

The Impact of Transnational Migrant Knowledge Transfer on National Tourism Development: A Case Study of Ghana

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of transnational migrant knowledge transfer on national tourism development in Ghana. A survey research approach was employed to gather data from the DuBois Center and Diaspora African Forum in Accra to achieve this aim. The study examined two hypotheses using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings, which indicate that transnational migrant knowledge transfer positively and statistically significantly affects national tourism development, underscore the critical role of transnational migrant knowledge transfers in enhancing the tourism sector. The study's urgent recommendations for policymakers, as key stakeholders, to create a supportive policy environment encouraging investments to enhance national tourism development, focusing on incentives for migrant investors in the tourism sector, are of immediate importance.

Keywords: Policymakers, Investment, National Tourism Development, Least-Squares Structural Equation Model.

JEL Codes: J60, M60, R60

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1. Introduction

Ghana's tourism industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, drawing both domestic and international visitors (Adu-Ampong, 2018). Notably, the country's rich cultural heritage, including its European colonial legacy and traditional festivities, has emerged as a key attraction for tourists (Addo, 2011). However, the development of Ghana's tourism sector has faced various challenges, including concerns over the safety and security of migrant visitors.

Research has highlighted the importance of understanding migrant perceptions of safety and the reliability of tourism information, as these factors can significantly impact their overall satisfaction and willingness to return (Preko & Gyepi-Garbrah, 2021). A study of migrant views on safety and security at beaches in Ghana found that their perspectives were highly relevant to the country's tourism development (Preko, 2020). Another study explored differences in the "sense of safety" among migrants in Ghana, as well as their trust in tourism information, revealing the need to understand better the nexus between safety, information reliability, and national cultural characteristics. Additional research has noted that tourists do not necessarily equate security with the mere presence of uniformed personnel but rather conceptualize it within a framework of space, order, and professionalism (Boakye, 2012). Furthermore, fear of crime and vulnerability have been shown to vary significantly across socio-demographic variables among tourists.

The focus of this study was the impact of transnational migrant knowledge transfer on national tourism development in Ghana. Despite the significant advantages offered by the development of contemporary tourism in Ghana, as in many other developing countries, it has not been immune to the challenges that typically accompany the sector. These challenges are linked to technological and knowledge constraints that have hindered industrial growth (Preko et al., 2023; Dayour et al., 2023; Geoffrey et al., 2021). This study aims to understand the difficulties faced by various actors within the Ghanaian tourism industry, including entrepreneurs, political authorities, and academics, as they strive to keep pace with the globalization of tourism and its potential to act as a catalyst for economic growth.

The debate over the influence of Asian, Caribbean, or African migrants and their diaspora on national and local development, particularly in the tourism sector, is a topic of interest for research (Zhu & Airey, 2021; Montero, 2020; Li et al., 2020). Although tourism has the potential to bring in foreign currency and aid in local infrastructure development, its impact on local employment and income distribution makes it an essential sector for rural development in Ghana (Geoffrey et al., 2021; Preko, 2020). While assumptions about the potential impact of transnational migrant knowledge exchange on development are reasonable, they must be proven empirically (Amoah et al., 2021; Ogden & Mazzucato, 2022; Hayfron-Benjamin et al. 2020). Given the increasing importance of knowledge and Ghana's growing integration into a global context, there is a need for an effective knowledge transfer mechanism for future development initiatives. Although it offers the potential to increase the inflow of foreign currency, source necessary capital, and develop local infrastructure, its potential for regional employment and income distribution makes it an appropriate sector to support rural development in Ghana (Bonye et al., 2022).

Although assumptions on interrelations and the potential impact of transnational migrant knowledge exchange on development are plausible, they must be proven empirically. Relying on the perceptions of Ghanaians residing in Germany and the observations and interviews with

stakeholders, this study aims to create transparency in the migratory process with specific respect to migrants' behavior and motivation, as well as the different ways in which returnee knowledge is used (Mohammed et al., 2023; Anschütz and Mazzucato2023). The increasing importance of knowledge and the growing integration of Ghana's economy and society into the global context have led to the development of an efficient knowledge transfer mechanism for future growth.

International migration is of considerable significance in Ghanaian society. Ghana demonstrates substantial interest in transnational migration and simultaneously experiences both positive and negative consequences resulting from the movement of people across national boundaries. (Kandilige et al.2023; Apatinga et al., 2022; Owusu, 2020). One of these benefits is the use of "returnee knowledge." In the perception of Ghanaian society, international migrants, particularly those residing in Europe, can gain valuable knowledge from their contact with the Western industrial world and bring it back to support national development, particularly in underdeveloped regions such as Ghana. Disseminating knowledge of exclusive education and work experience is expected to contribute, first and foremost, to personal settlement and welfare and local or national development (Rodwin, 2022; Simasiku, 2020). The subject of this study is closely related to the development field, with an emphasis on both national and local development, as well as techniques for accomplishing them. It adds to the continuing discussion on transnational interventions and the roles of migrants during and after conflict. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of knowledge transfer from migrants on Ghana's national tourism growth. Given the scarcity of previous research on this particular component of migrant knowledge transfer to developing nations, this study is exploratory. It tries to identify possible important events and destination categories that could be critical to maximizing national tourism development advantages.

Developing the tourism sector is widely viewed as an effective strategy for promoting economic expansion in both emerging and developed nations. Moreover, tourism fosters the exchange of information and proficiency across national barriers. Nonetheless, the transmission of knowledge and abilities associated with migration raises issues concerning credentials, particularly those acquired through informal or unconventional work experience. As tourism expertise and capabilities are commonly obtained outside traditional educational institutions, the training process in the tourism workplace is a crucial area of interest for the development of the tourism sector. Although most studies have concentrated on the function of tourism training at an international level, this research aims to contribute to the discourse by examining the processes of transnational migrant knowledge and skill transfer. A case study in Ghana demonstrates how the skills and knowledge generated by transnational migrants' impact both the economic and social dimensions of national tourism development.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Knowledge-Based View (KBV)

The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) presents several propositions relevant to understanding the impact of diaspora networks on knowledge transfer in tourism development. KBV, which emerged from the Resource-Based View (RBV), is one of the more widely accepted theoretical foundations for transnational entrepreneurship studies. This perspective emphasizes that

knowledge is the most crucial strategic asset, positing that competitive advantage is more likely in firms with high levels of skills and knowledge embedded within teams (Azeem et al., 2021).

Key aspects of KBV include the strategic importance and complexity of knowledge, the social and human dimensions of knowledge, and the integration of organizational and territorial knowledge and development. When applied to the context of diaspora networks and tourism development, the KBV suggests that national firms must strategically position themselves to meet the specific knowledge demands of the sector to acquire specialized knowledge within the industry (Grant & Phene, 2021; Duarte et al., 2022).

This approach involves motivating personnel through pay bonuses, training, promotion, and rewards, thereby creating a knowledge cycle that incorporates these themes into firms' future service conditions. It also advocates a service culture through policy interventions. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can develop unique knowledge by maintaining strong relationships with skilled service industry workers, their customers, and both regional and international researchers (Ferraris et al., 2022).

Furthermore, such companies view knowledge as both explicit and implicit and adopt proactive and integrative strategies and structures. They are prepared to collaborate with suppliers, customers, and partners to formulate, develop, and commercialize knowledge-intensive products and services (Williams et al., 2024; Jayasekera et al., 2022). These competencies provide firms with a competitive advantage. Moreover, once these skills are imitated, they become essential capabilities for new industry entrants.

Network Theory

One of the prominent advocates of network theory is Granovetter, who introduced the concept of the 'weak tie.' A tie, or link, signifies the strength of the connection between actors and businesses, often occurring in large numbers or developing over time (Granovetter, 1973). These links are valuable because, in addition to strong ties, they provide a crucial connection between the small, close-knit world of individuals and groups with strong ties and the broader world beyond. According to Granovetter, networks of weak ties offer participants greater access across each network, providing new information, opportunities, and additional benefits. These benefits may include moderate power and legitimacy derived from the ability to influence or 'fence' the external world.

Friedland and Alford (1991) provided one of the most comprehensive formulations of the network theory. They characterized a network as "an element in self-consciously coordinated activity systems that may include tracks, common names, and reputation systems, social structures and group memberships, standard operating principles, shared cultures, diverse mechanisms for sense-making, information flows, and nodes of switch that guide them, and occasional sources of pure power, authority or sanction" (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 201). They emphasized that the patterned interdependencies within the network typically extend beyond the interaction of any two or more members (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 201).

2.2 Empirical Review

The current focus on sustainable and responsible tourism is driven by various global and national challenges, including environmental degradation, cultural erosion, host community disturbances, and uneven distribution of economic benefits (Baloch et al., 2022). It is widely acknowledged that tourism is the second-largest contributor to foreign currency in the global economy and a significant source of income and employment in numerous countries. Tourism

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is essential for improving people's economic and social conditions in developing countries (Thommandru et al., 2023; Sardak et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2020). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence demonstrating that international tourism effectively achieves its poverty reduction objectives in developing countries.

Sustainable tourism has become a crucial aspect of international development. However, further research is necessary to understand the influence of transnational migrant knowledge on the expanding international tourism industry in their home countries (Anschütz & Mazzucato, 2023; Sandoz et al., 2022; Brzozowski & Cucculelli, 2020). The increasing number of Ghanaians living abroad presents a significant opportunity to harness the knowledge they have gained from living and working in foreign countries and to apply it to the tourism sector in Ghana (Akom et al., 2022; Ameyaw-Brobby & Gupta, 2021; Owusu-Agyeman & Amoakohene, 2020). Social remittances related to sustainable tourism development can play a crucial role in raising awareness of travel's social and environmental impacts, thereby contributing to the advancement of tourism development in Ghana.

Tourism-related business migrants are those who move to establish or work in a tourism-related business or geographical area, representing a new form of international labor division characterized by the movement of individuals with relatively high affluence from developed countries to less developed regions. These individuals invest capital and specialized knowledge in the development of tourist facilities used by affluent visitors, often generating revenue that is then transferred back to their home economies (Rao et al., 2024). The redistribution of wealth from developed countries to developing regions is increasingly significant for sustainable global tourism development (Wang & Tziamalis, 2023). These migrants leverage their tourism-related knowledge and skills as human and social capital to reestablish themselves in new locations or to bring profits back to their home countries as 'returning home businesses', contributing intellectual capital to the country's tourism sector (Naumovski, 2021). In this study, a 'seasonal tourist worker' is defined as a person who temporarily relocates from their home country to gain additional income, to return home for further investment and potential geographic relocation.

As Martin-Rodriguez and Tran (2003) explain, transnationalism encompasses the interconnected relationships among social fields across various geographical areas. Specifically, it refers to the engagement of communities in establishing and reinforcing connections that link them beyond nation-states, encompassing social perspectives and practices often overlooked within a national framework (Portes, 2001). Consequently, transnational migrant knowledge transfer involves disseminating information, ideas, skills, and experiences acquired by migrants in technologically advanced countries to less technologically sophisticated countries. This transfer occurs through interactions, education, and investments, particularly with country of origin (Clark, 1987). Regarding tourism, the transfer of innovative practices and knowledge from visitors' home communities during vacations demonstrates the potential of individuals in their home communities through transnationalism (Hjalager, 2004). However, no study has conceptualized this transfer from a migrant perspective.

It is widely believed that knowledge equates to power, and possessing essential knowledge facilitates successful actions. By controlling knowledge, the privileged can exert dominance over the less privileged. Plants have evolved specific protective mechanisms to ensure survival. The dissemination of knowledge on foreign lands results in a significant loss of valuable information. Onwauchi (2006) emphasizes the ongoing struggle for data and information

between the North (developed countries) and the South (less developed countries), with the North often imposing data-dumping policies, while the South seeks information more relevant to their development efforts. Strohaken et al. (2008) argued that meta-analysis and systematic reviews yield data with the greatest transformative potential, involving the systematic aggregation of relevant studies and rigorous literature search methods to identify key papers or information for exploring various alternative explanations.

The concepts discussed revolve around the idea that when migrants return to their home countries, they bring with them valuable knowledge, networks, and fresh perspectives. These elements can act as crucial drivers of development, especially in emerging economies across West Africa (Sagmo, 2015). Migrant networks can assist resource-limited entrepreneurial ventures in securing finance for new business activities and provide support in areas such as marketing, management techniques, and the development of human resources (Nayir et al., 2023; Shi & Shi, 2022). Furthermore, migrants can exert a significant impact by introducing new or altering the traditional consumption and lifestyle patterns associated with the host economy (Ferrari, 2022). However, highly skilled migrants are typically required to return to their home countries to influence foreign investment decisions and to contribute directly to innovation. In addition, an enabling set of conditions in the home country must be present for these contributions to be practical.

Transnational migration impacts cross-national exchanges, which include transferring knowledge and ideas, typically in the form of remittances or other support (such as cognitive, social, and cultural). Those who send and receive this knowledge occupy distinct social, cultural, spatial, and economic positions, enabling them to generate, produce, and utilize knowledge differently. This study, which focuses on return migrants and knowledgeable migrant entrepreneurs who have returned to Ghana, connects transnational migrant knowledge transfer with previous research on remittances, brain circulation, and transnational diaspora networks (Lam & Rui, 2023). Thus, the study hypothesis that,

H1: Transnational migrant's knowledge transfer has a positive and significant impact on National tourism development



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors own creation

3 Research Method

This section explores the research methodology used in this study. Research methodology is the systematic approach to collecting and analyzing data (Abdulai & Owusu-Ansah, 2014). Quantitative methods were applied in this study, which involved collecting and analyzing

numerical data to produce statistical results. These methods allow for objective and reliable measurements, making them suitable for examining the relationships between variables and generalizing the findings to a broader population.

A survey research design was adopted for this study, facilitating data collection from a large sample size and providing opportunities for an in-depth analysis of variable relationships (Abdulai & Ginardi, 2021; Abdulai & Owusu-Ansah, 2014). Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to ensure that participants had an equal chance of selection, enabling the researcher to obtain a representative sample from the target population.

Data collection involved distributing surveys to selected participants and incorporating structured questions and Likert scale measurements to gather quantitative data on various variables of interest. The Likert scale ranged from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Surveys were administered using online platforms, such as Google Forms. The survey sampled 380 transnational migrants from the Dubai Center. Four items were used to measure transnational migrant knowledge transfer, while six were employed to measure national tourism development.

Transnational Migrant Knowledge Transfer (TMKT):

TMKT1: Frequency of knowledge sharing among migrants and their home communities.

TMKT2: Types of knowledge shared (e.g., technical, business, cultural).

TMKT3: Channels or platforms used for knowledge transfer (e.g., social media, face-to-face interactions).

TMKT4: Impact of knowledge transfer on local businesses or tourism-related activities.

National Tourism Development (NTD):

NTD1: Growth in the number of international tourists.

NTD2: Development of tourism infrastructure (e.g., hotels, transport).

NTD 3: Increase in employment within the tourism sector.

NTD4: Expansion of tourism-related services and products.

NTD5: Government policies and support for tourism development.

NTD6: Community engagement and local involvement in tourism initiatives.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 Demographic Result

DETAILS	MEASUREMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
GENDER	Male	195	51.3
	Female	185	48.7
AGE Group	20-30	98	25.8
	30-40	96	25.3
	40-50	104	27.4
	50 and above	82	21.6
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Secondary Education	105	27.6
	College	175	46.1
	Masters and PhD	100	26.3

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Table 1 presents the study's demographic findings, including sex, age, education level, and visiting nation. This breakdown provided information on the characteristics of the participants. Participants were divided into two groups based on sex: male and female. The data revealed that 195 participants were male and 185 were female, indicating that 51.3% were male and 48.7% were female. These percentages show a relatively balanced distribution of both sexes in the participant sample.

The study analyzed participants' educational levels to gain insights into their educational backgrounds. The results showed the distribution of participants across different educational groups. Among the participants, 27.6 had secondary education, with a frequency value of 105. Notably, college-educated participants represented the largest group, comprising 46.1% of the sample, with a frequency of 175. Lastly, 26.3% of the participants had advanced degrees, including master's and doctoral degrees, with a frequency of 100.

4.2 Measurement Model

The components' and scales' reliability and validity were assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Kyriazos, 2018). Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and construct-specific factor loadings were used to assess internal consistency. The CFA results (Table 2) show that CA (α), CR, average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings exceeded the recommended levels (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012), showing excellent item convergence across all constructs.

Table 2 Construct reliability, validity, and Multicollinearity

Construct and Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	VIF
NTD1	0.754	0.817	0.864	0.515	1.861
NTD2	0.687				1.799
NTD3	0.717				1.837
NTD4	0.702				1.305
NTD5	0.727				1.639
NTD6	0.719				1.499
TMKT1	0.814	0.758	0.843	0.575	1.829
TMKT2	0.802				1.837
TMKT3	0.718				1.808
TMKT4	0.692				1.798

As shown in Table 2, the indicators of the national tourism development construct exhibit high reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. The items of the transnational migrant knowledge transfer construct also exhibited high reliability, as demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha, above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. The composite reliability measures (composite reliability) are higher, indicating better consistency. The AVE is moderate (above 0.50), suggesting that the indicators collectively capture a reasonable amount of variance in the construct.

To verify discriminant validity, it is crucial to compare the correlations between the constructs using the square root of the average variance recovered for the constructs. According to Ramayah et al. (2018), discriminant validity describes how distinct each construct is from the other study components. Table 3 presents the results of the validity analysis of the measurement

model. Testing was performed using a discriminant (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, discriminant validity is frequently assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE value to the correlation of latent variables. It is explicitly necessary that each AVE component's square root correlate with the other components more highly than its greatest correlation.

Table 3. Discriminant validity Fornell-Larker criteria

	NTD	TMKT
NTD	0.718	
TMKT	0.598	0.758

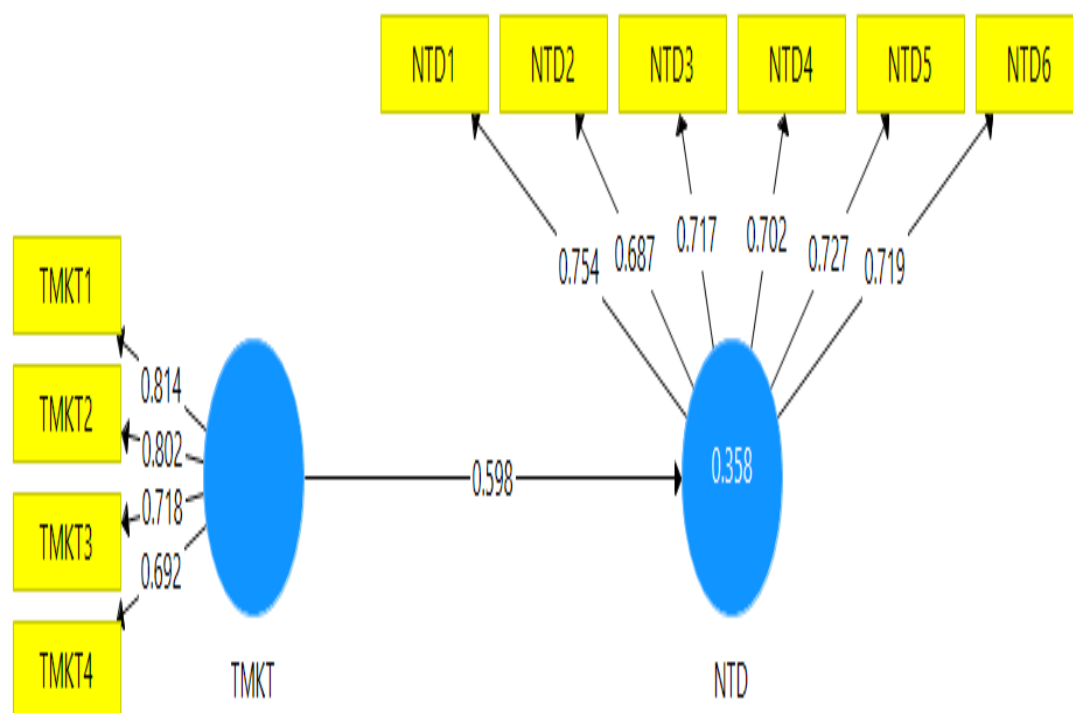
The findings suggest that the discriminant validity analysis achieved an acceptable moderate level, confirming the legitimacy of each variable used in subsequent analyses. The next step involves assessing the extent to which the independent variable accounts for variability in the dependent variable.

The last step in the measurement model of this study was to determine the degree to which the independent variable accounted for variability in the dependent variable.

Table 4 Model Fit – R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
NTD	0.358	0.356

In Table 4, the R-squared value for national tourism development is moderate, at approximately 35.8%. This suggests that 35.8% of the variability in national tourism development has been explained by transnational migrant knowledge transfer.



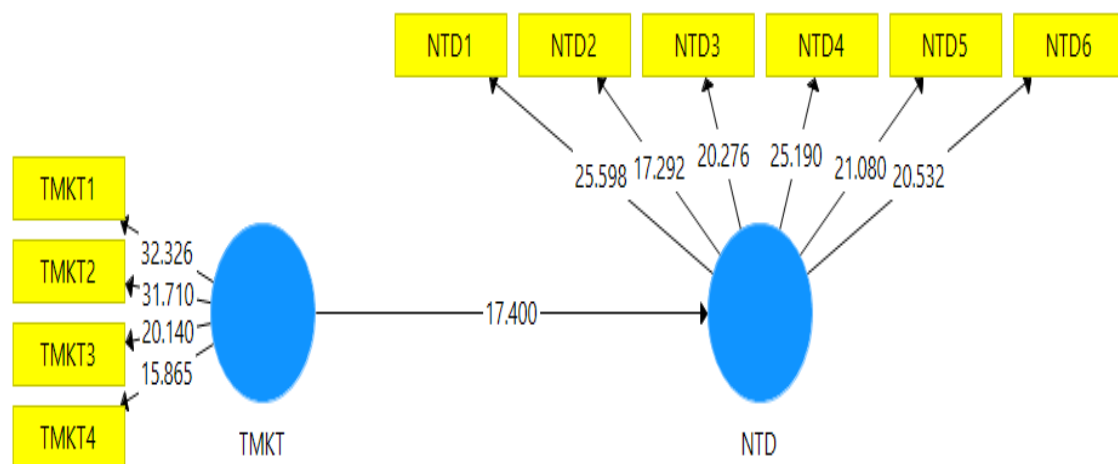
The hypothesis examined whether transnational migrant knowledge transfer positively and significantly impacts national tourism development. Table 5 lists details of the results.

Table 5 Structure Model Result

	Beta Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
TMKT -> NTD	0.598	0.034	17.400	0.000

The results in Table 5 indicate that transnational migrant knowledge transfer has a positive and statistically significant effect on national tourism development ($\beta = 0.598$, $t = 17.400$, $p < 0.001$).

This finding suggests that a 1% increase in transnational migrant knowledge transfer could lead to a corresponding increase in national tourism development. These findings underscore the critical role of transnational migrant knowledge transfer in enhancing the tourism sector. The significant β coefficient (0.598) reflects the substantial impact of knowledge transfer on national tourism development, highlighting its importance as a strategic asset for fostering growth and innovation in the tourism industry.



4.3 Discussion

This study examines the impact of transnational migrant knowledge transfer on national tourism development. This finding suggests that an increase in transnational migrant knowledge transfers significantly enhances the development of the national tourism sector. This result aligns with that of several previous studies. For instance, Williams and Hall (2000) found that the knowledge and skills migrants acquire abroad contribute significantly to developing tourism industries in their home countries. Furthermore, Newland and Patrick (2004) highlight that remittances and knowledge transfers from migrants can stimulate tourism by funding tourism-related projects and introducing new business practices.

However, this finding contradicts that of earlier research. For example, Meyer (2008) argued that the benefits of migrant knowledge transfer are often overstated, and that the actual impact on tourism development can be limited due to barriers such as lack of infrastructure, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate local skills to utilize the transferred knowledge

effectively. Additionally, Sørensen (2014) suggested that while migrant knowledge transfer has potential, its success depends heavily on the receiving country's ability to absorb and implement knowledge, which is not always guaranteed.

In summary, while this study's results support the notion that transnational migrant knowledge transfer positively affects national tourism development, this effect can vary depending on several contextual factors. Future research should focus on identifying these factors to understand better how to maximize the benefits of migrant knowledge transfer for tourism development.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant impact of transnational migrant knowledge transfer on national tourism development in Ghana. As migrants share their expertise, experiences, and cultural understanding, they enhance tourism services, promote innovative practices, and foster a deeper appreciation for Ghana's cultural heritage. This knowledge transfer can potentially elevate Ghana's tourism industry by introducing global best practices while remaining rooted in local traditions.

However, it is crucial to navigate the delicate balance between incorporating external influences and preserving the authenticity of Ghanaian culture. While the benefits of migrant knowledge transfer are evident, strategic measures are necessary to prevent cultural identity's dilution and ensure that tourism development remains sustainable and respectful of local customs.

To achieve this balance, policymakers should foster partnerships between the diaspora, local communities, and the tourism industry. Integrating migrant knowledge into the tourism sector through targeted programs can facilitate skill development and knowledge exchange. Additionally, creating a supportive policy environment that promotes investment in tourism and encourages sustainable practices is essential. By emphasizing both the economic and cultural dimensions of tourism development, Ghana can harness the full potential of transnational migrant knowledge while safeguarding its cultural heritage.

Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of a holistic approach to tourism development—one that leverages the unique contributions of transnational migrants and prioritizes the sustainability and integrity of Ghana's cultural landscapes. Through thoughtful planning and inclusive practices, Ghana can advance its tourism sector in a way that celebrates its diverse cultural identity and promotes long-term economic growth.

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