

POST WEBINAR REPORT: COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR IN GHANA AND CAMBODIA

The overall impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the global economy is adverse and immeasurable, with the hospitality industry taking a massive hit.

The once busy lobbies and fully booked conference rooms are now basically empty. This is a direct impact of worldwide travel and flight restrictions and lockdowns, and a clear indication that demand for hotel services in this time of social distancing has declined greatly.

On 5 May 2020, the UK Ghana Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with BritCham Cambodia, organized a webinar titled, "COVID-19 Impact on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector in Ghana and Cambodia".

The webinar connected businesses in addition to sharing insights into COVID-19's impact on the Hospitality and Tourism sector in Ghana and Cambodia.

The webinar followed a panel discussion format with the following panelists:

- Adrien Pons - Director, Sales & Marketing, Rosewood Phnom Penh
- John Kufour - Board Director, UKGCC
- Dr. Edward Ackah-Nyamikeh - President of the Ghana Hotels Association
- Adjoba Kyiamah - Executive Director, UKGCC
- Nurina Anuar - Executive Director, BritCham Cambodia

The audience was made up of members from both the UK Ghana Chamber of Commerce and BritCham Cambodia.

Summary of Presentations

Mr. John Kufour attributed the near shut-down of most hotels in Ghana to the outright closure of Ghana's border, restrictions on international flights and travel, and the enforcement of social distancing protocols. He explained that accommodation bookings have declined drastically, leading to job cuts and cash flow problems.

Mr. Adrien Pons provided insight into COVID-19's far-reaching impact on Cambodia's hospitality industry. According to him, the situation is much dire in Cambodia - a nation with about 17 million people which hosted approximately 6 million foreign visitors annually pre-COVID 19, with support from a workforce of 1 million people in the hospitality sector.

Dr. Edward Ackah-Nyamikeh confirmed some hotels in Ghana might collapse as operations have come to a halt. He stated that the Ghana Hotels Association is seeking government intervention in the form of tax cuts and direct financial assistance for its members.

Key takeaways

1. The hospitality and tourism industries contribute significantly to the GDP of both Ghana and Cambodia, securing jobs for millions of people.
2. Most businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors have no back-up plans for business continuity in this pandemic era.
3. Ghana and Cambodia's governments will have to play a critical role in saving the hospitality and tourism industries. There is the need for immediate financial intervention to avoid massive layoffs and loss of investments.
4. As a learning point from Cambodia, Ghana's government must revamp the tourism industry to support the hospitality industry. Demand for hospitality services such as hotel accommodation, catering, and entertainment increases as more tourists visit.
5. There are opportunities for growth for struggling and smaller business in the industry in terms of mergers and acquisitions.
6. The hospitality and tourism sectors must start preparing for recovery after the pandemic is over. The industry will have to learn to function in new ways, and strictly enforce improved sanitary and hygiene protocols.

Conclusion

The panelists were optimistic that with government financial subvention, the hospitality and tourism industries in both countries will bounce back once the pandemic is over and restrictions on travel are lifted around the world.