

An Economic Assessment of the Impact of the Ban on Drumming and Noise Making on Businesses in the Ga Mashie Area of Ghana

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Abstract: The ban on drumming and noise making preceding festival celebrations has been an age old tradition for some tribes in Ghana. Among the Ga Mashie people in the Greater Accra region of Ghana, the enforcement and prominence of this month long ban is greatly felt probably because they are located in the heart of the cosmopolitan and capital city. The study economically assesses the impact of this ban on businesses which use loud music to attract and entertain its customers such as pubs. A total of 30 pub managers and customers from 6 top pubs in the Ga Mashie area were involved in the research through focus group discussions and interviews. With the assumptions that each customer purchases 2 bottles of beer costing GH¢4.00 (\$1.005) per bottle a day in mind, the study concluded that pubs lose estimates of between GH¢2,700 (\$679) and GH¢11,200 (\$2,814) per day, between GH¢8,160 (\$2,051) and GH¢33,600 (\$33,768) per week and between (\$8,443) per week and between GH¢32,640 (\$8,201) and GH¢134,400 (\$33,769) per month during the ban. The study recommends that activities with less noise such as live soccer matches, movies and music videos can be introduced to attract and entertain customers during the ban. Also, sound proof rooms can be used to accommodate customers who cannot do without music and also attract more customers.

Keywords: Ban, Customers, Managers, Attendance.

INTRODUCTION

The ban on drumming and noise making in the Greater Accra region is enforced a month before the celebration of the famous Homowo festival by the Ga people. Homowo meaning 'hooting at hunger' is a festival of the Ga people which is celebrated to remember the abundance of corn witnessed after a long period of famine. According to some oral tradition, the ban was necessitated at a period when young men took to drumming and dancing instead of getting busy on their farms to plant corn needed for the celebration of the festival. Over time, the ban has grown together with the growing city and has been extended to all forms of noise making including playing loud music on radio sets, clapping and noise from church services. In typical Ga communities where the enforcement is tighter, there have been reports of people arrested by traditional authorities for loud ringtones from their mobile phones. This period, according to oral tradition, is to allow corn planted to grow very well for use for the celebration and also evoke the blessings of the deities on economic activities of the people.

Over the last 2 decades, there have been annual confrontations between churches and enforcers of the ban who are mostly young native men. While the Ga people think all residents on their land must uphold their tradition, the churches also believe such traditions

are unconstitutional since it infringes on their freedom of worship. This annual religious scuffle has resulted in many injuries over the years. Efforts from religious bodies, the government and other bodies aimed at resolving this scuffle have not yielded desired results.

With the development of Accra from just a Ga community to the capital and cosmopolitan city, several people have questioned the relevance of this tradition in these contemporary times. Also with the important role loud music plays in the operations of some businesses such as pubs, the survival and sustenance of such businesses is critical during the period of the ban. The study assesses the extent to which businesses are impacted economically during the period of the ban since loud music which attract and entertain customers is absent. It uses attendance of customers on a normal day before and during the ban to estimate losses per day, week and month. It also uses group and individual attendance as well as attendance by regular customers to explain the losses.

Literature on the ban on drumming and noise making in Ghana is scanty and limited to the annual tensions which arise between enforcers of the ban and some churches. The ban which normally precedes celebrations of traditional festival is not limited to the Ga people in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. Some

authors have recorded the observance of this tradition before festivals among the Asante and Akuapem people in the Ashanti and Eastern regions of Ghana respectively. Perhaps that of the Ga people have attracted much attention and generated concerns because of two main reasons. First, Accra has developed over the years from just a Ga community to the capital and most cosmopolitan city of Ghana. Secondly, the annual tensions that arise between enforcers of the ban in Accra and some churches whose worship thrive on loud music. These scuffles which became pronounced after the late 1990s has over the years moved from just a standoff between two religions to a battle of right to worship with the Ga people pointing to the guarantee of customary practices in the 1992 constitution of Ghana and the Christians referring to their freedom of worship [1-3].

With the rise of scientific reasoning and the dip in the African traditional religion, as a result of the rise of Christianity, some people have questioned the significance of the ban in these contemporary times. Again others believe the ban was agriculture related and therefore see no significance since virtually no farming takes place in Accra presently. Nortey [4] however believes the significance of this ban is more spiritual than physical. He has pointed out the biblical significance of the ban quoting from Ecclesiastes 3: 7b and Habakkuk 2: 20 of the Holy Bible but this contradicts some oral tradition which limit the significance of the ban to curbing laziness since it was instituted to prevent people from drumming and dancing during periods of farming preceding the festival. The spiritual significance of the ban is also underscored by Asamoah-Gyadu [5] who pointed out that this sacred period is intended to make prayers to deities for economic prosperity. Van Dijk [6] has viewed the ban as a preservation of elements of the culture of a pre-colonial state since they feel their identity, customs and traditions have been submerged and treated with contempt by foreigners [7]. Asante [1]

also concluded that the ban is only a way by which contemporary Ga people express their accumulated grievances especially marginalization in their own land.

Literature on the impact of the ban on people and businesses in particular is absent and therefore not available for review.

METHODOLOGY

The population for the study were pub managers and customers in the Ga Mashie area where the ban takes effect. The sample size was 30 made up of 6 pub managers and 24 customers from popular pubs in the Ga Mashie area. The sample technique was purposive for the managers and random for the customers who were present at the pub. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used including focus group discussions and interviews. Qualitative analysis of the data collected was done using simple statistical tools including tables.

ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption 1: Each customer purchases 2 bottles of favourite drink a day before and during the ban irrespective of the time spent.

Assumption 2: The favourite drink is beer which cost GH¢4.00 per bottle.

RESULTS

Customers’ attendance on a normal day before and during the ban

Managers’ estimates of attendance

The results indicate that there is between 500 and 1000 estimated percentage decrease in customers during the period of the ban. Pubs 3 and 4 estimated a low 500% (500 to 100) decrease while pub 5 estimated a 1000% (500 to 50) decrease. Pubs 6 and 2 had an estimated percentage decrease of 800% (800 to 100) while pub 1 had estimated 670 (200 to 30) percentage decrease.

Table 1: Estimated percentage decreases in attendance

PUB	Estimated Attendance Before Ban	Estimated Attendance During Ban	Percentage Decrease
PUB 1	200	30	666.67%
PUB 2	800	100	800%
PUB 3	500	100	500%
PUB 4	500	100	500%
PUB 5	500	50	1000%
PUB 6	800	100	800%

Customers’ views on attendance

Comparing the number of days customers attend the pubs before and during the ban, the results indicated that the number who attended every day remained 4 before and during the ban while attendance once a while rose from 2 (before the ban) to 12 (during

the ban). There were 3 customers who attended the pub once a week during the ban but none before the ban. Seven customers indicated they attended twice a week before the ban but this fell to only 1 during the ban. Also, there were 9 customers who attended thrice a

week before the ban but this also fell to only 2. There were no occasional and other attendants.

Managers’ views on attendance by regular customers

On whether regular customers attended the pub during the ban, a whopping 83.33% represented by 5 out of 6 managers) mentioned yes while only 1 manager out of the 6 represented by 16.67% said no. For the 83.33% who mentioned yes, only 20% (1 out of the 5) said the minority of the regular customers still attend the pub while the remaining 80% (4 out of 5) said the majority of the regular customers still attend the pub during the ban.

Group and individual attendance before and during the ban

Managers’ views

All 6 managers of the pubs indicated that attendance on a normal day before the ban was

composed of more groups than individuals but 5 out of the 6 mentioned that there are more individual attendants than groups during the ban. Only 1 manager indicated there are more groups than individuals during the ban.

Customers’ views

The results indicated that 20 respondents attended the pubs in groups before the ban but this reduced to 16 during the ban. Only 1 respondent mentioned individual attendance before the ban but this increased to 5.

DISCUSSIONS

Customers’ attendance before and during ban

Assumption 1: Each customer purchases 2 bottles of favourite drink a day before and during the ban irrespective of the time spent.

Assumption 2: If favourite drink is beer which cost GH¢4.00 per bottle

Table 2: Estimated percentage decreases in attendance

PUB	Estimated Attendance Before Ban	Estimated Attendance During Ban	Percentage Decrease
PUB 1	200	30	666.67%
PUB 2	800	100	800%
PUB 3	500	100	500%
PUB 4	500	100	500%
PUB 5	500	50	1000%
PUB 6	800	100	800%

Managers of the pubs indicated that the estimated number of people attending the pub during a normal day before the ban stood between 800 for pubs 6 and 2, and 200 for pub 1. This estimated attendance of the customers reduced significantly on days during the

ban to between 200 for pubs 2, 3, 4 and 6, and 60 for pub 1. This decrease was very significant because it recorded huge percentage decreases of between 1000% for pub 5 and 500% for pubs 3 and 4.

Table 3: Estimated number of favourite drinks sold

PUB	Before Ban		During Ban	
	Estimated Attendance	Estimated Number Sold (Estimated Attendance X 2 Bottles)	Estimated Attendance	Estimated Number Sold (Estimated Attendance X 2 Bottles)
PUB 1	200	400	30	60
PUB 2	800	1600	100	200
PUB 3	500	1000	100	200
PUB 4	500	1000	100	200
PUB 5	500	1000	50	100
PUB 6	800	1600	100	200

With the assumption that each customer purchases 2 bottles of favourite drink a day before and during the ban irrespective of the number of hours spent at the pub, the estimated number of favourite drinks sold on a normal day before the ban stood between 400 bottles for pub 1 and 1600 bottles for pubs 6 and 2.

These estimates compared to the estimates during the ban shows wide differences ranging between 60 bottles for pub and 1200 bottles for pubs 2, 3, 4, and 6. The percentage decrease in the estimated number of bottles sold before and during the ban also ranged between 500% and 1000%.

Table 4: Estimated purchases per day

PUB	Before Ban	During Ban	Estimated Loss Per Day (Before Ban – During Ban) Gh¢
	Estimated Purchases (Estimated Number Sold X Price Per Bottle) Gh¢	Estimated Purchases (Estimated Number Sold X Price Per Bottle) Gh¢	
PUB 1	3,200	480	2,720
PUB 2	12,800	1,600	11,200
PUB 3	8,000	1,600	6,400
PUB 4	8,000	1,600	6,400
PUB 5	8,000	800	7,200
PUB 6	12,800	1,600	11,200

With the assumption that a bottle of the favourite drink cost GH¢4.00, then the estimated purchases on a normal day ranged between GH¢3,200 for pub 1 and GH¢12,800 for pubs 2 and 5 before the ban but the estimated purchases during the ban fell

sharply to between GH¢480 for pub 1 and GH¢1600 for pubs 2, 3, 4 and 6. These therefore mean that pubs lose between GH¢2,720 and GH¢11,200 per day during the ban.

Table 5: Estimated losses per day, week and month

PUB	ESTIMATED LOSS PER DAY (before ban – during ban) GH¢	ESTIMATED LOSS PER WEEKEND (estimated loss per day x 3 weekend days) GH¢	ESTIMATED LOSS PER THE MONTH BAN (estimated loss per weekend x 4 weekends in a month) GH¢
PUB 1	2,720	8,160	32,640
PUB 2	11,200	33,600	134,400
PUB 3	6,400	19,200	76,800
PUB 4	6,400	19,200	76,800
PUB 5	7,200	21,600	86,400
PUB 6	11,200	33,600	134,400

With the active days of the pubs being weekends (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) the estimated losses per weekend for the pubs during the period of the ban stood between GH¢8,160 for pub 1 and GH¢33,600 for pubs 2 and 6. For the month long ban, the total losses of the pubs therefore stood between a high GH¢32,640 for pub 1 and GH¢134,400 for pubs 2 and 6.

Customers’ views on pub attendance

A comparison of customers’ views on their attendance to the pubs before and during the ban buttresses the huge losses made estimated by the managers of the pubs. The customers who attended the pub everyday remained the same before and during the pub. This could be residents living closer to the pubs and therefore go there after work to relax. Significantly, those who attended the pub once a while rose sharply from 2 before the ban to 12 during the ban. Again, customers who attended the pub once a week rose from 0 before the ban to 3 during the ban. Furthermore, as many as 7 customers attended twice a week and 9 customers attended the pub thrice a week before the ban but these also fell sharply to 1 and 2 respectively. These are indications that people spend fewer days at the pub during the ban. Also, these indicate that the number of customers attending the pubs regularly on several days

drops significantly during the ban and this was confirmed by the estimated drops from 800 to 100 customers for pubs 6 and 2, and also 200 to 30 customers by pub 1. Relating these to the losses made during the ban by the pubs, it is obvious that more people spending more days at the pubs means more sales and a considerable drop in the number of attendants and days spent at the pub means less sales.

Attendance by regular customers

The assessment of attendance by regular customers before and during the ban by the managers indicated that a majority of the regular customers still came to the pubs during the ban. This is an indication that regular and loyal customers may be responsible for the sustenance of the pubs during the ban. Linking this to the sales and losses made during the ban, it is likely that the estimated purchases during the ban which ranged from GH¢1600 for pubs 2, 3, 4 and 6, and GH¢480 for pub 1 could be attributed to the regular customers who are loyal during the ban.

Group and individual attendance

Managers’ comparison of the attendance to the pubs by groups and individuals indicated that majority of the pub attendants before the ban were groups but majority of the attendants during the ban were

individuals. More groups attending the pubs before the ban could mean more people, more time spent and consequently more sales. These correspond with the estimated 800 to 200 customer attendance to the pubs and also the high estimated purchases between GH¢3,200 and GH¢12,800 per day before the ban. On the other way round, more individuals attending the pub during the ban could also mean fewer people, less time spent and consequently fewer sales. These also correspond largely with the low estimated customer attendance between 30 and 100 customers as well as the low estimated purchases between GH¢480 and GH¢1,600 per day during the ban.

The views of the customers on group and individual attendance to the pubs did not show any significant differences before and during the ban. However, the small differences could contribute to the drops in estimated attendance and estimated purchases especially when the numbers of people in the groups attending the pubs are huge.

CONCLUSIONS

- There is a huge estimated percentage decrease of customers' attendance (between 500% and 1000%) during the ban on drumming and noise making.
- The estimated number of favourite drinks sold before and during the ban dropped sharply from 1600 bottles to 200 bottles per day for the highest and between 60 and 400 bottles per day for the lowest.
- Pubs lose estimates of between GH¢2,700 and GH¢11,200 per day, between GH¢8,160 and GH¢33,600 per week and between GH¢32,640 and GH¢134,400 per month during the ban.
- The number of customers who spend fewer days at the pubs during the ban soars while those who spend more days falls quite significantly.
- The continuous attendance of majority of the regular customers may be responsible for the sustenance of the pubs during the period of the ban.
- Less groups and more individuals attend the pubs during the ban.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Businesses should develop and introduce more activities with less noise such as live soccer matches, movies and music videos to entertain and sustain interest of customers during the ban
- Businesses can also organize more activities to draw more customers in period before ban to make huge profits before the month long ban
- Businesses must encourage and reward regular customers with discounts and others in order to encourage them to be more loyal to the pubs at all times including during the ban.

- Businesses can also use sound proof rooms to accommodate customers who cannot do without music and also attract more customers.
- Special promotions and discount activities can be organized during the ban to attract customers

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Appendix

- i. \$1.00 = GHC3.98 Bank of Ghana interbank exchange rate 16/11/2016
- ii. Actual price of beer is GHC4.00 per bottle