Original Research Article

Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism on Host Communities in the Fako Division. South-West Region, Cameroon

Fomano Contio Flavienne[1]*, Kum Awah Paschal[2], Matsida Kamta Marcelle Annie[3], Obono Francis Pascal[4], Tsonga Zapsi Brice Dimitri[5], Kouanang Ottou Stéphanie Reine[6]

[1]Development Anthropologist, PhD Student in Anthropology, University of Yaoundé
[2]University Professor
[3]Research officer at CNE MINERESI
[4]Anthropologue
[5]Anthropologue
[6]Medical Anthropologist (PhD), Researcher at CASP Consulting

Abstract: *Objective*: This article aims to examine the impact of tourism on cultural practices, local identities and social relations within communities in the Fako Division, in the south-west region of Cameroon. *Methodology*: Based on content analysis, this article is qualitative in nature. Primary and contextual data were collected in one of three languages (French, English, Pidgin) from administrative, traditional and religious authorities, tour operators, tourist guides, representatives of NGOs and tourist GICs, directors of cultural affairs, community members and tourists over a period from January 2019 until saturation point was reached. The research was conducted at several tourist sites in the Fako Division. Standard techniques used in development anthropology (direct observation using an observation grid, participant observation, in-depth interviews and group discussions, case studies, life stories, photography) were employed, based on ethical considerations, using interview and observation guides, a camera for taking photographs, a recorder and notebooks. The data collected was grouped and processed using ATLAS.ti software. The theory of social representations developed by Jodelet (1993), Herzlich (1972) and Laplantine (1987) served as a guiding principle for the analysis and interpretation of the data. *Results*: This was an exploratory qualitative study that examined the role of tourism in local development in Fako. Based on a critical review of recent literature and local case studies (Limbé beaches, Mount Cameroon, National Park, cultural heritage of Buea), the article identified several impacts, the main one being a reduction in unemployment, particularly among young people and women, in rural and peri-urban areas of Fako. Socio-economically, communities benefit directly from the income generated. Direct jobs are created for young people, women and other vulnerable groups within the community. Profits can be reinvested in community development projects (schools, health clinics, access to water, roads). The hotel and restaurant sector, tourist guides (mountain, cultural, naturalist, historical), transport (drivers, motorbike taxis), the sale of handicrafts, and site management (reception, maintenance) provide formal or informal, temporary or permanent jobs, thereby reducing the high unemployment rate among the local population: job creation and economic opportunities, but also risks of social exclusion, rising land prices, pressure on resources and changes in identity. *Conclusion*: The impact of tourism on cultural values and lifestyles in Fako is a double-edged sword. While on the one hand it offers opportunities for promotion, preservation and empowerment, on the other hand it poses real risks of denaturation, excessive commercialisation and erosion of identities. The loss of authenticity and stereotyping is a crucial aspect of the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism. One of the major challenges posed by the development of tourism is the risk of loss of cultural authenticity and stereotyping of the practices, objects and representations of host communities.
Keywords: Tourism, Socio-Cultural Impacts, Host Communities, Fako Division.

*Corresponding Author: Fomano Contio Flavienne
Development Anthropologist, PhD Student in Anthropology, University of Yaoundé

INTRODUCTION

The World Tourism Organisation (2007) defines tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon involving the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or professional purposes or for business. These people are called visitors (and may be tourists or excursionists, residents or non-residents) and tourism refers to their activities, some of which involve tourist expenditure (money paid for the purchase of consumer goods and services, but also valuable goods, for personal use or as gifts, for and during tourist trips). The tourism and travel industry is one of the largest and most dynamic in the world, employing around 230 million people. It generated 6% of global GDP in 2015 and 7% of global GDP in 2017 (WTTC, 2018). Sub-Saharan Africa is considered one of the emerging and growing markets in the world, and on the continent in particular, with nearly 5% of international tourist arrivals in 2017. In addition, some countries in North, East, West and South Africa have taken part in this boom. In 2017, Senegal welcomed more than 1,400,000 visitors, an increase of 40% since 2014, while the number of international arrivals in Tanzania was 13,300,000 in 2017, compared to 1.14 million in 2014 (UNWTO, 2018). Growth in countries in the Central African sub-region, such as Cameroon, has been highly unpredictable; 1,012,000 arrivals were recorded in 2017, compared to the 500,000 arrivals that made it a tourist destination in 2012, as predicted by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). However, despite the presence of both cultural and natural resources and the legal framework governing their exploitation (SDG 2018) in Central African countries, and more specifically in Cameroon, these countries are experiencing real stagnation in terms of tourism.

Cameroon has met the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) threshold for a 'tourist destination' (welcoming at least 500,000 tourists per year) since 2012, and today around one million tourists visit Cameroon each year (INS/Tourism and Leisure Statistics Yearbook, 2020). According to the National Institute of Statistics (INS), there are more than 9,000 tourism businesses operating in Cameroon. At the end of 2010, the tourism sector generated revenue of 25.64 billion CFA francs from entry visas to the country. Airport stamps generated 2.66 billion CFA francs. Miscellaneous duties and taxes brought in 59.142 billion CFA francs, creating nearly 60,000 jobs in Cameroon. Cameroon has rich biodiversity and cultures and therefore enormous potential for the development of a sustainable nature-based tourism industry (WTTC, 2008). However, it is not considered a major tourist destination on a global scale because the economic and cultural benefits of tourism are not forthcoming. Cameroon falls far short of visitors' desires and expectations, favouring wilderness over phenomena and riches that are unique in the world (Cameroun Tribune, January 2025); hence the conclusion that Cameroon's tourism industry remains very underdeveloped, even though tourism accounts for 3% of the national public investment budget. The South-West region has enormous natural tourist potential, making it one of the most attractive and dominant regions in Cameroon with 61 tourist sites, followed by the West, Centre and Adamaoua regions, which account for 14.8%, 10.4% and 9.1% of tourist sites respectively (INS, 2011). The major tourist attractions in this part of Cameroon include: Mount Cameroon, Limbe Wildlife Centre, the historic site of Bimbia, natural and cultural sites such as picturesque tea plantations on the road to Buéa, waterfalls near Buéa, German colonial remains in Buéa (the Governor's Palace and Bismarck Fountain), and traditional fishing villages. Despite the country's rich cultural and natural heritage, the Fako Division, like the Central African sub-region as a whole, has not experienced significant growth in the tourism market.

It is still very weak, leading to a precarious state of tourism development. Serious consideration must be given to the integrated and sustainable management of tourism in the Fako Division of Cameroon, because despite its enormous natural and cultural resources (Essono, 2000), it lags behind the tourism and infrastructure development observed in other sub-regions of sub-Saharan Africa, which are often characterised by their high contribution to global GDP and the exorbitant number of tourists recorded annually.

METHODOLOGY

This article is qualitative in nature, based on content analysis. This research was conducted over a period from 2019 to the date of writing. Primary and contextual data were collected in one of three languages (French, English, Pidgin) from administrative, traditional and religious authorities, tour operators, tourist guides, representatives of NGOs and tourist GICs, directors of cultural affairs, community members and tourists, until saturation point was reached at several tourist sites, namely: Mount Cameroon, Down Beach in Limbé, the Bimbia tourist site, the Limbé Wildlife Centre and Botanical Gardens, Park Hotel Miramar, Atlantic Beach Hotel, Fini Hotel and Seme Beach Hotel, and the central and decentralised services of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure in Yaoundé and Limbé, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourism practices in the Fako Division. The usual techniques used in developmental anthropology (direct observation using an observation grid, participant observation, in-depth interviews and group discussions, case studies, life stories, photography) were used, based on ethical considerations, with the aid of interview and observation guides, a camera for taking photographs, a recorder and notebooks. In addition, the tense social climate in the south-west region due to the English-speaking crises forced us to make several field trips due to the unavailability of informants, the inaccessibility of study sites, the mistrust of local populations towards any foreign presence, etc. To overcome these difficulties, we called on the administrative and traditional authorities.

The data collected was grouped and processed using ATLAS.ti software. To document our argument, a corpus was constructed based on the literature review and field surveys. Through documentary research (books, scientific reports, articles, journals, study reports, theses and dissertations), secondary data was collected from various libraries and documentation centres on topics related to the research subject. Focus group discussions enabled information to be collected in a group dynamic through interaction between the various participants. The theory of social representations by Jodelet (1993), Herzlich (1972) and Laplantine (1987) served as a guiding principle for the analysis and interpretation of the data. The article aims to study in depth the impact of different forms of tourism and sustainable development. Given that this part of Cameroon is home to a wide variety of tourism, ethnic groups and cultural traditions, it focuses on the involvement of different models of tourism in the development of Fako.

RESULTS

In Africa, mainly in Cameroon, most studies in tourism anthropology focus on Western or Asian contexts. Only a few authors, specifically development anthropologists, have taken an interest in Fako, a Division of Cameroon located in the south-western region. Its capital is Limbé. It covers most of the Mount Cameroon massif, which rises to 4,094 m at the summit of Fako, which gives the Division its name. Mount Cameroon, which can be described as an iconic volcano that attracts hiking and ecotourism enthusiasts, offers varied landscapes and breathtaking views. Limbe, a coastal town, is an important tourist hub with several tourist sites. Created in 1892, the Limbe Botanical Garden is considered one of the most beautiful in Africa and is home to a rich collection of plants. Limbe Wildlife Centre is a conservation centre housing various animal species, including primates. The black sand beaches offer opportunities for relaxation and seaside leisure activities. The historic site of Bimbia marks the ancient history of the slave trade and is currently being classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, the poor exploitation of available tourist resources, the failure to attract more tourists, the failure to promote certain tourist sites, the lack of education of tourism managers on management processes and the lack of integrated management remain problems that must be taken seriously and corrected in order to benefit from development commensurate with the available resources. In this regard, the traditional authorities of Fako perceive a risk of losing authority and control over their cultural heritage in the face of the commodification induced by tourism. These perceptions and representations of local communities regarding the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on their culture vary according to their level of economic involvement in the tourism sector. There is a lack of in-depth understanding of the processes by which cultural expressions are selected, staged, and potentially altered to meet the demands of the tourist market. Moreover, the modalities of participation and the sociocultural benefits for local communities often remain poorly defined, raising concerns about the sustainability and inclusiveness of this form of development.

The tourism models promoted in various localities in Fako to foster local development are: beach tourism, ecotourism, sports tourism and cultural tourism. The level of participation by local communities in the planning and management of cultural tourism activities is low, which limits their ability to benefit equitably from the economic spin-offs and to influence the preservation of their own culture. Tourism development in Fako is associated with the acculturation of younger generations, who tend to adopt cultural practices influenced by tourism interactions to the detriment of local traditions. Tourist pressure on cultural and natural sites is therefore leading to the degradation of these resources and a loss of their authenticity; cultural tourism in Fako may therefore exacerbate social tensions within communities due to the unequal distribution of benefits and opportunities. Sports tourism is attracting growing interest due to its economic impact and the appeal it generates because of the values and images it conveys (environment, ecology, freedom, concern for well-being, etc.). Far from being impervious, the tourism and sports markets have become sufficiently intertwined to now constitute a real source of revenue and employment for tourist areas and regions on the one hand, and sending and receiving countries on the other. Mount Cameroon and the lava from Mount Cameroon's last volcanic eruption in 1999 are tangible examples in the Fako Division.

Socio-Economic Development

The essential goal of sustainable development, a self-reproducing goal, is to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Through its ability to ensure the self-reproducing satisfaction of human needs in the short, medium and long term, development becomes sustainable (Bon 2009, Macleod and by 2007, Hopwood *et al*., 2005). Sustainable tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, professionals, the environment and host communities (UNWTO 2012). It aims to strike a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development in the production and delivery of tourism activities.

Sociocultural Dynamics

The various tourism models in the Fako Division aim to promote local skills and traditions by involving local guides, artisans and service providers from the communities; to ensure a fair distribution of economic benefits, enabling communities to finance their own micro-development projects (health, education, drinking water, etc.) and to raise visitors' awareness of local culture and environmental issues,

thereby promoting more respectful and educational tourism that not only raises awareness among local people and visitors of the importance of conservation, but also creates employment opportunities for guides, porters and nature-related service providers. However, it is crucial to avoid excessive commodification of nature and to ensure that the benefits of conservation are shared with local communities. Contribution to local development through the financing of conservation projects, creation of green jobs, promotion of local environmental knowledge, and development of light, environmentally friendly infrastructure.

Heritage-Based Local Tourism: Promoting Regional Identity

Beyond natural sites, there is the history of indigenous peoples, ancestral traditions, and historical sites such as the German Cannon of Bimbia and the Bimbia Slave Site. Heritage-based tourism would add depth and authenticity to the tourist experience by integrating these elements as key features. For example, tours leading to Mount Cameroon could include stops in villages for cultural exchanges, tasting local dishes, or learning traditional dances, thus ensuring the development of tourism products based on identity. As the informant suggests, "it is preferable to involve local institutions and guardians of knowledge. Traditional chiefs, cultural associations and local historians would be central players in this heritage preservation, guaranteeing authenticity and respect for practices." (Interview with an informant in Limbé on 15 October 2023). Promoting a brand image for Fako based on its unique heritage attracts tourists seeking deeper and more meaningful experiences than simple 'mass tourism'.

Promoting Local Culture

Participatory tourism promotes an authentic experience, where visitors interact with local culture in a respectful manner. It encourages the preservation of traditional skills, languages, customs and cultural sites. It fosters dialogue and mutual understanding between tourists and local populations, providing a framework for community involvement that is necessary for authentic and respectful heritage preservation. Without local participation, heritage preservation risks being superficial or even exploitative. It allows for diversification of offerings and adds value to the tourist experience. Both concepts contribute to sustainable development by promoting the conservation of heritage (natural and cultural) and ensuring economic benefits for local communities. They strengthen local communities' sense of belonging and pride in their heritage, encouraging them to preserve it. Participatory ecotourism raises awareness among tourists and communities about the importance of environmental conservation. A portion of the revenue generated by tourism activities is often reinvested in conservation projects such as species protection, habitat restoration, anti-poaching efforts, and minimising environmental impact (waste management, use of renewable energy, respect for flora and fauna).

Diversification of Income Sources and Increased Purchasing Power/Creation of Direct and Indirect Jobs

The impact is a reduction in unemployment, particularly among young people and women, in rural and peri-urban areas of Fako. Socio-economically, communities benefit directly from the income. Direct jobs are created for young people, women and other vulnerable groups within the community. Profits can be reinvested in community development projects (schools, health clinics, access to water, roads). The hotel and restaurant sector, tourist guides (mountain, cultural, naturalist, historical), transport (drivers, motorbike taxis), the sale of handicrafts, and site management (reception, maintenance), create formal or informal, temporary or permanent jobs, thereby reducing the high unemployment rate among the local population. As such, the increase in tourist activity offers an alternative or complement to traditional activities (agriculture, fishing, increased demand for fresh produce, livestock farming (supplying local restaurant chefs and waiters) or even the creation of indirect jobs for food suppliers to tourist facilities, fishermen, farmers, cleaning service providers, site maintenance staff, etc., construction (infrastructure development), and services (laundries, maintenance), thereby reducing dependence on sometimes fragile resources, managers of small accommodation facilities (tourist guesthouse, homestays), souvenir sellers, For communities dependent on agriculture or fishing, tourism offers an alternative or complementary source of income, thereby reducing their vulnerability to climate shocks or fluctuations in commodity prices. Women, who are often marginalised in the formal economy, can find opportunities in crafts, cooking, accommodation and the management of micro-tourism businesses. Profits are better distributed within the community. Local involvement ensures more sustainable management of resources and activities. Authentic contact with local populations enriches the travel experience. Active community participation increases the effectiveness of conservation efforts and develops skills and autonomy. This diversification reduces vulnerability to external shocks (climate, fluctuations in commodity prices). Increased income translates into improved household purchasing power, giving them better access to basic services (health, education, better quality food) and the ability to invest in small businesses or improve their housing.

Capacity Building and Community Empowerment

The emergence and strengthening of small structures managed by local populations (lodgings, family restaurants, craft cooperatives, guide agencies) ensure that profits remain and circulate within the local economy. These micro-enterprises are vectors of empowerment and entrepreneurial development. Taxes collected on tourist activities (VAT, tourist taxes) can

feed into local authority budgets, giving them the means to finance projects of general interest (infrastructure, social services). Tourism, particularly in its participatory forms (participatory ecotourism, community-based tourism), contributes to skills development and the empowerment of local actors. Local micro-tourism enterprises consist of the development of small accommodation facilities (campsites, lodges), restaurants offering traditional dishes, and craft cooperatives. The hotel and restaurant sector is therefore a powerful driver of local development in Fako. It generates a large number of direct jobs (reception, kitchen, service, maintenance and security staff) and indirect jobs (product suppliers, laundries, transporters). These jobs are accessible to people with different levels of qualifications, offering opportunities for young people and less skilled populations. Employee salaries, purchases of local products and taxes collected by local authorities contribute directly to the Division's economy. The profits made by local entrepreneurs are often reinvested in the community. Communities involved in decision-making and managing their own tourism initiatives thereby strengthen their capacity to define and control their own development. This process fosters the emergence of local leaders and stronger community governance structures.

Significant Socio-Cultural Benefits for the Communities of Fako

The most direct contribution of tourism to local development lies in its ability to generate income for local people. It brings significant socio-cultural benefits to the communities of Fako. It strengthens cultural pride and identity in the sense that tourists' appreciation of local traditions, dances, crafts and stories can boost communities' self-esteem and pride in their heritage. Cultural festivals (e.g. Bakweri Festival, Limbe FESTAC) are gaining visibility and being revitalised thanks to tourist interest, encouraging their intergenerational transmission. Tourist interest in historical sites (Bimbia, colonial remains) and cultural practices (crafts) can generate resources and political will for their conservation and restoration. Local languages and storytelling can be preserved through their use in guided tours or performances. Revenue generated by tourism can be reinvested in community projects (schools, health centres, access to drinking water), directly improving residents' quality of life.

The development of infrastructure for tourists (roads, communications) often benefits the entire population. Contact with visitors from different cultures promotes open-mindedness, tolerance and a better understanding of the world for host communities. Tourists leave with a more nuanced and positive view of Cameroon and its people. However, it is important to mention the turmoil caused by the so-called Anglophone crisis, as one informant testifies: "*The tourists we have received so far booked long before the Anglophone crisis began in 2016, and the money for the visits had already been paid. All those who had booked, as well as financial transactions that had not yet been completed, were cancelled. From January until now in September, we have no confirmed visits. Those who had planned to come are hesitating and prefer to wait until the end of the crisis... We employed five workers, but I had to let them go due to financial constraints. We now rely mainly on temporary workers, guides whom we hire on a part-time basis when the need arises.*" (Interview with an informant in Limbé on 04/08/2023). Community-based tourism and participatory ecotourism give local populations greater control over their development and how their culture is presented. Skills development (communication, languages, management) strengthens the capacity of individuals and groups to take action.

Improvement and Modernisation of Basic Infrastructure and Services

The economic benefits of tourism can encourage local authorities and investors to improve infrastructure. This includes improving access routes and building or rehabilitating roads leading to tourist sites (which also benefits local residents). The needs of tourist facilities can encourage the development of water and electricity supplies in villages. The development of health and educational facilities, indirectly, increased tax revenues or community contributions from tourism can finance social development projects (health clinics, schools). Improvement of communication services: the development of telephone and internet networks for tourism needs, benefiting communities. The increase in hotel and restaurant occupancy poses challenges in terms of waste management and compliance with environmental standards. All of this must be taken into account if we want to ensure that the sector's development benefits local populations fairly, beyond the major hotel groups. In other words, hotels and restaurants are integral components of the Fako tourism model. Their harmonious development, in synergy with other forms of tourism (ecotourism, cultural tourism, community tourism), is fundamental to maximising the sector's contribution to the sustainable socio-economic development of the Division. To meet the requirements of MICE events, hotels and conference centres are encouraged to modernise their facilities (internet bandwidth, audiovisual equipment, modular rooms). This can indirectly stimulate the improvement of urban infrastructure (roads, public transport, connectivity), thereby leading to the transfer of knowledge and expertise. In this context, hosting conferences, particularly those of a scientific or professional nature, facilitates the exchange of ideas and the transfer of technology and know-how to local professionals and students. Participants may be potential investors or partners for development projects. Tourism therefore makes a multifaceted and interconnected contribution to local development in Fako. However, in order for this contribution to be fully effective and sustainable, it must transcend simple economic logic and embrace a holistic vision. This implies participatory planning, equitable

distribution of benefits, a commitment to sustainability, capacity building, and a favourable political and regulatory framework. One informant put it this way: "*The CTOs and NGOs themselves are on a tight budget. They couldn't really offer any support. Thus, the support offered to local tourism NGOs is limited to technical assistance through irregular seminars and workshops organised by MINTOURL, CBTOs and NGOs, mainly with technical and financial assistance from foreign governments and international organisations*". (FGD conducted in Bimbia on 04/08/2023). These international organisations aim to educate communities on how to set up, manage and monitor their tourism operations. Survey results reveal that "*the lack of effective support from MINTOURL and MINAC for tourism development in the Division is partly due to the absence of a (sustainable) tourism development and management policy in the country*". (FGD conducted in Limbé on 18 January 2021). One of the highlights of cultural tourism is its contribution to local development through the promotion of local artisans and artists, the promotion of local products, the revitalisation of historical sites, the generation of income through shows, crafts, gastronomy, the creation of formal and informal jobs, increased tax revenues for local authorities, and the development of modern infrastructure.

Development of Entrepreneurial Skills

The need for qualified personnel stimulates vocational training in the hotel and catering trades (hotel schools, on-the-job training). This contributes to improving services and professionalising the sector. The development of the hotel industry encourages improvements in basic infrastructure (roads, water, electricity, sanitation) in areas where establishments are located. High-quality hotel and catering services are crucial to the overall attractiveness of Fako as a tourist destination, encouraging longer stays and higher visitor spending. Training in small business management (accounting, marketing, customer service); learning how to plan, organise and manage tourism projects; acquiring new technical and language skills through training local guides (knowledge of biodiversity, history, guiding techniques, first aid). Foreign language courses (English, French) facilitate interactions with international tourists; training in hospitality, catering, health and safety remains a key benefit for communities.

Organisation of Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

The Fako Division, and more specifically its cities of Buéa (regional capital of the South-West) and Limbé (a dynamic coastal city), has significant potential for the development of business and conference tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions - MICE). The organisation of conferences, seminars and workshops contributes significantly to local development by attracting a specific clientele with particular needs and economic impacts. The presence of hotel infrastructure and a certain economic and administrative centrality in Fako (notably Limbe and Buea, the seat of the South-West region) opens up prospects for business and conference tourism, stimulating the local economy by creating demand for accommodation, catering, transport and other professional services. It also promotes exchanges and partnerships, contributes to local development by increasing the turnover of local businesses, stimulates employment in services and improves the visibility of the Division.

Increased Purchasing Power

In the context of the Fako Division, local micro-tourism enterprises are particularly relevant due to the diversity of opportunities and the need to directly involve communities. The additional income enables households to improve their access to basic services (health, education, better quality food) and to invest in small personal infrastructure (improvements to their homes). A local tourism micro-enterprise is a small business, often very small (fewer than 10 employees, sometimes even just one person), owned and managed by members of the local community, whose activities are directly linked to the tourism sector. These businesses play a crucial role in local development as they enable a more equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism among the population.

Small-scale micro-enterprises operate with limited resources but can be highly responsive to local market needs and trends. Examples include small family-run guesthouses, restaurants with just a few tables, artisans selling their creations, and independent guides. They are generally owned and managed by individuals, families, or small groups within the community concerned. This ensures that the income generated remains largely within the local economy. Their offerings are often strongly linked to the cultural heritage, traditional skills or specific natural resources of Fako. They are better placed to offer authentic experiences that respect the environment and local culture. They often require a relatively low initial investment, making them accessible to a wider range of people within the community. Guest rooms or small lodgings in local homes in the villages around Mount Cameroon or on the coast offer a cultural immersion experience, such as: small, simple and eco-friendly accommodation in protected natural areas, managed by local communities in ecotourism camps; small local restaurants/refreshment bars serving authentic Fako dishes (Eru, Ndole, grilled fish, etc.) prepared with local ingredients, often by women; small shops selling local products such as fresh fruit, natural juices, spices and processed seafood.

They generate jobs for young people, women and marginalised populations, often without requiring high formal qualifications at the outset. By managing their own businesses, residents develop entrepreneurial, management, marketing and customer service skills.

They showcase the culture, traditions and natural resources of Fako in an authentic way. They give communities greater control over their development and how tourism is conducted in their area. They diversify the local economy, making it less dependent on a single activity (e.g. agriculture) through economic resilience. The Authentic Tourism Experience: They offer visitors a more immersive and meaningful experience, promoting direct contact with the population and the discovery of local life. Community-based tourism contributes to local development. This contribution manifests itself in the generation of direct income for households, the creation of local jobs, the improvement of basic infrastructure (water, energy, roads) if profits are reinvested, and the strengthening of entrepreneurial capacities.

Sociocultural Contribution: Strengthening Identity and Social Cohesion

When well-managed, tourism strengthens the social fabric and cultural pride of host communities. Festivals and cultural events are revitalised and promoted, ensuring the transmission of dances, songs, stories, rituals and craft skills (basket weaving, pottery, sculpture) to younger generations. Historic sites (Bimbia, colonial remains in Buea and Limbe) are maintained, restored and promoted, strengthening the sense of belonging and collective memory of the people of Fako. Tourist demand for handicrafts and local products supports local artisans and farmers, preserving ancestral techniques and unique skills. Visitors' interest in and appreciation of local culture and traditions strengthens residents' identity and pride in their heritage. This reverses the trend of cultural erosion due to globalisation. The development of human capacities and empowerment through community participation in the planning, management and benefits of tourism activities strengthens their leadership, negotiation and project management skills. Training programmes (guiding, languages, hospitality, cooking) increase individuals' professional skills and self-confidence. The emergence of community groups or cooperatives to manage tourism initiatives promotes social cohesion and collective capacity for action. Intercultural exchanges and direct interactions between tourists and local populations can break down stereotypes and promote mutual understanding and open-mindedness on both sides.

Implications and Benefits of Immersive Tourism for Fako

Immersive tourism encourages a respectful approach to local culture, avoiding superficiality and 'folklorisation'. The income generated by workshops, accommodation, the sale of crafts and the services of local guides directly benefits communities. By promoting local skills and traditions, immersive tourism contributes to their transmission and preservation for future generations. Communities see their culture appreciated and valued, which can strengthen their pride and identity. Tourists leave with a deeper understanding of the local culture, and locals discover other cultures,

promoting tolerance and open-mindedness. This model is inherently more sustainable because it favours small structures, reduces the environmental impact of large infrastructures, and distributes profits more evenly.

For the Fako Division, the development of immersive cultural tourism represents a promising path towards inclusive local development that respects the environment and promotes its rich socio-cultural heritage. This would require close collaboration between communities, local authorities, tourism operators and development experts. Tourism is a powerful driver of conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. Part of the revenue generated by ecotourism (entrance fees, taxes, and voluntary contributions) can be directly reinvested in conservation projects (protection of protected areas such as Mount Cameroon, anti-poaching, reforestation, waste management). Responsible tourism and ecotourism raise awareness among visitors and local populations of the importance of Fako's biodiversity and the challenges of preserving it, as nature guides play a crucial educational role in explaining ecosystems and species. By offering economic alternatives, tourism reduces communities' dependence on unsustainable activities (deforestation, overfishing, and illegal hunting). The adoption of low-impact tourism practices (waste management, use of renewable energy, responsible water consumption) contributes to the preservation of fragile ecosystems.

Uncontrolled tourism development has undesirable socio-cultural consequences. Pressure to meet tourists' expectations pushes communities to modify or 'folklorise' their rituals, dances or crafts, losing their original meaning and becoming mere spectacles or consumer products. Handicrafts are very often mass-produced and some lose their symbolic value. The 'demonstration effect' leads to the imitation of tourists' lifestyles, particularly among young people, resulting in a loss of interest in traditional values and ancestral practices. Changes in social behaviour, clothing and aspirations arise from competition between the needs of tourists (water, beaches) and those of residents, creating frustration.

The increase in the prices of goods and services due to tourist demand makes life more expensive for locals. The unequal distribution of tourism profits exacerbates tensions and inequalities within communities. Excessive visitor numbers disturb residents' peace and quiet, increase noise pollution and minor crime. The emergence of new economic players linked to tourism is changing traditional social hierarchies. The displacement of populations for major tourism projects sometimes leads to a loss of social ties and ancestral lands.

Ethical and Moral Issues

In some contexts, tourism is associated with social problems linked to moral depravity. These include

sex tourism, prostitution and child begging, although this is less prevalent in Fako. Loss of respect for elders or authority figures if their roles are perceived as less valuable than tourism opportunities. The historic site of Bimbia, linked to the slave trade, is a sensitive place of remembrance. The management of this site must ensure that the dignity of the victims and their descendants is respected, avoiding any form of 'spectacularisation' of suffering.

The sacred relationship between the Bakweri people and Mount Fako requires a tourism approach that respects local rituals and beliefs, actively involving traditional chiefs and elders. The current crisis has exacerbated social and economic tensions, making communities even more vulnerable to the negative impacts of unregulated tourism, but also more likely to be involved in resilience projects focused on community-based tourism. This article highlights the crucial importance of understanding the impact of tourism on cultural values and lifestyles, as this is at the heart of socio-cultural dynamics.

Impact on Cultural Values and Lifestyles

The interaction between tourists and host communities is a dynamic process that profoundly influences cultural values and traditional lifestyles. In the Fako Division, where ethnic diversity (Bakweri, Isubu, Bamboko, Wovea, etc.) and a rich heritage intermingle with colonial history and contemporary challenges, these impacts are particularly nuanced. One of the most direct and often ambivalent impacts is the transformation of cultural elements into tourism products. There is also a loss of authenticity and meaning insofar as cultural practices that were once sacred or highly symbolic (ritual dances, ceremonies, songs) are adapted or simplified to appeal to tourists, thereby losing their deeper meaning. They become 'shows' rather than authentic expressions of community life. For example, a traditional dance performed outside its original ritual context becomes, in most cases, a mere demonstration. Traditional dances, songs, or even fragments of rituals that were once performed in specific contexts (initiation ceremonies, weddings, funerals, religious celebrations) for reasons internal to the community are transformed into daily 'shows' for tourists. They are often shortened, simplified, or performed outside their sacred time or place, thus losing their symbolic and spiritual significance.

Cultural elements are recreated or staged artificially to meet perceived tourist demand, rather than reflecting the community's living and evolving practices. For example, a village may be transformed into a 'living museum' where residents play a role, rather than simply living their daily lives. Commercial imperatives may push artisans to produce quickly and in large quantities, using cheaper or lower-quality materials, to the detriment of complex traditional techniques and the uniqueness of each piece. Objects that had a specific ritual, utilitarian

or social function are transformed into simple decorative souvenirs, their design altered to appeal to Western tourist tastes (bright colours, simplified patterns). In other words, crafts that were once created for everyday or ritual use are now mass-produced, using less noble materials and of lower quality, to meet tourist demand for souvenirs. The most striking example is the 'Ndop' fabric, which today comes in all shapes and sizes. This leads to a loss of traditional skills and a focus on quantity rather than quality or meaning. Local cultures are reduced to a few clichés or stereotypical representations that meet tourists' expectations, obscuring the complexity and diversity of cultural realities.

Demonstration Effect and Erosion of Values

Constant contact with tourists, who are often perceived as wealthier and more 'modern', has a significant impact on the aspirations and values of host communities. Young people, in particular, are influenced by the lifestyles, material wealth and behaviour of tourists. This leads to a desire for foreign consumer goods, emigration, and a devaluation of traditional lifestyles (farming, artisanal fishing). The introduction of money as the main driver of tourist interactions weakens traditional community values based on reciprocity, solidarity, and sharing. The monetisation of all services alters social relationships. The adoption of Western clothing or the more frequent use of foreign languages (English, French) to the detriment of local languages (Kpe, Isu, Wovea) is one of the consequences of tourist interaction. The economic disparity between tourists and hosts creates feelings of frustration or envy, and potentially leads to begging or exploitation.

Tourism development directly alters communities' daily routines and activities. Increased demand for water, energy and food (particularly seafood in Limbé) from the tourism sector creates shortages or price increases for local populations, affecting their access to essential goods. Some community members are abandoning traditional activities (farming, fishing) in favour of more lucrative jobs in tourism, which can affect local food security or the transmission of primary skills. Ancestral lands, public beaches, and sacred sites are being transformed into exclusive or paid tourist areas, limiting communities' access to their own living, worship, and subsistence spaces. High tourist traffic leads to noise, congestion, and a loss of tranquillity for residents, affecting their daily quality of life.

Preservation and Revitalisation of Cultural Heritage

Cultural festivals and events are supported and promoted, encouraging the transmission of dances, songs, stories, rituals and craftsmanship to younger generations. Historic sites (Bimbia, colonial ruins in Buea and Limbe) are maintained, restored and promoted thanks to tourism revenues and awareness of their importance. Local crafts and local products are promoted, creating markets for producers and artisans and contributing to the survival of ancestral techniques.

Tourism can have positive effects on the social fabric of communities, such as strengthening community cohesion. Collective participation in tourism projects promotes teamwork and a sense of belonging. The promotion of local identity through visitors' appreciation of local culture and traditions reinforces residents' pride in their heritage. Intercultural exchanges between tourists and communities can break down stereotypes, promote mutual understanding and open-mindedness.

Guides and porters acquire transferable professional skills (organisation, leadership, languages). Recognition of their role and demand for their services strengthen the dignity and autonomy of communities. Mount Cameroon's reputation as a trekking destination draws attention to the natural and cultural wealth of Fako. Guides often share myths and legends related to Mount Fako, enriching the experience of hikers and promoting oral heritage. The promotion of volcanic landscapes for tourism contributes to local development by generating income through the creation of jobs for guides, porters and reception staff, the development of hotels and restaurants, the sale of local crafts and the protection of the environment. The economic value of tourism encourages the preservation of volcanic landscapes and associated biodiversity. Guides share traditional knowledge about the volcano and its environment by promoting local culture. Tourism encourages the preservation of cultural practices linked to Mount Cameroon. The volcanic landscapes of Fako, with Mount Cameroon at their forefront, represent an exceptional tourist asset. Sustainable management, combining preservation of their unique character with benefits for local communities, is a major challenge for the future of tourism in the region. Uncontrolled tourism development could disrupt natural habitats if strict rules are not enforced (limited number of visitors, marked trails, no feeding of animals).

Cultural Resilience and Adaptation

It is important to note that communities are not simply passive recipients of impacts. They develop resilience and adaptation strategies. In community-based tourism models, communities actively seek to define how their culture is presented and marketed in order to preserve its authenticity and ensure that the benefits accrue to them. Tourism stimulates renewed interest in cultural practices that were in decline, as they become a source of pride and income. Awareness-raising efforts can be put in place to educate visitors about cultural sensitivities and to equip local young people to interact constructively with tourists without giving up their identity.

The impact of tourism on cultural values and lifestyles in Fako is a double-edged sword. While on the one hand it offers opportunities for promotion, preservation and empowerment, on the other hand it poses real risks of denaturation, excessive commercialisation and erosion of identities. The loss of authenticity and stereotyping is a crucial aspect of the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism. One of the major challenges posed by the development of tourism is the risk of loss of cultural authenticity and stereotyping of the practices, objects and representations of host communities. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in regions rich in heritage, such as the Fako Division, where the interaction between tourist expectations and local cultural realities leads to adaptations that alter the very substance of the culture. Loss of authenticity occurs when cultural elements are modified, simplified or taken out of context to suit tourist consumption, thereby losing their original meaning and depth.

Language and Interactions

The inhabitants are perceived solely as 'natives' or 'simple, smiling people', denying their individuality, modernity, aspirations or problems. Relationships can become superficial and transactional. Stereotyping reinforces existing prejudices about African cultures, reducing them to exoticism, simplicity or primitivism, rather than recognising their complexity and dynamism. This creates a power asymmetry where local culture is objectified and consumed, rather than understood and respected. Sometimes, under economic pressure and in order to attract tourists, communities themselves begin to represent themselves in a stereotypical manner, internalising external expectations and losing part of their own self-definition.

Manifestations of These Negative Impacts in the Fako Division

These phenomena manifest themselves in Fako in various ways. When the tales and legends of the Bakweri people about Mount Fako are recounted, they may be oversimplified or overly dramatised, losing important nuances of their spiritual meaning. Although authenticity is paramount in Bimbia, there is a risk of presenting the history of the slave trade in a sensationalist or simplified manner, rather than encouraging deep reflection on its complexities and legacies. Some festivals become events primarily aimed at tourists, with repetitive performances and a loss of their original community significance. The mass production of wood carvings or other objects compromises quality and artistic meaning, compared to unique pieces created for the community.

During this same period, the government increasingly encouraged the construction and ownership of private hotels, but this was hampered by administrative constraints. It was not until 2006 that MINTOURL began classifying and reclassifying hotels and speeding up the processing of applications from investors wishing to invest in the accommodation sector. Today, investment in the tourism industry is dominated by the private sector, with the government mainly playing the role of facilitator and ensuring that laws are implemented and enforced. Almost all hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and tour operators are owned,

controlled and managed by the private sector, but the government retains control of some hotels and is the sole administrator of all national parks and other protected areas in the country. By retaining complete control over access to the national parks and reserves on which the development of the nature-based tourism industry relies, there has been very little infrastructure development in or around them. This has helped to preserve the diversity of wildlife and flora in these parks. Issues such as carrying capacity, visits, pollution and waste disposal, etc., are unknown there.

On the other hand, the lack of accommodation coupled with limited accessibility has contributed to making most of Fako's parks and natural sites inaccessible to many visitors who could have visited them and thus contributed to the emergence of the national economy. This has also made the sites less attractive and uncompetitive in the ecotourism market compared to, for example, Gabon, which offers similar ecotourism, albeit on a smaller scale and with less variety. In any case, it is well planned and managed, high-end, environmentally friendly and has eco-lodges and camps within its parks (Gabontour, 2010). Aware that an important element of the overall tone or appeal of tourist destinations is the physical location, density and quality of accommodation, our visit to Bimbia and Mount Cameroon, for example, revealed that the The accommodation facilities at these sites are in a state of neglect and pose a health hazard. This approach is already being practised to a very limited extent by BERUDEP and Mount CEO, but discussions with their representatives have revealed that this idea has yet to be fully accepted by local authorities and communities because, in addition to getting used to the whole concept, they lack the necessary funding to undertake improvements to their homes, to make them clean and comfortable, as well as to provide basic necessities and sanitary facilities for tourists. The funds needed for the project may become available if the communities adopt the microfinance model presented above.

Bypassing Independence and Post-Independence Movements

Cameroon's political history and recent crises (particularly the Anglophone crisis) have had an impact on tourism. Periods of instability have generated mistrust towards foreigners or activities perceived as foreign. Conversely, after difficult periods, tourism is a sign of a return to normality and an opportunity for economic recovery. The Anglophone crisis has had a significant impact on tourism in Fako, resulting in considerable economic losses. This recent experience has anchored an image of vulnerability and uncertainty in the minds of the population, making a return to stable tourist activity more difficult. The informant, referring to this situation, reports: 'The population is living in uncertainty. The insecurity caused by the Anglophone crisis means that people cannot fully engage in income-generating activities related to tourism. When you make an investment, you can lose everything, or it can all go up in smoke.' (Interview with an informant in Bimbia on 23 June 2023). Additional issues that have contributed to hampering the Fako Division as a tourism and holiday destination include hospitality, general infrastructure services and the level of human resource development (HRD) in the tourism sector. As indicated by the main themes described, which are interdependent, the tourism industry in this Division depends in part on them, as they have the potential to drive tourism development and growth at the national and regional levels. The key themes therefore act as motivators for tourism development. It is in this vein that 'social actors are not Mr Jourdains or cultural idiots, but people who implement ethnomethods or methods... practices of ordinary knowledge that enable them to solve their problems of living and interpret them'. A critical assessment of the importance and impact of the issues discussed in the previous chapters on the development of sustainable tourism is provided below, highlighting the extent to which tourism development in Fako should be considered from an endogenous perspective.

Conservation of the Environment, Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Hiking tourism gives economic value to the ecosystems of Mount Cameroon, encouraging communities and authorities to protect them. Part of the revenue can be allocated to combating poaching, reforestation and waste management on the trail. Local guides can raise awareness among visitors and communities about the importance of biodiversity and environmentally friendly practices. The revenue generated by ecotourism can be reinvested in the protection of natural areas (Mount Cameroon, coastal areas, forests) and endangered species. Raising awareness among local people and visitors about the importance of conservation, thereby creating a shared interest in protecting the environment. The implementation of low-impact tourism practices (waste management, rational use of resources). Furthermore, the appeal of rare species generates funds that can be allocated to monitoring, scientific research and conservation programmes (anti-poaching, reforestation). Local guides and sites such as the Wildlife Centre play a key role in raising awareness among visitors and communities about the value of their natural heritage and the threats it faces. By promoting nature through tourism, communities can be encouraged to reduce unsustainable practices (deforestation, illegal hunting), in other words, reducing pressure on resources and building capacity by training locals in nature guiding techniques, biodiversity management and foreign languages. The development of scientific research and partnerships with national and international institutions for the study and conservation of Fako's biodiversity, the promotion of heritage by highlighting Fako's unique natural wealth, increasing its visibility as a leading ecotourism destination. The integration of communities' traditional knowledge of

medicinal flora and fauna into the interpretation offered to visitors.

Direct Income Generation

Hiking and trekking activities generate multiple benefits for local development in Fako. The salaries of guides and porters are the main source of income for many men and young people in mountain communities. A portion of the entrance fees and taxes paid by hikers can be reinvested in park management and conservation. The same applies to ancillary services such as accommodation (before/after the trek), catering, local transport and the purchase of supplies. Wildlife viewing, as a component of ecotourism, contributes significantly to local development with a particular focus on income generation, conservation and awareness, and capacity building. It creates jobs for young people from local communities who are trained in ecotourism, commonly known as naturalist guides, in species identification and environmental awareness. Revenue from entrance fees to parks, reserves or centres (such as the Wildlife Centre) can be reinvested in conservation and community development, accommodation (lodges), catering, transport, and the sale of observation equipment or local crafts related to nature.

The organisation of conferences, seminars and workshops makes specific contributions to local development, thereby providing a direct economic stimulus. For example, there is an increase in turnover. Hotels, restaurants, conference centres and catering services see a significant increase in their revenues. "*The Fako Division is sought after by most speakers who come here to conduct their activities. And when they come in large numbers, hotels are booked well in advance. Depending on the event, restaurants and catering services generate high turnover*". (Interview with an informant in Bimbia on 14 June 2023). Through this conference-based tourism model, it drives specific services, such as creating demand for translation, sound, projection, specialised transport (shuttles), security, florists and local printers. Organisers and participants are likely to purchase local goods and services (office supplies, refreshments, handicrafts). In addition to permanent jobs in the hotel industry, these events generate temporary jobs for reception staff, technicians, interpreters, drivers, security guards, etc. They can also create opportunities for young local professionals. The Informateur states that it 'has a guaranteed source of income for the implementation of most of the projects mentioned in their recently adopted PMP. This is because they were working on a major conservation project.*'wildlife and community development, a project known as the Kudo-Zumbo project, in partnership with the WWF, which are the main technical and financial sponsors*." (Interview with Informateur, in Bimbia on 18 June 2023). Furthermore, beaches and water sports contribute significantly to local development in Fako in several ways: Income generation through informal and formal trade. Street vendors, small beach restaurants,

canoe rental companies and hotels benefit directly from the influx of visitors. Job creation for waiters, cooks, salespeople, security guards, cleaners, and maintenance staff in hotels and beach facilities. The demand generated by beach tourism encourages improvements in access roads, water and electricity services in coastal areas. Beaches are major entry points for tourism in Fako, attracting visitors who explore other types of tourism (ecotourism, cultural tourism). The leisure infrastructure and activities developed for tourists also benefit local residents. The popularity of beaches can attract investment in the hotel and restaurant sector.

To stimulate the local economy by increasing visitor spending in restaurants, bars, shops, transport, and activity providers. Job creation through the creation of positions in the hotel, restaurant, entertainment, and leisure facility management sectors; infrastructure improvement, as the need for entertainment and recreational services drives the development of better road, energy, and leisure infrastructure. Improved quality of life for residents, as the infrastructure and activities developed for tourists also benefit local populations, improving their leisure options. The attractiveness of the destination, based on a wide range of recreational activities, makes Fako more appealing to a wider audience, thus encouraging longer stays.

The creation of parks and implementation of rules and regulations concerning their management has deprived local communities of their livelihoods. Some resort to poaching and illegal harvesting of forest products, causing constant conflict between park management and local communities. Even though they are allowed to hunt small animals in the park, they are complicit with poachers who hunt large mammals such as elephants and gorillas. Unlike the sometimes tense relationship between MINTOURL, MINFOF and local authorities, relations between MINCAC and local communities are considered to be fairly cordial. However, the Informant pointed out, '*They have received very little support from the government. They are going to start working with communities across the country to identify natural resources that can be promoted through tourism. However, he stressed that these resources cannot be properly marketed due to a lack of finances and qualified personnel to oversee their promotion, although the training of qualified personnel is being considered.*' (Interview with Informant, in Limbe on 20 November 2021). These institutions regularly take part in organising awareness-raising and training workshops and seminars for local communities. This is because their main objective is to promote local economic development by actively involving community members in profitable socio-economic activities. Thus, all their workers and managers, from back-office staff to tour guides, come from local communities. The view that the relationship is harmonious has been challenged by the informant, who mentions "the gradual deterioration of relations between the communities and the Director

General of Mount Cameroon since the departure of the DED and GTZ teams in 2007. There is favouritism in the selection of tour guides and porters to accompany tourists to Mount Cameroon, and there are irregularities in the management of funds collected from mountaineers and intended for rural development projects in villages surrounding the mountain. These differences have prompted porters and guides to return to their former occupation of poaching in order to support their families. Relations between local private sector actors are not very harmonious, bordering on mutual mistrust. (Interview with Informant, in Buea, Mount Cameroon, on 5 September 2023). In terms of relations with international operators, the lack of security and the guarantees still demanded by many operators on the supply side before agreeing to work with local operators were perceived as a hindrance by those interviewed. However, some of them had collaborated and acted as ground handling agents for international tour operators.

DISCUSSION

The results of various studies indicate that tourists modify their behaviour to minimise risk while travelling (Hartz, 1989) and replace risky destinations with those considered safe (Mansfeld, 1996). Therefore, issues of safety and risk for tourists are as compelling as they are burdensome when it comes to tourism development, management and promotion. Consequently, the way in which regions (destinations) plagued by political instability and terrorism, and those located nearby, deal with negative images becomes very important, as political problems, challenges and unrest can effectively hinder travel to crisis areas and create a lasting barrier to international tourism (Sönmez, 1998). In addition, crime and banditry can hinder tourism by damaging the safe image of a destination. The ramifications can be long-term and extremely difficult and costly (Bloom, 1996). Given these observations, the periods of political unrest in the early 1960s (independence) and again with the advent of multiparty politics in the early 1990s, and more recently the Anglophone crisis over the past few years, the Fako Division in Cameroon is therefore very politically unstable, with recorded cases of serious physical assaults.

These situations directly affect the Divisional and regional tourism industry, as the image of the region as a destination portrayed in the Western media is one of insecurity and political instability, which is not countered by effective public relations campaigns in the markets. This is a serious deterrent and an obstacle to the successful marketing of Fako as a tourist destination. The importance of service infrastructure, including transport, accommodation, catering and staff, to the development of tourism in general, from a geographical and economic perspective, has already been recognised by many tourism researchers (Gunn, 1994; Burton, 1994; Picard, 1993). Despite this, the results of the data analysis revealed that the construction and expansion of new and existing road networks, as well as the construction, upgrading and privatisation of accommodation infrastructure in a sustainable manner, has not been carried out in Fako, where developments in the above-mentioned sectors are virtually at a standstill, with most of the existing infrastructure in ruins.

Since the Middle Ages, transport systems and infrastructure have always played an important role in the development of travel and, consequently, the development of destinations. The role of transport as an agent and successful component of destination development cannot therefore be ignored. Transport acts as a motivator for tourism development in that it stimulates the creation of new attractions and the growth of existing ones (Kaul, 1985). The role played by a destination's infrastructure base as a factor in improving its attractiveness has already been cited by various authors, including Inskeep (1991) and Gunn (1988). In analysing the tourism product from a comparative and competitive advantage perspective, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) clearly demonstrated that without roads, airports, ports, electricity, sewage and drinking water, tourism planning and development in a destination is not possible.

Transport and accommodation services are two key elements of this basic infrastructure and form an integral part of the tourism package. In full terms, transport infrastructure in this case can be considered as the total of all roads, airports and seaports, while the accommodation base can be broadly seen as the total sum of all accommodation facilities from hotels, hostels, guesthouses and bed and breakfasts to campsites. A destination must be easy to access and easy to move around In this regard, good road, airport and maritime networks and infrastructure improve tourist accessibility within the country and enable a smooth transition on arrival and departure. Accommodation infrastructure enables tourists to enjoy comfortable stays and relaxing holidays by providing quality services similar to those available to tourists in their countries of origin. However, while a good transport network promotes the development of tourism and increases accessibility to certain previously unknown and undiscovered destinations, construction is also responsible for the natural and socio-cultural degradation of destinations, particularly in many developing countries where sustainable development and management practices are not fully implemented.

This research identified the lack of a good and efficient transport network as a critical factor that had a negative impact on visitors' overall holiday experience and their general appreciation of the country as a tourist destination. It is therefore necessary to make serious changes if due consideration is to be given to the proposals mentioned for the development of a tourism industry in Cameroon, based on the development and promotion of niche sectors. However, most of the

existing potential sites are located far from major cities and have serious accessibility problems, as mentioned in Chapter Four. This situation has created many difficulties and stress not only for tour operators, but even more so for tourists who are unfamiliar with the country. Thus, only the most resilient could undertake such trips because they are time-consuming and very tiring, even if they are adventurous and exciting.

In the case of Fako, what is more relevant is the formation or creation of partnerships in which all stakeholders participate directly or indirectly in the management of sustainable development in the various tourism niches, thus ensuring that the needs of communities are taken into account in all situations. The MITAC approach is based on the transfer of benefits to a community, level of wealth, involvement, ownership or control (Simpson, 2008); and its main objectives, like those of any CBT or TPP initiative, are to bring economic and socio-cultural benefits to local communities and ensure environmental conservation. The stakeholders in this partnership have a duty to ensure that benefits are delivered to the community while achieving the development of STs; the communities where operations are based may or may not be directly involved in the implementation of the project, but they always benefit from the initiative. This differs slightly from PPT or CBT, where the emphasis is on predefined sections of society, ownership, management and/or control of tourism projects (Simpson, 2008). It takes into account the complex nature of Cameroonian civil society, the shortage of qualified personnel in the tourism/hospitality sector and the perception of the tourism industry in the community compared to other economic sectors; Consequently, we believe that a CBTI model is best suited for the development of ST in Fako, where the few existing projects established under CBT guidelines are currently facing difficulties (poor management, lack of qualified personnel, and financial constraints) after having thrived under professional expatriate management.

The CBTI model emphasises that direct community involvement in tourism management is not essential. In doing so, it allows governments, industry, and NGOs the flexibility and potential to design and deliver benefits to a community without the challenges that can arise when communities are directly involved in decision-making processes (Simpson, 2008). In the proposed CBTI model for Cameroon, the community will continue to participate in programmes, and industry workers will be recruited and trained locally, as is standard for all CBT and PPT initiatives. Meanwhile, management will be composed of trained professionals, regardless of their background. This will ensure effective organisational management, achievement of objectives, and efficient collaboration among stakeholders without local interference.

The approach will involve identifying and legitimising all potential stakeholders (including organisers of planning, development, and management processes) (Roberts & Simpson, 1999) before establishing collaborative partnerships to implement CBTI projects that could aid in the development and management of destinations at both local and national levels. According to Reed (1997), stakeholder identification is always a complex issue in tourism-developing destinations where interests are not collectively organised, as is the case in Cameroon. However, once identified, collaboration among stakeholders provides a crucial bridge between the skills of the public, private, and community sectors and the organisations that enable access not only to higher levels of funding (Palmer, 1996) but also to the technical expertise required for sustainable tourism development and management, which many communities in Fako lack.

Challenges include difficulty obtaining loans or start-up capital, managerial and business skills deficits due to a glaring lack of training in business management, marketing, communication, and foreign languages, and limited capacity to reach broader clientele outside Fako. Service quality is paramount in a context facing competition from established large-scale tourism enterprises. "*There is (mis)management of funds intended for micro-projects (such as provision of potable water and construction of community halls) in villages surrounding Mount Cameroon at the end of each year. Very few villages have benefited from these funds since their inception. According to the informant, since the departure of GTZ, these funds, even when collected, have not been disbursed by Mount management to the communities for which they were intended*" (Interview with Informant 53, Buea, 13 February 2021). Funding has been considered one of the principal sources for the effective development of a sustainable tourism industry, not only globally but particularly in the Fako Division of Cameroon. The lack of financial resources for project development has been seen as a constraint preventing major reforms and the effective development of the tourism industry in both public and private sectors. This is justified by the fact that: "*MINTOURL and MINAC have the smallest budgets compared to other ministries. Nearly 60% of their budgets were spent on administrative costs, with the remainder allocated to development activities. The marketing domain and MINTOURL, in general, were unable to undertake substantial projects (e.g., marketing campaigns, destination promotion, participation in tourism fairs in key tourism-generating regions) to financially support private-sector stakeholders in need*" (FGD, Limbe, 24 January 2019).

BERUDEP's main funders, on the other hand, are international partners with whom the organisation works closely. "*Some funds also come from board members and from the sale of products (honey, wax,*

*medicinal herbs) from other operations in which the organisation is involve*d" (Interview, Limbe, 23 May 2023). Ecotourism has generated very little revenue as it is still at an early development stage with few tourists. Although some income derived from park entry fees paid by tourists and researchers, this amount is negligible and insufficient to cover operating costs. Consequently, none of the projects planned for sites in 2002 were realised due to lack of funds. Current PMP development has sought to be more realistic, considering the limited budget expected from government and international donors.

Regarding bank financing and international tourism enterprises, the fact that approximately 80% of private tour operators and hotels are family businesses meant that they lacked the guarantees financial institutions often require for agreements, leaving them to rely on their own resources. "*Sometimes I received remunerative commissions from MINTOURL, financial aid to the private sector; stakeholders were almost non-existent. Therefore, we had to manage alone despite ambitious plans for the industry's development. Even though there has been a trend since the appointment of the new minister to regularly invite the private sector and stakeholders to seminars and workshops organised by MINTOURL and other NGOs, regrettably, these invitations are often last-minute, making participation nearly impossible*" (FGD, Limbe, 20 November 2019).

Due to the seasonal nature of the industry and its current development stage, tour operators rely on other livelihood activities. They have been involved in diverse operations ranging from documentary production for international companies such as the BBC, micro-financing small community development projects, money transfer services, car rental, public transport, airport security, civil aviation, and event organisation, among others. "*Tourism we observe is not their main revenue-generating activity. Clearly, we must rely on other activities to survive… otherwise, we would collapse as we cannot pay rent and other bills. Things are very difficult*" (FGD, Bimbia, 13 June 2021). The absence of funding is viewed by all interviewed stakeholders as a significant barrier to tourism development in Fako. During these projects, an inventory of the park's flora and fauna is conducted. Administrative infrastructure for park workers has been built. Ecoguards have been trained. A VIC has been constructed and equipped with information on the park and surrounding region. Trails have been opened for researchers and tourists, and accommodation infrastructure, including a guesthouse and three camps, has been constructed. These projects now require partnership with local communities.

Partners can determine the project's focus and operational domains. This model exists in Fako, known as a "bipartite agreement," primarily in private initiatives such as agriculture, where communities/villages create SHGs/GICs to enter into partnerships with private sector economic operators investing in commercial agricultural development. These private enterprises provide necessary capital, often modest (agricultural tools, fertiliser, modern sustainable agriculture training, etc.), enabling local farmers and GICs to increase food production. The harvest is sold on national/international markets, and profits are fairly distributed among stakeholders. This has always resulted in a win-win situation for farmers and private enterprises. It would therefore be possible for tourism stakeholders to adapt this model for tourism industry development in Fako. This model envisages private investors becoming shareholders (for the duration of the agreement) in joint venture initiatives, providing the capital and expertise necessary for the development, management of ST, marketing activities, and simultaneous profit generation. This partnership model is formed when the community initiative is supported by government agencies, including public sector enterprises. Recognising that the government is responsible for providing numerous laws, regulations, and services directly or indirectly affecting the tourism industry—such as land use/management, labour and environmental regulations, skills, training and capacity building, essential infrastructure provision, and environmental services (including health, safety, waste management, and water supply)-it becomes an essential partner without which sustainable tourism development in Cameroon cannot occur. Government support to tourism-potential communities in Fako may take the form of these services and infrastructure, as well as financial aid, discounts, grants, and one-stop customs facilitation for enterprise creation and capacity building. This partnership model is currently challenging to implement, given Cameroon's broader economic crisis and budgetary and technical constraints.

This joint enterprise initiative is viable in Fako, where the economy often requires public-private partnerships for development operations. Local community groups with tourism development potential will be identified by regional private economic operators in association with public institutions through their enterprises and networks. Private operators become project sponsors, brand ambassadors, and patrons (or of source-market regions), contributing to the development and promotion of tourism activities in communities/regions. This type of collaboration not only ensures greater "inclusion" in travel, tourism, and hospitality industry operations but also enhances visitor experience, ensures optimal visitor satisfaction, and generates meaningful returns for communities through increased visitor influx.

CONCLUSION
The tourism industry in Fako Division, South-West Cameroon, possesses rich cultural and natural potential. Tourism in Fako is conducted with neglect for environmental, cultural, and local dimensions during project implementation. Tourism does not promote the well-being of local communities in Fako, as sustainable

tourism principles derived from sustainable development are not applied in tourism sector projects. Tourism activity in Fako primarily serves as a form of entertainment, neglecting environmental, cultural, and local dimensions during project development. Tourism is a globalised phenomenon; it is therefore necessary to clarify how global tourism forces interact with Fako's local specificities, producing socio-cultural outcomes unique to tourism operators, planners, and policymakers, in order to develop forms of tourism that benefit local communities, respect their culture and environment, and minimise negative impacts.

REFERENCES

- Archer, B., & Fletcher, J. (1996). L'impact économique du tourisme aux Seychelles.
- Archer, B., Cooper, C., & Ruhanen, L. (1994). Les impacts positifs et négatifs de tourisme. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Archer, B., Cooper, C., & Ruhanen, L. (2004). Les impacts positifs et négatifs du tourisme. Dans W. F. Theobald (Éd.), Global Tourism (pp. 79–102). Londres: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Ashley, C.èèè (2000). Les impacts du tourisme sur les moyens d'existence ruraux : l'expérience de la Namibie. Londres : Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Austen, R. (2001). La traite négrière comme histoire et mémoire : Confrontations de asservir les documents de voyage et les traditions communautaires. The William and Mary Quarterly.
- Bach, S. A. (1996). Criminalité liée au tourisme et hôtellerie : examen de la littérature et documents connexes. New York : Wiley.
- Bachmann, P. (1988). Le tourisme au Kenya : un besoin fondamental pour qui ? Berne : Peter Lang.
- Beaud, M. (2003). L'art de la thèse. Paris : La Découverte, coll. Guides Repères.
- Bloom, J. (1996). Une perspective sud-africaine des effets de la criminalité et de la violence sur l'industrie du tourisme. In A. Pizam & Y. Mansfeld (Eds.), Tourism, crime and international security issues (pp. 91–102). New York : Wiley.
- Buckley, R. (2003). Études de cas en écotourisme. CABI Publishing.
- Buhalis, D., & Fletcher, J. (1995). Impacts environnementaux sur les destinations touristiques: une analyse économique. Adlershot : Avebury.
- Bulloch, A. (2006). Présentation du tourisme sur le champ de bataille. Battlefield Tours.
- Clift, S., & Carter, S. (2000). Tourisme et sexe : culture, commerce et coercition. Londres : Cassell.
- Conseil mondial des voyages et du tourisme (WTTC) (2007). Botswana: l'impact des voyages et le tourisme sur l'emploi et l'économie. Londres: WTTC. Disponible en ligne sur: http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original_pdf_file/finwt tc_botswana.pdf [accédé: 13.06.2018]
- Dale, G., & Oliver, H. (2005). BTEC National Travel and Tourism Book 1. Oxford: Heinemann.
- De Sardan, J.-P. O. (1995). Anthropologie et développement : Essai en socio-anthropologie du changement social. Paris : Karthala.
- Diagne, A. K. (2004). Le développement touristique et son impact sur la Petite Côte sénégalaise : Une étude de cas géographique des relations centre-périphérie. Géographies touristiques.
- Edgell, D. L. (2006). Gérer le tourisme durable: un héritage pour l'avenir. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press.
- Elliott, J. (1997). Tourisme : politique et gestion du secteur public. Londres : Routledge.
- Essah, P. (2001). Esclavage, patrimoine et tourisme au Ghana. The Haworth Hospitality Press.
- Farell, B. (1992). Alternatives touristiques. In V. Smith & W. Eadington (Eds.), Tourism Alternatives (pp. 115–132). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Fyall, A. (2003). Gérer les attractions touristiques: nouvelles orientations. In A. Fyall, B. Garrod & A. Leask (Eds.), Managing Visitor Attractions: New Directions (pp. 236–252). Oxford : Elsevier.
- Grawitz, M. (2004). Lexique des sciences sociales (8e éd.). Paris : Dalloz.
- Gunn, C. (1988). Planification du tourisme (2e éd.). Washington, DC : Taylor et Francis.
- Hall, C. M. (1997). Tourisme sexuel en Asie du Sud-Est. Londres: Earthscan Publications Ltd.
- Halstead, L. (2003). Pour que le tourisme communautaire fonctionne : les facteurs qui contribuent à un développement réussi du tourisme communautaire à Caprivi, Namibie (Document de recherche n° 60).
- Hartz, C. (1989). _Les chefs d'entreprise en tant que cibles terroristes internationales_. Université de l'Illinois à Chicago.
- Hudson, S., & Miller, G. (2005). Considérations éthiques dans le tourisme durable. Londres : Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Inskeep, E. (1991). Planification touristique : une approche de développement intégré et durable. New York: Van Nostrand.
- Jafari, J. (2001). La scientification du tourisme. New York : Cognizant.
- Krippendorf, J. (1994). The holiday makers : comprendre l'impact des loisirs et du voyage. Oxford : Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Laplantine, F. (1987). L'anthropologie. Paris : Éditions Seghers.
- Loi n ° 98/006 du 14 Avril 1998 du Ministère du tourisme (1999). Décret fixant les modalités d'application sur les activités touristiques. Yaoundé : MINTOURL
- Lokossou, K. C. (2001). La traite négrière et le tourisme culturel. New York & Oxford: Éditions UNESCO / Berghahn Books.

- Mansfeld, Y. (1996). Guerres, tourisme et facteur « Moyen-Orient ». New York: Wiley.
- Mbaiwa, J. E. (2003). Les impacts socio-économiques et environnementaux du développement touristique dans le delta de l'Okavango, au nord-ouest du Botswana. Journal of Arid Environments.
- Mbonji Edjenguèlè. (2005). L'ethno-perspective ou la méthode du discours de l'ethno-anthropologie culturelle. Yaoundé: PUY.
- Miller, G. (2005). Suivi d'une transition touristique durable: le défi d'élaboration et utilisation d'indicateurs. Wallingford: CABI Publishing.
- Mitchell, J., & Faal, J. (2007). Forfaits touristiques et pauvres en Gambie. Londres: Overseas Development Institute.
- Murphy, P. E. (1985). Tourisme : Une approche communautaire. Londres : Methuen.
- Picard, M. (1993). Tourisme culturel à Bali. In M. Hitchcock, V. T. King & J. G. Parnwell (Eds.), Tourism in Southeast Asia. Londres : Routledge.
- PNUD (2018). Les trois principaux domaines d'impact du tourisme; PNUD Tourisme et Environnement Initiative. Disponible en ligne à: http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/susttourism / about.htm [consulté le 08.04.2020].
- Raymond, Q., & Van Campenhoudt, L. (1995). Manuel de recherche en sciences sociales. Paris : DUNOD.
- Reed, M. (1997). Relations de pouvoir et planification touristique communautaire. Annals of Tourism Research, 24(3), 566–591.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). La destination compétitive : Une perspective touristique durable. Wallingford, Oxfordshire : CABI Publishing.
- Roberts, L., & Simpson, F. (1999). Développer des approches de partenariat pour le tourisme en Europe centrale et orientale. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 7(3–4), 314–330.
- Ross, S., & Wall, G. (1999). Évaluation de l'écotourisme : le cas des Sulawesi du Nord, Indonésie. Tourism Management, 20(6), 673–682.
- Ryan, C. (2002). Équité, gestion, partage du pouvoir et durabilité : questions du « nouveau tourisme ». Tourism Management, 23(1), 17–26.
- Scheyvens, R. (2002). Tourisme pour le développement : Autonomiser les communautés. Harlow : Pearson Education.
- Shaw, G., & Williams, A. M. (2002). Enjeux critiques du tourisme : Une perspective géographique (2e éd.). Oxford : Blackwell Publishing.
- Simpson, M. C. (2008). Initiatives de tourisme d'utilité communautaire : un concept oxymore Tourism Management, 29(1), 1–18.
- Smith, M., & Duffy, R. (2003). L'éthique du développement touristique. Londres : Routledge.
- Sofield, T. H. B. (2003). Autonomisation pour le développement du tourisme durable. Bradford: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Sönmez, S. F. (1998). Tourisme, terrorisme et instabilité politique. Annals of Tourism Research, 25 (2), 416–456.
- Tosun, C., & Timothy, D. (2001). Défis du développement du tourisme durable dans le monde en développement : le cas de la Turquie. Tourism Management, 22 (3), 289–303.
- Wade, D. J., Mwasaga, B. C., & Eagles, F. J. (2001). Une histoire d'analyse de marché du tourisme en Tanzanie. Tourism Management, 22(1), 51–62.
- Wahab, S., & Pigram, J. (2010). Tourism Development and Growth: The Challenge of Sustainability. Londres : Routledge.
- Weiermair, K. (2000). Perceptions des touristes à l'égard de la satisfaction à l'égard de la qualité des services. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 9(1), 17–30.