AFRICA TOURISM RENAISSANCE CONFERENCE

ATRC 2025 Summary Report

Rediscover, Reconnect, Reignite Africa



Organized by the Sixth African Region Initiatives (SARI)
25 and 26 September 2025, Accra Marriott Hotel, Accra, Ghana

A summary of the full ATRC 2025 Report prepared by the SARI Programs Team (20 October 2025). The speeches, panels and activities are reported as in the full report.

ATRC 2025 at a glance

Item	Detail
Event	A two day conference on 25 and 26 September 2025 at the Accra Marriott Hotel, Ghana
Registered attendees	162, mostly youth entrepreneurs and women led MSMEs from Ghana and the diaspora
Speakers	More than 25 high level speakers from tourism boards, international agencies and academia
Programme	5 panel discussions, 3 masterclasses, keynotes, cultural performances and exhibitions
Launch	The SARI Enterprise Empowerment Program (SEEP)
Media reach	More than 150,000 across digital and traditional channels
Overall satisfaction	4.8 out of 5 (post event survey, 50 or more responses)
Would recommend	4.9 out of 5

1. Executive summary

The Africa Tourism Renaissance Conference (ATRC) 2025, organized by the Sixth African Region Initiatives (SARI), was a two day, impact driven event held on 25 and 26 September 2025 at the Accra Marriott Hotel in Ghana. The conference aimed to foster dialogue on African tourism and its links with adjacent industries, sustainability, diaspora investment, cultural preservation and regulatory ecosystems. Its key goals included promoting youth and women empowerment through tourism, launching the SARI Enterprise Empowerment Program (SEEP) and building strategic partnerships for economic development.

Day 1 opened with the national anthems and opening remarks by Dr. Toni Luck, followed by speeches from Zainab Muntari (SARI CEO) and keynote speaker Prof. Kobby Mensah. It included a cultural dance from Mali, an address by Raphael Otutey Blaboe of the Accra Marriott, and two panels: *Exploring Opportunities in Tourism and Adjacent Industries: Navigating Diaspora Led Investments in Africa* and *Africa Tourism Conservation and Sustainability for Economic Development*. A coffee break with networking and exhibitions led into three masterclasses: inter industry businesses (led by Abdul Hamid Adams), career pathways in culinary and concierge practice (led by Chef Ednah Rosen) and leveraging art for profit (led by Daniel Ametefe Kukubor). The day closed with facilitator remarks.

Day 2 featured a performing arts display, a message from Mrs. Regina Amadi-Njoku (SARI Vice Chairperson) and three panels: *Leveraging Vulnerabilities Within the African Tourism Industry: Turning Challenges into Opportunities*, *Preserving African Culture: African Culinary Representation, Preservation and Curation in Modern Food Culture and Culinary Industry*, and *The Role of Regulatory Bodies in Fostering a Conducive Ecosystem for the Growing Tourism Industry in Ghana and Africa*. A cultural dance display and a coffee break were included, and the day ended with closing remarks on learnings, challenges and opportunities.

Key achievements included attracting more than 150 participants from Ghana and the diaspora (predominantly youth entrepreneurs and women led MSMEs), engaging more than 25 high level speakers from tourism boards, international agencies and academia, launching SEEP, and achieving media reach exceeding 150,000 across digital and traditional channels. Successes included strengthened collaborations with GTDC, UNESCO and tourism innovation ecosystems.

Challenges included logistical delays in panel transitions, varying attendance between the two days (higher on Day 1) and limited international representation due to visa issues. The event exceeded its attendance goals. Pre event surveys showed low initial awareness of SARI initiatives (average scores of 1 to 3), while post event feedback showed significant increases (average scores of 4 to 5), affirming the event's impact on knowledge and networking.

2. Event overview

The conference was held over two days and brought together leaders, innovators and stakeholders from the tourism, creative, academic and development sectors. It served as a platform for knowledge exchange, dialogue and collaboration aimed at redefining Africa's tourism narrative through culture, innovation and diaspora partnerships. Keynote speeches, high level panels, masterclasses and reflective dialogues explored investment and sustainability, talent development, cultural preservation and policy frameworks.

Day One: Building the Foundations of Africa's Tourism Renaissance

The event opened with the MCs welcoming the audience, followed by the singing of the Ghanaian and Tanzanian anthems.

Opening remarks by Dr. Toni Luck

Co founder and Chief of Staff, Diaspora African Forum

Dr. Luck officially opened the conference with an address that celebrated African unity, diaspora identity and women's leadership in shaping the continent's future. She acknowledged H.E. Ambassador Dr. Erieka Bennett, Founder of the Diaspora African Forum, and H.E. Madam Regina Amadi-Njoku, both of whom played pivotal roles in the creation of the African Union's Sixth Region, which represents the African diaspora worldwide.

She recounted the origin of the Sixth Region in 2002, when Ambassador Bennett advocated to President John Agyekum Kufuor for the inclusion of the diaspora in Africa's integration agenda, an idea that later gained continental recognition under the AU. The Sixth Region now has its own flag and anthem, symbolizing the diaspora's official identity and connection to the African continent.

Speaking on behalf of the Diaspora African Forum, the only embassy globally dedicated to the African diaspora and recognized by the AU, UN and EU, she underscored the Forum's mission to promote diaspora engagement and representation at the global level. She emphasized that:

> *"the womb of the African woman is the heart of tourism,"*

signifying women's central role in nurturing societies, economies and the spirit of African identity. She concluded by commending Zainab Muntari (CEO of SARI) and her team for their exceptional organization of the maiden conference and, on their behalf, formally declared the Africa Tourism Renaissance Conference open and ready for business.

Keynote address by Miss Zainab Muntari

CEO, Sixth African Region Initiatives (SARI)

Miss Muntari delivered a keynote that set the tone for the conference's central theme: reconnecting Africa and its diaspora through tourism, investment and empowerment. She reflected on her experience as a tour operator who has led over 500 diaspora travelers to explore the continent. She recognized that while the diaspora is eager to reconnect, invest and give back, and African women and youth are eager to grow and innovate, there remains a lack of structured platforms to bring both sides together.

This insight gave birth to SARI, a Pan African initiative rooted in Ghana that seeks to bridge Africa and its diaspora through travel, enterprise and cultural collaboration. SARI's mission is not to compete with existing organizations, but to complement and connect, focusing on positioning Africa as a top global destination for tourism, business and sustainable development.

She highlighted the urgency of the initiative: Africa's underutilized tourism and hospitality potential, persistent barriers facing youth such as lack of funding and mentorship, and the growing global demand for authentic African experiences. Through SARI's programs, including the SARI Enterprise Empowerment

Program (SEEP), the organization supports women and youth enterprises across agritourism, gastronomy, wellness, creative arts, sanitation and sustainable tourism, building a holistic ecosystem around the sector.

She emphasized that the Africa Tourism Renaissance Conference is SARI's flagship platform, designed to offer expert panels, diaspora business matchmaking, cultural showcases and youth focused initiatives, all geared toward unlocking Africa's tourism and economic potential. In her closing remarks she called on partners, investors, governments and the diaspora to join SARI's movement, not just as supporters of another program, but as co creators of a thriving Pan African tourism and investment ecosystem. She ended with a call to action:

> *"Join us in building a thriving ecosystem where the diaspora reconnects, entrepreneurs rise, and Africa claims its rightful place as a global leader in tourism and cultural exchange."*

Keynote address by Prof. Kobby Mensah

CEO, Ghana Tourism Development Company (GTDC)

Prof. Mensah delivered a keynote on redefining Africa's tourism narrative and positioning it as a driver of cultural exchange, economic empowerment and diaspora engagement. He commended Zainab Muntari for her leadership and conveyed greetings from Ghana's Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, Hon. Abla Dzifa Gomashie. He noted that Africa's tourism story has long been limited to safaris and scenery, overlooking its cultural, creative and heritage richness.

Highlighting the rise of cultural and heritage tourism, he stressed that tourism is now a catalyst for the creative economy, spanning music, film, fashion, gastronomy and festivals. Using Ghana as an example, he cited initiatives such as the Year of Return and Beyond the Return, as well as GTDC's new Tourism Investment Platform and Tourism Marketplace, which connect diaspora investors and local businesses through digital tools. He acknowledged ongoing challenges such as limited infrastructure and bureaucracy, but emphasized Africa's youthful creativity, growing diaspora capital and cultural wealth as powerful assets for transformation.

Prof. Mensah concluded by calling for digital innovation, stronger policy integration, public private partnerships and greater support for the creative sector, urging Africa to move "beyond symbolism into substance" and make tourism a true engine for sustainable development and unity.

Address by Mr. Raphael Otutey Blaboe

Director of Human Resources, Marriott Hotel

Mr. Blaboe shared insights on Marriott's commitment to talent development and inclusive growth within Africa's hospitality industry. He emphasized that people are the heart of tourism's renaissance, describing Marriott employees as "associates", partners in business success.

He highlighted partnerships with Accra Technical University and the Design & Technology Institute, which give students hands on industry experience, and Marriott's Voyage Management Trainee Program, through which young graduates gain leadership exposure and career development opportunities across the continent. He noted Marriott's progress in gender inclusion, with women occupying 40% of management roles, and its youth driven workforce, averaging 30 years of age. He urged investment in skills training to prepare Africa's youth for the future of work shaped by AI and automation, and called on the diaspora to contribute through mentorship and capacity building.

He concluded by stressing that tourism should be seen not only as an industry, but as a driver of dignity, empowerment and opportunity, a sector capable of shaping Africa's future through its people.

Audience impressions session

Mr. Abeiku Sagoe, veteran Ghanaian filmmaker and actor

Following the keynotes, the MCs gathered brief impressions from the audience. Mr. Sagoe commended Zainab (CEO of SARI) and the organizers for curating an impactful conference that celebrates African creativity and collaboration. Drawing on over 50 years of experience in film and cultural production, he reflected on how the industry has evolved from largely manual beginnings to today's technology driven era of opportunities for young creatives.

He emphasized teamwork, networking and mentorship in sustaining growth across the creative and tourism sectors. Encouraging participants to share ideas openly, he cautioned against the culture of secrecy that once limited innovation. He extended his support to emerging creatives, inviting them to connect with industry veterans for guidance and collaboration. His remarks set a tone of intergenerational dialogue, collaboration and shared learning.

Panel discussions, Day One

Panel 1: Exploring Opportunities in Tourism and Its Adjacent Industries: Navigating Diaspora Led Investments in Africa. Moderated by David Quaye (Programs and Partnership Manager, Africa Governance Center), with Dr. Toni Luck (Diaspora African Forum), Malissa Garner (African Diaspora Liaison Director), Caleb Elikplim Houncarine (Finance and Contract Management Professional) and Dr. Wilson Richbill (Policy Advisor and Executive Coach). The session examined how diaspora led investments can be leveraged to unlock opportunities within Africa's tourism ecosystem. Panelists explored investment models, emerging opportunity spaces and policy gaps, and emphasized collaboration between local entrepreneurs and the diaspora to create sustainable tourism ventures. Key takeaways included the need to strengthen regional frameworks, build investor confidence through transparent systems and embrace technology to drive tourism innovation. The panel underscored diaspora partnerships as a bridge for knowledge transfer, funding and cross cultural exchange.

Panel 2: Africa Tourism Conservation and Sustainability for Economic Development. Panelists were Bisi Ademulegon (Serenity Farms, Ghana), Dr. Morrie L. Jacks, Dr. Samuel Nkumbaan (University of Ghana), Gontse Molelekeng Adeniran (Sustainability Strategist) and Mr. Carl Ampah (UNESCO Culture Sector Head). The panel explored ecotourism, cultural survival, land stewardship and Indigenous knowledge. Discussions centered on balancing conservation with economic development, promoting community based tourism and integrating UNESCO's perspective on cultural heritage and sustainability. Mr. Ampah emphasized UNESCO's focus on safeguarding cultural diversity and advocated for cultural industries that enhance identity while generating livelihoods. The session concluded with recommendations to expand ecotourism initiatives, invest in cultural education and strengthen frameworks for sustainable tourism governance.

Masterclass breakout sessions

In the afternoon, participants attended three practical masterclasses:

- **Building Inter Industry Businesses**, led by Abdul Hamid Adams (Tondaar Ventures): creating brands and services that connect tourism with other sectors, using tools such as the Business Model Canvas and SWOT Analysis to identify new markets and revenue streams.
- **Career Pathways in Culinary and Concierge Practice in Africa**, led by Chef Ednah Rosen: culinary innovation, hospitality careers and entrepreneurship in Africa's growing gastronomy landscape.
- **Leveraging Art into Viable and Profitable Business**, led by Daniel Ametefe Kukubor: guiding creatives on turning artistic talent into sustainable enterprises through monetization, branding, digital platforms and financial literacy.

The sessions equipped participants with tools to enhance their business models, develop new skills and explore emerging opportunities across tourism, hospitality and the creative economy.

Day Two: Consolidating Lessons and Shaping the Future of African Tourism

Welcome address by Mrs. Regina Amadi-Njoku

Vice Chairperson, Sixth African Region Initiatives (SARI)

Mrs. Amadi-Njoku opened Day Two with a call for Africa to seize the global momentum around its growing tourism and cultural influence. She noted that the world is shifting toward a multipolar order in which Africa sits at the center of global attention, but warned that the continent must be prepared to benefit rather than repeat past patterns of exploitation.

She urged Africans to move from a “tourism of conquest” to a “tourism of partnership”, built on equality, culture and collaboration. Highlighting the power of the African diaspora's reconnection with the continent, she described this unity as a transformative force for economic and cultural renewal. She cautioned against negative cultural narratives and the erosion of African identity, calling instead for a revival of indigenous values, language and cultural education as tools of liberation. She praised SARI's youth and women led approach to culture driven tourism and pledged her continued support to the movement. Her address concluded with the statement:

> *“We were colonized by their culture; we will liberate ourselves by our culture.”*

Panel discussions, Day Two

Panel 3: Leveraging Vulnerabilities Within the African Tourism Industry: Turning Challenges into Opportunities. Panelists were Georgina Mensah (GIZ Ghana), Kevin Nunekpeku (Pathline Tours), Awuracy Butler (Butler's Tours), Abdul Hamid Adams (Tondaar Ventures) and Felicity Nelson (GTDC). The discussion examined how Africa's structural weaknesses, such as policy bottlenecks, infrastructure gaps and limited financing, can be converted into drivers of innovation. Using Ghana's tourism growth data as a reference point, panelists discussed the roles of digitization, human capital development and sustainability in turning vulnerabilities into growth opportunities. The session concluded that unlocking Africa's tourism potential requires multi sector partnerships, youth driven innovation and policy support that empowers MSMEs and local entrepreneurs.

Panel 4: Preserving African Culture: Culinary Representation, Preservation and Curation in Modern Food Culture. This panel explored African cuisine as a vessel of identity, history and economic potential, from culinary heritage and entrepreneurship to audio visual documentation and the global representation of African food. Panelists emphasized the need to document indigenous foodways, protect local ingredients and celebrate culinary traditions as part of Africa's creative and tourism economy. The session also examined the role of film, social media and storytelling in amplifying authentic African food narratives, and called for culinary archives, food festivals and cross border collaborations to preserve and promote African cuisine globally.

Panel 5: The Role of Regulatory Bodies in Fostering a Conducive Ecosystem for the Growing Tourism Industry in Ghana and Africa: Emerging Opportunities and Challenges. Led by Mrs. Humaima Abdul-Rahman (Controller and Accountant General, Ghana Audit Service, Kumasi), the session focused on the role of regulatory bodies in shaping the future of Ghana and Africa's expanding tourism sector. Mrs. Abdul-Rahman emphasized that as tourism becomes a key pillar for economic diversification, job creation and cultural preservation, institutions such as the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, the Registrar General's Department, the Ghana Revenue Authority and SSNIT play a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable growth, investor confidence and industry standardization.

Her presentation unpacked the processes and requirements for SMEs and entrepreneurs to formalize operations, obtain licenses and align with regulatory frameworks. She highlighted the benefits of compliance, including access to incentives, visibility and partnerships, while reframing taxation and registration as tools for business growth rather than barriers. The session also addressed emerging opportunities such as ecotourism, digital tourism platforms and community based tourism, alongside challenges such as regulatory overlaps, infrastructure deficits and informal sector growth. She urged closer collaboration between agencies and entrepreneurs to streamline compliance processes and foster innovation, and concluded by calling for greater digital literacy, inter agency coordination and capacity building, noting that a transparent, well regulated environment is vital to attract investors and build a resilient, competitive and inclusive African tourism ecosystem.

Closing session: Moving Forward, Learnings, Challenges and Cultivating Resilience

Moderated by Damaris Saku, with reflections from Hon. Dr. Edward Nana Yaw Ofori Kuragu, the closing session captured the collective insights of the conference. Dr. Ofori commended the youth led organization and inclusive dialogue, describing the ATRC as a milestone platform for rethinking Africa's tourism future. He urged greater focus on food tourism, infrastructure development and cultural education, calling for future editions to include culinary exhibitions and career fairs to engage youth more directly. He reminded participants that tourism is Ghana's fourth largest foreign exchange earner and has the potential to become number one if strategically developed. The session closed with reflections from veteran actor Abeiku Sagoe, who praised the youthful energy and fresh perspectives that made the event truly groundbreaking.

Across the two days, the conference demonstrated the power of youth leadership, cross sector collaboration and cultural pride in reshaping Africa's tourism agenda. The event reinforced that Africa's tourism renaissance will thrive through unity, digital innovation, investment in talent, cultural preservation and sustainable partnerships between the continent and its global diaspora.

3. Audience and engagement

ATRC 2025 attracted a diverse audience reflecting growing interest in tourism, culture and sustainable economic development across Africa. A total of 162 attendees registered, including professionals, entrepreneurs, policymakers, students and diaspora representatives from industries such as Tourism, NGOs, Media, Education, Fashion, Technology and Manufacturing.

Measure	Result
Registered attendees	162
Main attendance region	Greater Accra, Ghana
Peak attendance	Day 1: 48 attendees at 9 AM. Day 2: 26 attendees at 9 AM
Largest group	Women aged 18 to 30: 52 attendees. Men aged 18 to 30: 37
Ages 31 to 40	5 women and 28 men
Ages 41 to 50 and 51 and above	8 to 12 attendees per gender group
Regions	Greater Accra 83.33%, Central 4.94%, Ashanti 2.47%, diaspora and international 3.7%
Industries	NGOs 14, Tourism 9, Media 8, Education 8, plus Fashion, Technology, Advertising and others
Photography consent	157 of 160 responses (98%) consented to photography for promotional purposes
Organizations	138 organizations: 125 sent one attendee, 11 sent two, 2 sent teams of 5 to 6

Attendance trends. Both days peaked at 9:00 AM, aligned with the main keynote sessions and panels. Day 1 had a sharper decline after midday, while Day 2 held a steadier flow through the morning. The first day's programme, with the keynotes and opening sessions, drew the largest turnout, while Day 2 sustained attention through more interactive sessions and masterclasses.

Attending both days. Among attendees present on both days, the 18 to 30 age group dominated (53.5%), followed by the 31 to 40 and 51 and above brackets, and most of these consistent participants were from Greater Accra (80%). Younger participants remained the most engaged across multiple sessions.

Media reach. The conference exceeded 150,000 impressions through digital and traditional media combined. The top countries were Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya and South Africa, with online reach of 62.5% male and 34.8% female. Partner media houses, local influencers and participants amplified the event, visual highlights and post event reflections generated consistent online traction, and the youth segment drove most social engagement.

Key insights

- **Youth centric appeal.** The strong 18 to 30 turnout and online engagement affirm the enthusiasm of young Africans for tourism and cultural enterprise.
- **Local focus.** Greater Accra remained the central hub, and future editions should enhance regional inclusivity.
- **Industry diversity.** Cross sector representation reinforces tourism's interconnectedness with technology, education and the creative economy.
- **Media impact.** High visibility across traditional and digital channels strengthened the event's continental positioning and stakeholder recognition.

- **Group participation.** Future conferences may encourage team or group participation packages to foster collaboration between organizations.

4. Marketing and promotion

Promotion was guided by a six month communication and visibility strategy led by the Communications Team, with the Programs and Media Outreach Units. It blended digital marketing, traditional media and strategic partnerships to build awareness, attract diverse audiences and sustain engagement before, during and after the conference.

Social media. A week by week communications plan ran from May to September 2025. The team created over 120 creative assets (flyers, countdown graphics, motion videos, speaker highlights and partner spotlights). The “What Africa Tourism Means to Me” campaign invited diaspora voices, youth entrepreneurs and cultural advocates to share short videos and reflections, and video series and reels showcased panelists, keynote speakers, masterclass leads and partner institutions. Daily posting and engagement were maintained on Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn and TikTok.

Monthly focus. June and July focused on awareness and early registration through teaser videos and infographics, including “5 Ways the Diaspora Can Support African Tourism Now”. August brought countdown campaigns, diaspora engagement features and live behind the scenes coverage. September was the final drive, with World Tourism Day tie ins, Instagram and Facebook Live sessions and pre event interviews.

Traditional media. The Programs Team secured airtime through TV3 and YFM Ghana for live discussions and promotional interviews with key spokespersons, expanding visibility beyond digital platforms and positioning ATRC 2025 as a credible Pan African tourism development dialogue. Paid advertising slots on television and radio extended reach across Ghana's major urban and peri urban centers.

Paid digital and partnerships. Sponsored Instagram posts targeted diaspora audiences, tourism stakeholders and young entrepreneurs. The conference was also listed on 10Times, Eventbrite, AllEvents and similar platforms, attracting registrations from tourism professionals and investors, and collaborations with partner organizations, creative agencies and the diaspora network amplified reach through shared mailing lists and reposted content.

Newsletters. Monthly newsletters went out from May through September 2025 with programme updates, speaker announcements, registration reminders, logistical information and stories on tourism innovation, sustainability and diaspora engagement. The email campaigns achieved strong open rates and reinforced credibility across stakeholder groups.

Overall assessment. The campaign generated sustained visibility and anticipation over six months, created high quality visual and storytelling content aligned with ATRC's Pan African identity, and drove multi channel engagement that translated into registrations, media partnerships and brand recognition. The synergy between digital, traditional and community based promotion positioned ATRC as a model of cross sector collaboration and modern communications planning in the African tourism ecosystem.

5. Financial statement

ATRC 2025 was planned, funded and delivered by SARI as a self funded pilot. Future editions will be planned with sponsors and partners in place before major spending.

6. Attendee feedback and survey insights

Two surveys assessed the effectiveness, reach and participant experience of ATRC 2025: a Pre Event Questionnaire and a Post Event Evaluation. They gathered views on awareness of SARI, satisfaction with

the event's organization and perceptions of impact across empowerment, innovation and diaspora engagement. A total of 50 or more responses were collected across both surveys, from tourism practitioners, entrepreneurs, policy advocates, development partners and academia.

Awareness of SARI. Participants entered the conference with moderate awareness of SARI and its sub programs, and left with a clear, well rounded understanding of its mission, youth empowerment initiatives and diaspora engagement. Average awareness scores rose from 1 to 3 before the event to 4 to 5 after it. This indicates that the event content and communication strategy were highly effective in positioning SARI as a credible actor in Africa's tourism empowerment ecosystem.

Logistics and experience. The average satisfaction rating across logistical components was 4.35 out of 5. Participants noted clear and helpful pre event communication, well coordinated venue management that suited networking and interactive sessions, and professional and warm hospitality, with many mentioning the welcoming support of the organizing team. Timing and scheduling were cited as minor challenges, with comments about slight delays and overlapping sessions, which offers an opportunity for tighter timekeeping and clearer session transition signals in future editions.

Session relevance. Session content and delivery were exceptionally well received, with overall relevance ratings between 85% and 95% across all session types. Participants described the sessions as “very relevant”, “educative”, “insightful” and “impactful”.

Session type	Rated “very relevant”	Highlights
Panel sessions (1 to 4)	85% to 90%	Praise for the diversity of topics and panelists, covering tourism innovation, diaspora collaboration and women's empowerment. Discussions were lively and interactive.
Masterclasses (Abdul Hamid Adams, Chef Ednah Rosen, Daniel Ametefe Kukubor)	80% to 85%	Highly practical and motivational. Participants valued the professional depth, case examples and hands on insights from the facilitators.
Closing activity	95%	Universally appreciated for its energy and inspiration, described by many as a “powerful conclusion” that reinforced learning and created a strong emotional connection to SARI's mission.

Overall measure	Score	What participants said
Overall satisfaction with ATRC 2025	4.8 out of 5	Exceptionally high contentment. Participants described it as “impactful”, “inspiring” and “professionally enriching”.
Likelihood to recommend	4.9 out of 5	Strong advocacy. Nearly all respondents would encourage colleagues to attend future editions.
Session content satisfaction	4.6 out of 5	Discussions were educational and directly applicable to participants' work, with a mix of policy, innovation and empowerment perspectives.

Several respondents also expressed a desire for expanded regional participation, continued diaspora engagement and more interactive networking formats in future events. Attendees left with a sense of pride, inspiration and renewed motivation to support SARI's vision of inclusive, sustainable tourism and diaspora led development.

7. Lessons learned

The 2025 conference provided valuable insights into the operational, strategic and collaborative elements needed to deliver a high impact continental event.

1. Early planning enables stronger partnerships and execution. Preparations that began months in advance, supported by a structured communications plan and strong pre event visibility, enhanced outreach, partnership engagement and delegate mobilization, and allowed the team to secure high value speakers, finalize venue partnerships and coordinate logistics efficiently.

2. Venue partnership matters for quality and efficiency. Selecting the Accra Marriott Hotel proved pivotal. Beyond meeting technical requirements, the venue's ability to integrate catering and technical support reduced logistical complexity, so future conferences should prioritize venues with multipurpose, integrated support systems.

3. Strong technical production defines the attendee experience. The staging, sound, lighting and decor delivered by Sleek Events and SARI's Comms team enhanced the professional feel of the conference and directly influenced session flow, audience experience and online media capture.

4. Cross sector collaboration enriches content quality. Bringing together policy actors, private sector leaders, academia, diaspora groups, entrepreneurs and cultural practitioners strengthened the discourse and confirmed the value of integrating adjacent industries into tourism conversations.

5. Youth engagement is a strategic imperative. The surge of interest among young people reinforced the importance of youth centered programming, including masterclasses, networking platforms and capacity building spaces. Future editions must maintain and expand this focus, including career fairs and mentorship clinics.

6. Cultural integration deepens impact. Cultural performances (Balanzan, Borborbor, culinary discussions and food heritage narratives) positioned culture as a core tourism asset, not entertainment, affirming that African tourism cannot be separated from African identity, history and culture.

7. Communication strategy significantly affects attendance and visibility. The structured six month plan helped drive over 150,000 media reach. Paid ads, newsletters, media tours (TV3, YFM) and consistent social media engagement boosted awareness. Sustained communications momentum directly influences attendee numbers and diversity.

8. Data collection enhances reporting and future planning. The attendee dataset (demographics, participation modes, engagement levels and country representation) proved invaluable. Going forward, more detailed tracking such as session level attendance, satisfaction ratings and lead tracking for partners will deepen insights.

9. The diaspora and continent connection must be intentionally designed. Sessions across both days affirmed that diaspora engagement is not automatic. It must be structured deliberately through cultural reconnection, shared economic pathways, capacity building and co created tourism initiatives. ATRC 2025 validated SARI's model as a strong vehicle for this agenda.

10. Time management and session pacing require continued optimization. While the programme was rich, some sessions needed tighter pacing to accommodate transitions, cultural performances and networking periods. Streamlined transitions and clearer time discipline will improve flow and allow more audience interaction.

Appendix: Photographs



Photographs from ATRC 2025: cultural performance, audience sessions, networking and the closing day. Photography consent was given by 98% of respondents.