Residents’ Perceptions of Socio-economic Impacts of a Regional Trade Fair in Ghana

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Abstract: The growing trade fair economy has motivated studies relating to trade fair planning, effectiveness, and evaluation, among others. However, limited studies have explored residents’ perception of socio-economic impacts of trade fairs on communities. Since residents’ negative attitude can affect sustainability of trade fairs, it is important for organisers to understand residents’ perception of the socio-economic impacts of such events. The present study investigated residents’ perceptions of the impacts of a regional trade fair in Ghana. Through a quantitative research design, a questionnaire survey of 447 residents of Ho as undertaken through a convenience sampling technique in public places and houses. Kruskal-Wallis One-Way ANOVA tests indicate that perceptions of residents did not vary by gender. The results further confirm the inconsistency of socio-demographic variables in explaining residents’ perception of event impacts. There was significant difference between age groups on some statements while others showed no difference. Generally, residents were positive toward the impacts of the fair.

Keywords: Trade fair impacts, residents, Volta Trade and Investment Fair, Ghana

1. Introduction

Trade fairs are events that bring together, in a single location, a group of suppliers who set up physical exhibits of their products and services (Black, 1986) with the primary motive of giving information, promoting and selling goods and/or services (Nunez, Garcia-Lozano, Gabarrel & Rieradevall, 2009). Trade fairs, trade shows, exhibitions and expositions are used interchangeably in the literature (Kirchgeorg, 2005), and for the purpose of this paper, the terms are used interchangeably. Based on market coverage, trade shows can be either vertical or horizontal (Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1994). Typically, a vertical show promotes a single industry category to a specialised professional clientele (Rice & Almossawi, 2002). In contrast, a horizontal show usually involves a much broader range of products and a more diverse audience. Morrow (1997) uses the terms trade show and public show for vertical and horizontal shows, respectively. The trade show sector has become a multi-billion dollar industry. Trade shows held in Europe in 2006 attracted 1.5 million exhibitors and 160 million visitors (Trivino, 2006). In the United States of America, over 12,000 trade shows are held annually attracting over two million exhibitors and over 100 million visitors (Centre for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2001). The growing significance of trade shows has attracted many research interest: advantages of trade fairs to exhibitors (Herbig et al., 1998); trade show selection (Kijewski et al., 1993); the effectiveness of trade shows (Berne and Garcia-Uceda, 2007; Li, 2007); attendees behaviour (Smith et al., 2003) and visitor objectives (Mensah, 2012; Tanner, Chonko & Ponzurick, 2001; Iyanda et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2010). In spite of these studies and many more others, there is a general lack of research in the trade show research realm (Blythe, 2000; Hansen, 2004; Smith et al., 2004; Gopalakrishna et al., 1995). Even more surprising about the gap in the trade show literature is the lack of research on residents’ perception of trade show impacts. Though the duration of trade shows is relatively short, the socio-economic impacts might be significant worth exploring host residents’ perception on. Furthermore, the available trade fair literature is predominantly North American and Western European in content with limited trade fair studies on Africa and particularly, Ghana.

Using the first Volta Trade and Investment Fair as a case, the study investigated the perception of Ho residents on the socio-economic impacts of the fair. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the overall perception of residents and to find out whether perception of trade fair impacts is differentiated along socio-demographic and economic dependency lines. The Volta Trade and Investment Fair were held from 16th November 2009 to 22nd November 2009 in Ho, the regional capital. Two hundred and three private and public/organisations, trade promotion agencies and small-scale traders participated in the fair. The
fair was a horizontal fair as consumable goods; services and small-scale machinery were exhibited. Residents of communities where trade fairs are staged are critical to the success of such events because they double as hosts and attendees. This is even more essential in the context of trade fairs held in Ghana, where local residents are the overwhelming majority of trade fair attendees. It is important for organisers to understand the perception of residents on the impacts of such events on the community. A negative perception and attitude toward trade fairs will seriously affect attendance, which might ultimately collapse the trade show. An empirical investigation of how residents of Ho feel about the impacts of the Volta Trade and Investment Fair will provide useful practical implication for organisers. Such feedbacks will be useful in the planning of the fair in order to sustain the support and attendance of residents.

2. Literature Review

Socio-economic impact of Events: Although events are temporary and restricted in space and time, they affect communities where they are held and so are trade shows. A specific discussion of trade fair impacts from residents’ perspective is scant in the trade fair literature. Based on the foregoing, the study strongly draws from the field of tourism studies, which should not be incongruous, given that trade fairs are events. Other authors have highlighted the tourism/events nexus and the similarities between the two so as to draw insights about the impact of events from the tourism literature. Fredline and Faulkner (2000) argue that affinities between general tourism and events mean that insight derived from the former are potentially useful as a foundation. In any case, events are generally perceived as tourist attractions (Twynam& Johnson, 2004). Impacts of events have been mostly analysed from social, economic and environmental dimensions that may either be beneficial and adverse. Ritchie (1984) identified positive social impacts of events to include increased community pride, strengthening of traditions and values, and increased voluntarism. In addition, Hall (1992) acknowledged improved regional identity and increased community participation as positive social impacts. On the other hand, Getz (2005) points out prostitution, increases of crime, substance abuse and bad crowd behaviour as examples of negative social impacts of events. A lot of studies have emphasized economic benefits of events (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; await, 2003; Kim & Petrick, 2005). For instance, events result in economic development in host communities, increase tax revenue, and provide employment opportunities. Events also create opportunities for potential investments in host communities as well as an increase in commercial activities (Ritchie, 1984). On the negative economic impacts, increases in prices of goods and services are also associated with events (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). Other studies have identified traffic congestion (Andereck et al., 2005); overcrowding (Higham, 1999); excessive noise levels (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000); littering (Orams, 2005) are some of the negatives associated with events.

Theoretical Framework: Social exchange theory has provided the theoretical foundation for studies exploring residents’ perception of impacts of tourism and events (Ap, 1992; Sirakaya, Teye & Sonmez, 2002; Andereck et al., 2005). The social exchange theory suggests that people engage in interaction or reciprocate with other people because they expect to receive benefits or incentives from the other party (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964). Thus human relationships are formed by the use of subjective cost-benefit analysis creating mutual obligations, reciprocity, or repayment over time (Croppanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). Tourism development or impacts will be perceived positively and supported by residents when the benefits, such as economic benefits, outweigh the cost of sharing environmental and social relations with the tourism industry (Harrill, 2004). However, variation exists in the perception of residents on tourism and event impacts and many factors based on the social exchange theory have been used to explain this diversity. The stage or level of activity development is said to also influence residents’ perception of tourism and events impacts. Proposed as the ‘Irridex model’, Doxey (1975) argued that as tourist numbers increase, a host community goes from a phase of being euphoric to apathy, irritation and antagonism. Somewhat contrast to Doxey’s view, Fredline and Faulkner (2000) are of the view that the age of an event is likely to affect residents’ perception of impact. The thrust of Fredline and Faulkner’s argument is that residents’ perception of impact becomes less negative with the age of the event. A relationship between event size and magnitude of impact has also been put forward in the literature. Larger events are expected to create more impacts than small events (Fredline, 2000). In addition, Hall (1989) argues relativity between the size of an event and the size of the host population. It is alleged that the expectation of economic benefit from an event will have the largest positive effect on the evaluation of impacts. Residents who received the greatest economic benefits will favour an event more than those who receive fewer or no benefits (Perdue, Long and Allen, 1990; Akis, Peristianis and Warner, 1996).
Personal benefits such as personal or family job opportunities, additional income and so forth, may affect the manner in which residents view the impacts of an event. AP (1992) postulated that members of the host community with business or employment interests in an event would be generally more positively disposed to it because they trade off resulting costs with benefits. Conversely, those who are not involved in the event derive no substantial direct benefits, yet may still experience some costs and are more inclined to hold negative perceptions. Previous research has also examined the relationship between socio-demographics of residents and perception of impacts (Var et al., 1985; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Tomljenovic & Faulkner, 2000; Canosa et al., 2001; Teye et al., 2002). Age is alleged to influence residents’ perception of impacts, younger residents tend to be more positive (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996) whilst older residents are often less positive about the impacts of events (Husbands, 1989). With regard to gender, Harrill & Potts (2003) found females to be more negative toward tourism impacts than males. Some studies have found that the more highly educated a person is, the more likely they are to have positive perception of impacts (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996). With occupation, Husband (1989) found that white-collar workers in the Victoria Falls area in Zambia were more favourably disposed to tourism than was the lower-tier managerial class. Some studies have found minimal contribution of socio-demographic factors in explaining residents’ perception (Pizam, 1978; Liu and Var, 1986; Perdue et al., 1990).

3. Methodology

Data for the study was collected in April 2010, six months after the trade fair was held. The population of interest in the study is all residents aged 18 years and above in Ho. Questionnaires were administered to house hold heads or, in the absence of a household head, with an adult representative (18years and above). Each questionnaire took about 30 minutes to complete, and a total of 447 questionnaires were completed and used for analysis. The household population of Ho township is estimated at 15,183 (PHC, 2000). Respondents were selected via convenience sampling method. Although convenience samples are generally unrepresentative to the larger population, these samples capture a good mixture of residents from all the suburbs of Ho. Random sampling technique was not utilised because of the unavailability of a sampling frame. The survey instrument comprised two main sections. First, an array of 19 statements referred to positive and negative socio-economic impacts of the trade fair, in relations to which respondents were asked to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale with the words ‘strongly agree’ at the high end and ‘strongly disagree’ at the low end. The second part collected socio-demographic, community attachment and economic dependency data of respondents. The instrument was developed after a thorough review of extant literature on the impacts of events and tourism (Kim and Petrick, 2005; Sirakaya, Teye and Sonmez, 2002; Harrill, 2004; Ohmann, Jones & Wilkes, 2006). Responses to the statements were analysed using SPSS version 16.0 and descriptive statistics was generated for individual statements and subsequently ranked in descending order so as to detect the statements with overall high agreement. Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were conducted on predictor variables (Socio-demographic profile of respondents and economic dependency variables) and impact statements to establish associations and relationships.

4. Results

Respondent Profile: Of the 447 respondents, 58 per cent were male and 42 per cent female. The majority (59%) were in the age group 29 and younger, followed by the 30-39 age group (23.7%) whilst 50 years and older were in the minority (17.3%). More than half (55%) of the respondents were single with 36.4 per cent being married. Fifty-one per cent and 33.3 per cent of respondents had achieved tertiary and secondary level education respectively, while 11.7 per cent had basic education. Some 38 per cent were self-employed, 32 per cent government workers and 30 per cent students.

Description of individual Measurement items of perceived impacts: Table 1 illustrates the frequency distribution, means and standard deviations for each impact statement. Overall, about 74% of the residents agreed that the trade fair resulted in positive impacts whilst 32% identified with negative impacts (Table 1). The mean scores indicate that respondents were in higher agreement with the positive impact statements than the negative elements. Descriptively, residents of Ho had a high agreement (M=2.83) that the fair will attract more investment into the community.
Table 1: Residents’ Perception on impacts of Trade Fair

| Statement                                                                 | Number | % in Agreement | Mean  | SD   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------|-------|------|
| **Positive Impacts**                                                      |        |                |       |      |
| The fair will attract more investment to Ho                               | 436    | 83.5           | 2.78  | .542 |
| The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents                           | 432    | 79.4           | 2.74  | .557 |
| The fair created more business for local people and small businesses      | 440    | 80.9           | 2.72  | .625 |
| Job opportunities were created for some residents                         | 441    | 79.8           | 2.70  | .645 |
| Traders increased sales during the fair                                   | 441    | 73.9           | 2.62  | .691 |
| The trade fair created income-generating opportunities for residents      | 442    | 72.6           | 2.55  | .770 |
| The image of Ho has been enhanced as a result of the fair                 | 437    | 69.6           | 2.54  | .749 |
| The fair has improved community spirit                                    | 437    | 68.2           | 2.53  | .743 |
| The trade fair has improved the standard of living of residents of Ho     | 444    | 59.9           | 2.34  | .863 |
| Overall perception of positive impacts                                    | 439    | 74.2           | 2.61  | .687 |
| **Negative Impacts**                                                      |        |                |       |      |
| The fair caused Ho to be crowded with people                              | 440    | 55.0           | 2.27  | .871 |
| The fair led to increase in prices of goods and services                  | 446    | 43.0           | 2.03  | .913 |
| The fair created litter problem in Ho                                     | 441    | 37.3           | 1.90  | .911 |
| The fair resulted in increased noise level in the town                     | 438    | 36.3           | 1.89  | .909 |
| The fair created traffic problems in Ho                                   | 440    | 34.5           | 1.86  | .903 |
| There was excessive alcohol consumption in Ho during the fair             | 445    | 22.7           | 1.64  | .828 |
| The fair led to increase in crime in Ho                                   | 434    | 20.3           | 1.54  | .810 |
| There was rowdy and wrong behaviour in Ho during the fair                 | 443    | 18.1           | 1.52  | .782 |
| The fair resulted in prostitution in Ho                                   | 438    | 17.8           | 1.47  | .779 |
| Overall perception of negative impacts                                    | 440    | 31.6           | 1.79  | .85  |

Minimum value-1 and Maximum value-3, 1=Disagree, 3=Agree- Higher means represent higher agreement with impact statement.

Agreement for other economic statements such as creation of business (M=2.72) and job (M=2.7) opportunities and increment in traders’ sales (M=2.62) was quite appreciable. The assertion that the trade fair resulted in improve standard of living received low agreement (M=2.34). On social impacts, respondents were in high agreement (M=2.74) that the fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents. Regarding the negative impacts, more than half (55%) of residents agreed that the fair caused overcrowding in the town. However, respondents moderately disagreed, with wide variability, that the fair led to prostitution (M=2.53), rowdy and wrong (socially unacceptable behaviour) (M=2.48) and crime (M=2.46). There was wide disagreement among the respondents with perceived environmental impacts in regards to the trade fair. Residents of Ho were split if the fair led to traffic problems (M=2.14), noise level (M=2.11) and litter (M=2.10).

Comparison of residents’ perception on the positive and negative impact factors for different gender groups: Table 2 shows the results of a Mann-Whitney U test conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that residents’ perception of impact will vary by gender. The results of the test indicate that no significant differences between males and females were found on all the ten impact factors (both positive and negative). However, males agreed more with positive statement than females while females disagreed with negative statements than males.

Comparison of residents’ perception for different age groups: An analysis of the mean ranks indicates that three (one positive and two negative impacts) of the ten items of residents’ perception were found to be significantly (p<0.05) different (Table 3). Respondents aged 40 or older believed that traders in Ho made more sales during the fair than residents aged <29 and 30-39 age groups. More residents aged between 30 and 39 than the other age groups disagreed that the fair created traffic problem in Ho. Interestingly, the same age group outnumber the other age groups in dismissing the assertion that the fair led to increases in prices of goods and services in the town.
### Table 2: A Mann-Whitney U Test for comparison of residents’ perception by Gender

| Positive and negative impact factors | Male (n=254) | Female (n=183) | Z Statistic | P-Value |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------|
| Positive impact factors             | Median Ranks |               |             |         |
| The fair will attract more investment to Ho | 216.66      | 217.65        | -.253       | .800    |
| The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents | 219.92      | 206.74        | -1.535      | .125    |
| The fair created more business for local people and businesses | 222.20      | 213.33        | -1.055      | .291    |
| Job opportunities were created for some residents | 219.66      | 218.08        | -.184       | .854    |
| Traders increased sales during the fair | 221.51      | 215.46        | -.643       | .520    |
| Negative impacts factors            | Median Ranks |               |             |         |
| The fair created traffic problems in Ho | 217.71      | 219.61        | -.170       | .865    |
| The fair resulted in increased noise level in the town | 223.24      | 209.70        | -1.211      | .226    |
| The fair created litter problem in Ho | 227.19      | 207.63        | -1.743      | .081    |
| The fair led to increase in prices of goods and services | 222.23      | 220.48        | -1.54       | .877    |
| The fair caused Ho to be crowded with people | 217.61      | 219.75        | -.195       | .846    |

Higher median rank represents higher agreement with impact statement.

### Table 3: Kruskal Wallis Test for comparison of residents’ perception by age group

| Positive and negative impact factors | <29 (n=260) | 30-39 (n=102) | 40+ (n=75) | H Statistic | P-Value |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-------------|---------|
| Positive impact factors             | Mean Ranks  |               |            |             |         |
| The fair will attract more investment to Ho | 215.23      | 215.30        | 222.75     | .522        | .770    |
| The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents | 218.37      | 216.11        | 202.20     | 2.009       | .366    |
| The fair created more business for local people and businesses | 213.75      | 229.64        | 219.83     | 2.511       | .285    |
| Job opportunities were created for some residents | 219.08      | 230.54        | 203.01     | 4.244       | .120    |
| Traders increased sales during the fair | 203.28      | 229.64        | 259.09     | 20.835      | .000    |
| Negative impacts factors            | Mean Ranks  |               |            |             |         |
| The fair created traffic problems in Ho | 204.19      | 244.68        | 232.13     | 10.343      | .006    |
| The fair resulted in increased noise level in the town | 211.23      | 221.45        | 234.08     | 2.403       | .301    |
| The fair created litter problem in Ho | 216.84      | 232.80        | 207.38     | 2.300       | .317    |
| The fair led to increase in prices of goods and services | 208.83      | 243.71        | 234.66     | 7.695       | .021    |
| The fair caused Ho to be crowded with people | 222.34      | 208.91        | 218.47     | 1.035       | .596    |

Higher median rank represents higher agreement with impact statement.

Comparison of residents’ opinion for different occupation groups: According to results of Kruskal Wallis tests, significant differences (p<0.05) were found on three of the ten impact statements (Table 4). Government workers recorded high mean rank for traders increasing sales during the fair than the other occupation groups. In contrast, the self-employed occupation group recorded the lowest mean ranks compared to the other occupations groups on the negative statements of the ‘fair leading to increases in prices of goods and services’ as well as ‘creating traffic problems’.

### Table 4: Kruskal Wallis Test for comparison of residents’ perception by occupation

| Positive and negative impact factors | Gov’t Worker (n=128) | Self-employed (n=102) | Student (n=120) | H Statistic | P-Value |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| Positive impact factors             | Mean Rank            |                       |                 |             |         |
| The fair will attract more investment to Ho | 196.97              | 187.07                | 197.69          | 1.764       | .414    |
The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents 194.15 187.86 197.92 1.070 .586
The fair created more business for local people and businesses 206.44 184.62 196.79 5.377 .068
Job opportunities were created for some residents 203.42 184.36 201.96 5.110 .078
Traders increased sales during the fair 214.17 208.69 161.49 26.998 .000

Positive impacts factors

The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents 194.15 187.86 197.92 1.070 .586
The fair created more business for local people and businesses 206.44 184.62 196.79 5.377 .068
Job opportunities were created for some residents 203.42 184.36 201.96 5.110 .078
Traders increased sales during the fair 214.17 208.69 161.49 26.998 .000

Negative impacts factors

The fair created traffic problems in Ho 192.93 179.56 220.40 10.474 .005
The fair resulted in increased noise level in the town 199.10 180.60 205.75 3.188 .203
The fair created litter problem in Ho 200.21 188.35 205.75 3.188 .203
The fair led to increase in prices of goods and services 196.17 179.99 221.54 10.368 .006
The fair caused Ho to be crowded with people 210.40 184.01 205.75 3.188 .203

Comparison of residents’ perceptions on the positive and negative impact factors of different education groups: Three out of the five positive impact factors were significantly (p<0.05) different across the four education groups (Table 5). On the ‘more business for local people and businesses’, residents without formal education tended to believed that the trade fair contributed to creating business for local people more than the other groups. Residents with tertiary level of education also showed the highest mean rank on the ‘job opportunities were created for some residents’ and ‘traders increased sales during the fair’. Again, residents without formal education disagreed more than the other groups on the negative factor of ‘the fair created traffic problems in Ho’.

Comparison of residents’ perceptions by direct income benefit: Results of a Mann-Whitney U test to ascertain differences in perception of residents based on direct income benefit from the fair are reported in Table 6. One out of five positive impact factors was found to be significant (p<0.05). Residents, who did not derive direct income benefit from the fair, agreed more than residents whose income increased that the fair enhanced the pride of residents of Ho. In contrast, scores were significant (p<0.05) for two negative impact factors. Residents who reported direct income benefit from the fair, scored lower on all five negative items than their counterparts meaning that residents who had income benefit from the fair disagreed with the negative factors.

Table 5: Kruskal Wallis Test for comparison of residents’ perception by education

| Positive impact factors | None (n=14) | Basic (n=49) | Secondary (n=147) | Tertiary (n=229) | H Statistic | P-Value |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| The fair will attract more investment to Ho | 204.25 | 201.28 | 215.29 | 222.28 | 3.309 | .346 |
| The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents | 216.50 | 188.88 | 214.82 | 222.89 | 6.323 | .097 |
| The fair created more business for local people and businesses | 242.54 | 205.85 | 204.68 | 229.81 | 9.641 | .022 |
| Job opportunities were created for some residents | 155.82 | 212.04 | 219.20 | 226.14 | 8.867 | .031 |
| Traders increased sales during the fair | 185.93 | 226.87 | 204.40 | 230.56 | 8.377 | .039 |

| Negative impacts factors | None (n=14) | Basic (n=49) | Secondary (n=147) | Tertiary (n=229) | H Statistic | P-Value |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| The fair created traffic problems in Ho | 286.69 | 218.80 | 200.55 | 227.07 | 9.296 | .026 |
| The fair resulted in increased noise level in the town | 288.07 | 229.40 | 211.09 | 215.71 | 6.245 | .100 |
| The fair created litter problem in Ho | 278.61 | 224.59 | 209.23 | 221.27 | 4.910 | .179 |
The fair led to increase in prices of goods and services 236.29 221.05 219.91 222.68 .262 .967
The fair caused Ho to be crowded with people 270.21 209.04 227.43 212.64 4.754 .191

Higher median rank represents higher agreement with impact statement

Table 6: A Mann-Whitney U Test for comparison of residents’ perception by increase in personal income

| Factors                                      | Yes (n=111) | No (n=316) | Z Statistic | P-Value |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|---------|
| **Positive impact factors**                  | Median Ranks|            |             |         |
| The fair will attract more investment to Ho  | 213.88      | 210.90     | -.453       | .651    |
| The fair has enhanced the pride of Ho residents | 196.49    | 214.87     | -1.968      | .049    |
| The fair created more business for local people and businesses | 218.18 | 211.83 | -.679 | .497 |
| Job opportunities were created for some residents | 222.77  | 210.92     | -1.244      | .213    |
| Traders increased sales during the fair      | 206.85      | 215.90     | -1.877      | .380    |
| **Negative impacts factors**                 |             |            |             |         |
| The fair created traffic problems in Ho      | 218.11      | 211.86     | -.503       | .615    |
| The fair resulted in increased noise level in the town | 229.35  | 207.15     | -1.789      | .074    |
| The fair created litter problem in Ho        | 240.60      | 203.95     | -2.944      | .003    |
| The fair led to increase in prices of goods and services | 217.79 | 215.64 | -.194 | .846 |
| The fair caused Ho to be crowded with people | 247.98      | 201.20     | -3.840      | .000    |

Higher median rank represents higher agreement with impact statement

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The study sought to explore residents’ perceptions and opinions of the socio-economic impacts of the Volta Trade and Investment Fair, and how their perceptions were different across socio-demographic variables (age, gender, occupation and education). Secondly, the paper ascertained whether economic dependency on the fair would influence residents’ perception of impacts of the trade fair. Generally, residents were positive toward the impacts of the fair. Residents appeared to be collectively positive about the ability of the fair to inspire investment opportunities in Ho. This indicates that residents were forward looking in their evaluation of the impact of the fair on the community. This appears to be in agreement with organisers’ objective for staging the fair, which was to present the Volta Region to potential investors. However, of the ten positive statements, ‘trade fair has improved the standard of living of residents’ received the lowest agreement rating. This is not surprising considering the small size of the fair, and that, the fair could not have generated substantial impact that would have resulted in improvement in living standards of residents. In contrast, residents were sharply divided on the negative impacts of the fair. Although an appreciable proportion (48.9% to 47.2%) of residents disagreed that the fair resulted in littering, increase noise level and traffic problems, an equally substantial segment (34.5% to 36.7%) of residents agreed. In fact, more residents agreed to the statements ‘the fair caused Ho to be crowded with people’ and ‘the fair led to increase in prices of goods and services’ than those who disagreed. These points to the fact that residents’ agreement with positive impacts did not obscure their judgements on negative impacts.

Results of tests conducted to ascertain differences revealed mixed findings. The perceptions of residents did not vary by gender; none of the ten statements tested significant (p>0.05). This is not surprising considering the inconsistency surrounding socio-demographic factors as predictors of residents’ perception reported in the extant literature (Ryan & Montogomery, 1994). For instance, Mason and Cheyne (2000) argued that gender is least understood among all demographic variables in explaining variation in residents’ perception. Regarding age, the younger respondents appear tolerant with perceived negatives impacts than their older counterparts. The older residents posted higher agreement with more negative impacts than the younger residents. These findings are consistent with the conclusion of Tomljenovic & Faulkner (2000) that older residents hold more negative perception than younger residents do. Residents employed by the public sector were in higher agreement with positive impact statements than the other occupation categories. This is akin to the conclusion of Husband (1989) that white-collar workers in the Victoria Falls area in Zambia were more favourably disposed to tourism than was the lower-tier managerial class. On the basis of Doxey (1975) and Butler (1980), the Volta Trade and Investment Fair (VTIF), which is the case for the current study, being a maiden event, is most likely to
attract favourable perception from residents because the event can be said to be in its euphoric stage. It is therefore not a surprise that residents were generally positive towards the impacts of the VTIF.

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