifiable categories, I find them difficult to grasp. Sometimes some of my colleagues question my continual quantitative approach to research. I feel that when it comes to research, it comes very close to how we as researchers are gifted individually and how we often orient the whole research process to follow our personal flair and interest (A Tourism Lecturer, Interview transcripts 2015).

Kitchin and Tate (2001) stress that academics often choose methods based on their natural gifting, as a result those who are 'stato-phobic' (dislike quantitative approaches) are more likely to avoid quantitative approaches in their research, whilst those who like to deal with figures will more often than not tilt towards quantitative research. Also, technological change is going to increasingly impact on research. For example, in the early 1990s, Internet availability was very limited in Africa, however the power of the internet with the portability of smart phones in the 21st Century are constantly changing the research methods and techniques being used in tourism research (Eshun 2011; Goeldner and Ritchie 2012; Sundberg 2014; Wu and Pierce 2014). Tourism Research Network (TRINET) increasingly sees its members conducting various forms of online surveys. Currently, Ghana has the fastest Internet speed in Africa, and most Ghanaian universities have a bandwidth of approximately 155 Mbps (Nunoo and Anane-Antwi 2014). Furthermore, Vodafone has set Internet Cafes on most of the university campuses in Ghana to increase accessibility. The increasing Internet services on university campuses in Africa has led to:

The establishment of Africa Journal Online (AJOL), a platform dedicated to improving online visibility of and access to scholarly research of African-based academics, and other online scholarly initiatives like HINARI…Provide platform for data accessibility and visibility (Nunoo and Anane-Antwi 2014, 97).

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Nonetheless, Nunoo and Anane-Antwi (2014) suggest that the rate of bandwidth speed is very slow in the continent despite most institutions having moved from dial-up to fibre or satellite connection. In addition, social research from Africa is still largely showing old references. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, most subscriptions to leading journals could be accessed only at the main libraries of these universities, and lecturers often prefer to have their own stock of academic references in their offices which may not be readily updated (Eshun 2011). Secondly, there seems to be no strong objections from local or continental publishing houses if majority of references in manuscripts are at least five years old. As a consequence, African researchers are often referred to new sources of literature during the peer review process of their manuscripts sent outside Africa.

4.3 Perceptions of knowledge from quantitative and qualitative research traditions

Social researchers in Africa, tend to see literature review often purely as an exercise to seek for empirical evidence for the issue of comparison (Airhihenbuwa 2005). However, Silverman (1999, 1) notes that 'without theoretical considerations there is nothing to research'. As researchers overlook critical evaluation of existing theoretical and methodological literature on their chosen research topics, they often arrive hastily at research objectives and questions.

Clough and Nutbrown (2002) introduced the term 'Goldilocks test' to help researchers in choosing appropriate research projects namely 'too big', 'too small', 'too hot' and 'just right' research questions. Under the 'too big' scenario, the research will require too many resources (e.g. financial and time) during the research process. Such a situation brings with it inefficiency in executing the research. In direct contrast to the 'too big' scenario is the 'too small' situation, where the research seems insignificant and may lead to insufficient outcomes. Some researchers may also select a topic which may be considered as 'too hot'. Under this scenario, the researcher may have to cross many ethical barriers and based on the nature of the research, there is a possibility that the researcher will be insensitive to the respondents. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) vouch for 'just right' research topic, which is the

right investigation at this time for a researcher. As supervisors of student projects at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, we have seen series of revisions on their research topics. A student-researcher gives her experience during the initial stages of her undergraduate research project:

> *When I presented my topic to my supervisor, he asked me to consult further literature on the chosen topic. I came back to him with another topic and he said it was a big topic that was not appropriate at the undergraduate level. I later through his guidance settled on a more appropriate topic. I feel our research method courses show us more of the statistics than actually guiding us to the approaches in undertaking appropriate topics for undergraduate research (An Undergraduate Student, Interview transcripts 2015).*

The respondents also hinted that employing quantitative methods allowed for a structured process of data collection and analysis. Hussey and Hussey (1997) re-emphasise that quantitative research is a more straightforward process for a new researcher. This observation was eloquently re-echoed in the quote below:

> *Research method courses are overly anchored in quantitative methods which culminate into correlational, regression analysis and other inferential statistics. Students are made to feel the aplomb and legitimacy in running regression, generating tables, charts and graphs. Indeed, students who do not state and test hypotheses and carry out regression analysis are sometimes considered weak and theses that do not employ inferential statistics analysis are considered not rigorous and authors may suffer needlessly. Also, the seeming hesitance towards mathematics among many students seems to accord students undertaking quantitative research some level of respect among their colleagues over those undertaking qualitative research (Lecturer, Interview transcripts 2015).*

This notwithstanding, Chilisa (2005) challenges African researchers to contest neopositivism, which with its nomothetic logic often fails to convey the subtleties of the lived experiences of specifically local communities. As a consequence, many authors posit

the *raison d'être* of alternative approaches in tourism research should contest how some knowledge categories gain legitimacy at the expense of other forms of knowledge (Airhihenbuwa 2006; Ateljevic et al. 2007; Bryce et al. 2015; Eshun 2011; Eshun and Tagoe-Darko 2015; Jack and Westwood 2006; Tribe 2005). This stance will involve critiquing why, how, where, which and what methodological wheel must move in a particular research (Cloke et al. 2004; Goeldner and Ritchie 2012; Phillips 2005; Raghuram and Madge 2006; Yin 2009). A student-researcher expresses her satisfaction on using a lesser-known method in her research project:

> *When my supervisor suggested that based on my research objectives, I may need to consider nethnography as part of the mixed-method design I have adopted, I was diffident. However, further reading on nethnography revealed that it was really a useful technique to examine customer satisfaction, and tripadvisor.com made this very accessible to get data on a large sample of tourists on my study area. This approach helped reduced time spent and the cost I would have borne with face-to-face questionnaire administration and interviews (Focus Group Discussion Transcript, 2015).*

Indeed, when one of the authors conceived the idea for this paper, he having already published on alternative methodologies in tourism, realised that the best approach to undertaking this research was through the qualitative paradigm. This is because there is less research conducted on this topic, and also using this approach provided the opportunity for the voices of the respondents to feature predominantly in the analysis. According to Yin (2009), this adds credence to the knowledge creation process. Raghuram and Madge (2006) stretch this stance further by suggesting vehemently that by letting a reader come face-to-face with the lived experiences in qualitative research, it helps to erase the façade and sometimes subtle chicanery of quantitative research through 're-living' the experiences of the respondents.

To authors Airhihenbuwa (2006), Chilisa (2005), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Eshun (2011), Eshun and Madge (2012), Raghuram and Madge (2006) and Sylvester (1999),

qualitative research should seem appealing principally to Southern scholars because it allows a wide range of voices to be heard and interpretations to be extracted. In fact, during the drafts of this paper, the authors continually asked themselves whether the qualitative approach for the study was most appropriate and with discussions with colleagues, the qualitative approach was ultimately favoured.

The review of undergraduate dissertations and publications by lecturers from 2011 to 2015 also showed interesting outcomes. Of the total of 257 dissertations, 201(78.2 percent) were purely quantitative and 56(21.8 percent) employed a mixed-method approach with none using qualitative solely as a method. Similarly, of the 41 articles submitted by lecturers selected for this study, 33(80.5 percent) could be classified as purely quantitative research, with 5(12.2 percent) being mixed-method in approach and 3(7.3 percent) employing qualitative method as a sole method. Almost all the researchers employed questionnaire as the main tool for their data collection.

Chilisa (2005) therefore avers that at the core of quantitative research in Africa, is how questionnaire assumes the position of an indispensable research tool. Eshun and Tagoe-Darko (2015) also re-echo strongly that questionnaire has become the 'opium' of social research in Africa, which marginalises lesser-known methods of social research. Indeed, the data from the focus group discussions showed why quantitative approach still seems to be readily chosen as the methodological approach in Ghana, and to a large extent Africa (see Table, 2).

Table 2. Reasons for employing the two main Paradigms

Quantitative	Qualitative
Advantages	*Advantages*
• Questionnaires are easy to administer and reach larger sample size in relatively shorter time • Relatively easy to analyse once the procedure is clear and understood • There are readily available information on quantitative analysis • The perception and entrenchment of it being the better of the two methodologies • Posited as being more objective	• Empowers respondents as active members in the research process • Potential for creating new types of knowledge • Promotion of local culture • Opportunity for research to be embedded in the lived experiences of respondents • Complement the growing qualitative literature on tourism
Disadvantages	*Disadvantages*
• Quantitative research may make research appear as a mechanistic and pre-determined endeavour or exercise • Most of data collection and analysis techniques seem to limit responses from respondents • Seems overly top-down in approach in research process	• Trivialisation of work due to pre-dominance of neopositivism • Language and semantic preferences • Open to different interpretations and subjective assessments • May lead to relatively bulky work • Some supervisors and assessors biases towards quantitative research

• Low involvement of respondents • Presents straight jacket approaches and their adoption by researchers	paragms • May take longer to analyse

Source: Fieldwork study, 2015.

Goeldner and Ritchie (2012) provide the caveat that tourism is a multifaceted field, which demands that a number of approaches to a particular project are weighed up, with each approach geared towards addressing a different task or objective. Interestingly, there is some encouraging research on tourism from Africa that employs mixed-methodologies (Akama et al. 2011; Appiah 1991; Eshun 2011; Eshun 2014; Eshun and Tettey 2014; Eshun and Tonto 2014; Owusu 2001; Shehab 2011).

Furthermore, inadequate funds for research continue to limit sustained cross-fertilisation of ideas among African scholars compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the world (Eshun 2011; Serpell 1999). For example, at the 2nd World Research Tourism Summit held in USA in 2013, only two researchers from West Africa were in attendance. Currently, the main source of funding for research for academic staff in Ghanaian universities is the Book and Research Allowance paid annually by the Government of Ghana. Most universities in Ghana sponsor their staff based on availability of funds and with limited external funding, their chances of getting acquainted with cutting edge approaches in tourism research may be further narrowed.

4.4 Nexus of Industry, Society and Academia

Airhihenbuwa (2006) and Chikezie (2004) claim research in Africa fails to explore ways that can communicate their usefulness to their targeted potential beneficiaries, principally being the local communities. Briggs and Sharpe (2004) add that most research experiences of the researched are used in the West, but without opening up the process to their knowledge and explanations. Nagar (2002) notes that the academic process of promotion, tenure and the role of credentialism in determining faculty advancement strongly

emphasises the production of scholarly articles. This is shown in the way that often North-based institutions put demand on their scholars to create quality theoretical works for publications, hence the now ubiquitous warning of 'Publish or Perish' in academia (Eshun 2011; Nagar 2002). However, the continual demand by African institutions on their scholars to publish and communicate solely through scholarly articles will be internecine as shown lucidly below:

> *The 'Publish or Perish' motif is inextricably preoccupied with promotion. Often our papers fail to contribute towards materialising what Ngugi Wa Thiong'o refers to as decolonisation of the African mind. Quite clearly, we are focused on publishing to promote ourselves, whilst failing languishingly to promote the well-being of our surrounding communities and beyond (A Tourism Lecturer, Interview transcripts, 2015).*

Especially for researchers living in Southern societies, Hollinshead (2004) explains that their works often seem to be living a life of their own, without undergoing the critical conceptualisation of ethnographic field research embedded within the material needs of the respondents. Malinowski tasks researchers to consider the 'imponderabilia of actual life' (i.e. to consider their circadian needs and aspirations) of the respondents in their research (O'Reilly 2005: 8). The question then is how tourism researchers in Africa tackle the increasing disgruntlement among respondents mainly in local communities, who have the perception that researchers are solely concerned with collecting data for academic purposes disavowed from their day-to-day realities and *commune bonum* (Airhihenbuwa 2006; Eshun and Madge 2012). Indeed, many authors have argued that besides the import of pure research in social research, there is a more pressing onus on researchers especially from Africa, to engage in problem-based research (Okolie 2003; Sylvester 1999; Tembo 2003; Zeleza 2002).

In a similar vein, Echtner and Prasad (2003) project the argument that development programs and research in Africa tend to exclude the lived experiences of the targets of development. Augmenting this stance, Chikezie (2004) avers that the report 'Our Common

Interest' on Africa's development experience initiated by the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair actually 'marginalised, excluded and patronised those who were supposed to own the process of shaping their own destiny'. Malinowski echoes the significance of grasping the "'natives' point of view and their visions of their world" in social research (cited in Stacey, 1969, 52).

Currently some residents, specifically in local communities in Ghana, show outright refusal to participate in research or feign preoccupation with other activities so as to dissuade researchers from asking for their participation (Eshun 2011). Additionally, it has become a common practice for respondents to demand gifts for their participation from researchers. This scenario unfortunately hinders the possibility, particularly for student-researchers, to cut corners during the data collection process. A student-researcher provides further emphasis on this scenario:

> *During my research on Bobiri Forest Reserve and Butterfly Sanctuary, I had to virtually plead with the respondents to fill in the questionnaires. To them, soliciting for information and data has become an annual ritual by students, with nothing to show for in their communities. Sometimes I bought them books and 'soboro', a local drink made from bissap (Hibiscus sabdariffa), to gain their attention to participate in the research. This actually affected my budget and I was tempted sometimes to reduce my sample size so as to reduce cost (An Undergraduate Student, Interview transcripts, 2015).*

Similarly, Airhihenbuwa (2006), Chilisa (2005), Eshun and Madge (2012) and Tembo (2003) recount how academics in Africa are perceived by local communities as living in their ivory towers and maintaining an adversarial relationship with their needs. This stance was evident in a question raised by a respondent during one of the author's doctoral fieldwork at Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary in Ghana:

> *"Our community has seen many Ghanaians and foreigners come here for 'something' connected with the monkeys, but when they leave we never see them again or what they did with our responses?" (Eshun 2011, 239).*

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Franklin and Crang (2001,6) also criticise succinctly that there is a tendency for tourism researchers to follow a template in their research. Cloke et al. (2004, 374) add that "most research projects are still carried out 'on' others rather than being done 'for' others". Although the claim of academics maintaining disavowal of their works with societal needs is overly misguided, such an observation brings into sharp focus the relationship and communication that academics maintain with the larger populace. Many African scholars argue that despite the myriad socio-economic and environmental challenges in Africa, research is often positioned solely to promulgate ideas minus the urgency for addressing the nexus of research, society and industry on the continent (Akama et al. 2011; Hollinshead 2004; *Mowforth and Munt 2003*).

Indeed, the push for publishing among researchers particularly in the universities and having works being cited is not an end in itself. Whilst respecting the import of pure research, the sole preoccupation of publication for academic promotion remains a counterproductive and sometimes dangerous endeavour. Zeleza (2002, 9) posits that African social scientists continue to 'romanticise' African realities and conversing with each other through journals and conferences, often disavowed from local community material needs. For example, researchers are still only concerned with sending bound copies of their works to local institutions, albeit the majority of local residents in Africa are illiterate in most of the Northern languages (Eshun 2011; Tembo 2003).

The foregoing observations demand that researchers and their institutions must seek to partner diverse stakeholders connected with tourism such as the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Art, Ministry of Agriculture (MOFA), Nature Conservation Research Centre, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF) and Forestry Commission among others to coordinate efforts in identifying the significant gaps in tourism research in the country. The gaps identified through the collaborative effort should be embedded in the material struggle of the country. Consequently, when prospective researchers take on board some of the research needs identified, researchers may be contributing concurrently to the visions of Ghana for sustainable development. Put differently, although a research project may be about

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satisfying an academic requirement, tourism research in Ghana should be embedded within the pursuit of developmental and environmental aims. Anyidoho (2003) also elucidates on this:

> *"As long as we (Africans) cannot bring our knowledge home and share it with our people in such a way as to lead to some general transformation in the material conditions… for as long as we are unable to build our new knowledge from…the foundations of knowledge our own cultural systems, we may be engaged in nothing more than game of betrayal and of self-delusion, the dangerous and possibly suicidal game of language and the "politricks" of knowledge" (Anyidoho 2003, 10, Bracketed information added).*

It is against this backdrop, that a lecturer from University of Cape Coast has leveraged his research on stingless bees to set up an International Stingless Bee Centre. This Centre is now attracting agro-ecotourists to learn about these species as well as giving them the opportunity to purchase organic honey produced on site. Similarly, the executive director of Nature Conservation Research Centre, transcended from a conservationist to initiate community-based ecotourism in Ghana. In addition, a lecturer at KNUST, has set up Centre for Tourism Research-Ghana (CTR-GH) to help towards abridging the needs of academia, industry and society. Thus these examples, and many centres and research consortia which are springing up in Ghana, accentuate the drive on how academics can help pragmatically to address the nexus of academia, society and industry.

5. CONCLUSION

Although there is increasing research attention on methods in social research (Airhihenbuwa 2006; Chilisa 2006; Cloke et al. 2004; Decrop 1999; Eshun and Madge 2012; Eshun and Tagoe-Darko 2015; Eshun and Madge forthcoming; Jack and Westwood 2006; Kwansah-Aidoo 2001; Raghuram and Madge 2006), there is less research attention on issues of methodological choices among researchers. As a consequence, this paper seeks to fill this overt knowledge gap in Ghana and to some extent Africa, by exploring the overarching

reasons that prompt researchers to particular methodological traditions and choices in tourism research. Also, the paper stresses the challenges of using alternative or lesser-known methodological approaches in tourism research in Ghana and to some extent Africa. Through thematic analysis, this paper shows four themes that underpin the reasons for researchers choosing particular approaches in their works *inter alia* external pressures on choice of methods', 'issues of positionality, technology and alternative approaches', 'perceptions of knowledge on quantitative and qualitative research traditions', and 'nexus of industry, society and academia'.

The paper adds to the relentless arguments that the dominance of quantitative methodologies in tourism research especially in the Southern countries should heed the call for interpretivistic epistemologies and methodologies employing qualitative methods in terms of data collection and analysis (Ateljevic et al. 2007; Eshun and Tagoe-Darko 2015; Tribe 2005). This notwithstanding, Eshun (2011, 73) stresses that it is worth recognising "that the calls for tourism research to be embedded in interpretivism and the mere numbers of qualitative research do not, however, accord them *a priori* resistance to positivism". Consequently, the proclivity for interpretivistic approaches in tourism research as touted in this paper, does not in any way obliterate the need for appropriating the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a particular research (Eshun and Madge 2012; Jazeel and McFarlane 2007; Zeleza 2002). Many authors have argued that researchers should think beyond the myopic quantitative-qualitative divide when it comes to addressing a suitable methodology for their research (Cloke et al. 2004; Tembo 2003; Tribe 2005). In fact, appropriating both theoretical and methodological triangulation in tourism research will help to engender a balanced focus on the use of numerical information combined with appropriate application of qualitative approaches (Decrop 1999).

Eshun (2011) argues that most African researchers still fetishise 'methods' at the expense of methodologies embedded in anti- and neocolonist politics—which contributes to the replication of the misrepresentations of Africans and their ways of knowing as being incapable of solving their own problems—therefore external solutions must arrive *deux ex machina* (cf. Airhihenbuwa 2006; Andreasson 2005). Thus in the final analysis, the paper

argues that the call to alternative approaches in tourism research in Africa should not overlook the need for bringing positive transformations, principally at the local community level on the continent. As Milazi (1996, 45) rightly observes: 'Africa's research on sustainable development should be guided by what is necessary and what is possible and what it will cost in financial terms, in institutional terms, and in terms of shared social responsibility towards achieving biodiversity conservation and rural community development'.

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