



**ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ECOTOURISM
IN MOUNT CAMEROON REGION**

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ABSTRACT

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Ecotourism activities are growing in popularity around the world and generating considerable financial effects to the local population. The definitions of this phenomenon are still evolving, but generally include references to travel to natural areas and local conservation benefits. The purpose of this study was to estimate the economic impact of this business to the youths and the local communities in the Mount Cameroon region under a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) called Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organization (Mount CEO).

The data were collected from 20 local residents, including the management of Mount CEO and senior administrators from the department of tourism in the region. Qualitative approaches were applied to analyze the data since it is an effective way of obtaining information about opinions and behaviour. The theoretical section explores basic facts about the economic impact of tourism, information regarding the Mount Cameroon region, former research on the subject, research approach and methods, key findings, recommendations and a conclusion.

The result revealed that the Mount CEO project contributes about 47.798.000 CFA Franc (72.863 Euro) yearly to the local economy in direct benefits only. The findings also indicate that even though certain individuals or businesses are benefiting more from this activity, the local people and their communities are also having their share of the cake.

Another aim of this piece of work was to establish a comprehensive and reliable database of tourist statistics and to contribute significantly to the state of knowledge with respect to tourism related activities, not just for the region, but also to all seeking facts and information about this subject.

Key words: Economic impact, ecotourism, Mount Cameroon, Mount CEO

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus of the research

To begin with, it is important to attempt to define ecotourism and tourism since the two models will be used side by side in this study. Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." (The International Ecotourism Society TIES, 1990). Along with this definition TIES believes that those who participate and implement ecotourism activities should follow the following principles:

- i. Minimize impact
- ii. Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- iii. Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- iv. Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- v. Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people and
- vi. Raise awareness to host countries' political, environmental and social climate

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism can be defined as "the activities of travelers taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure, or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident in the country or place visited" (Keyser 2009, 5).

Tourism has become an important aspect of global economic activities as well as regional and local economies (Keyser 2009, 3). According to Pao (2005, 68), in 2004 tourism had grown to such an extent that it accounted for over 241 million jobs worldwide and more than 10 per cent of the world domestic product.

Many countries are starting to recognise their comparative advantage in tourism and to see tourism as a means to growth and development (Saayman & Saayman 2006, 1). In Mount Cameroon region, ecotourism activities may have made remarkable contribution to the local economy.

According to Stynes (1997, 3), “businesses and public organizations are increasingly interested in the economic impacts of tourism at national, state and local levels.” In many smaller economies local information is lacking or inadequate (Guidance Tourism 1998, 2). This lack of information may lead to wastage of scarce resources, which poor communities can still afford. The tourism market analysis for the Mount Cameroon region identifies “the lack of accurate visitor statistics as a major factor inhibiting the development of a meaningful marketing analysis and strategy” (Clacey et al. 2008, 11).

One way to obtain such localised information is by way of an economic impact study. Stynes (1998, 4) cited that “Economic impact studies provide information to help decision makers better understand the consequences of various actions on the tourism industry as well as other sectors of the economy”. Gathering this information is not an easy task especially in an underdeveloped region like Mount Cameroon. Measuring the impact of visitor volumes at a local level has been an important issue for destination and countryside managers for years. Yet, the scale, diversity and nature of tourism make quantification a challenge (Tourism South East 2008, 1).

It is also imperative that communities understand “the relative importance of tourism to their region, including tourism’s contribution to the economic activity in the area” (Stynes 1998, 3). This understanding can assist in shaping attitudes and creating an environment conducive to tourism.

While tourism is an important economic catalyst, its effects may not be equally distributed in communities (Keyser 2009, 27). “South African and Peruvian examples have demonstrated that an increase in tourism does not necessarily result in better lives for a wider range of people living in the destination” (Keyser 2009, 28).

These examples appear to hold true in the Mount Cameroon region too as the major players in the business of ecotourism are members and associates of the Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Board (Mount CEO).

It is also important to note that tourism or precisely ecotourism should not be only looked at in terms of positive economic contributions as the possibility also exists that tourism can have a negative impact on communities (Keyser 2009, 18). According to Keyser (2009, 19), these may include environmental damage and social disruptions. Although this is not the focus of this study, references will be made to this where applicable.

The main aims of this study are:

- To estimate the economic impact of ecotourism to the region of Mount Cameroon based on monetary side-effects
- To examine factors that contributes to the economic impact of tourism in the region.
- To promote the region as a potential tourism destination
- To attempt to find a solution to the lack of documentation and data deficiency in the area
- Make recommendations to enhance the economic effects of this activity on the local economy

The significance of this piece of work is that it is intended to provide some kind of solution to the problem of lack of data and tourism statistics, promote tourism development and recommend a way forward towards future research in this subject.

1.2 Concepts and theories

Before examining the concepts of economic impact of tourism, it is essential to gain insight into the relationship between tourism and the economy in general. There is evidence which suggests that a positive correlation between tourism growth and economic development exist, especially as tourism plays a special role in developing countries and communities. It helps to lower deficits in the balance of payments, increase levels of economic growth and raise job opportunities, generate tax revenues and income in the area (Loutfi et al. 2000, 2).

There are a lot of concepts and theories about economic impact of tourism. This study examines just a few of them and will apply direct-, indirect- and induced hypothesis to the Mount Cameroon scenario.

Tourism impacts can be categorised as direct, indirect or induced (Keyser 2009, 307). Direct impact of tourism results from the total amounts spent by tourists in the region. It refers to any business that receives payment directly from the tourist (Guidance Tourism 1998, 8). For example, an increase in the number of tourists staying overnight in hotels would directly yield increased sales in the hotel sector. The additional hotel sales and associated changes in hotel payments for wages and salaries, taxes, supplies and services are direct effects of tourist spending.

Indirect impact of tourism is an economic activity stimulated on by subsequent rounds of expenditure. Some parts of this economic injection remains in the region while other parts of it go to elsewhere in the region or country (Guidance Tourism 1998, 8). For instance industries supplying products and services to hotels: changes in sales, jobs and income in food supply industry, and so on represent indirect effects of changes in hotel sales. Businesses supplying products and services to the food supply industry represent another round of indirect effects, eventually linking hotels to varying degrees to many other economic sectors in the region.

Induced effects occur when locals who earn money through tourism spend their income on goods and services, thereby stimulating the local economy (Guidance Tourism 1998, 8). For example, hotel and food supply employees, supported directly or indirectly by tourism, spend their income in the local community for food, housing, transportation and the usual array of household product and service needs. The sales, income and jobs that result from household spending of added wage, salary or proprietors' income are induced effects.

By means of indirect and induced effects, changes in tourist spending can impact virtually every sector of the economy in one way or another. The magnitude of secondary effects depends on the propensity of businesses and households in the region to purchase goods and services from local suppliers. Induced effects are particularly noticed when a large employer in a region closes a plant. Not only are supporting firms hurt, but the entire local economy suffers due to the reduction in household income within the region. Retail stores close and leakages of money from the region increase as consumers go outside the region for more goods and services. Similar effects in the opposite direction are observed when there is a significant increase in jobs and household income. In the evaluating chapter, this study will determine whether or not the Mount Cameroon region experiences such economic impacts from the business of ecotourism.

In order to calculate a realistic estimate of economic impact of tourism, it is essential that all three impacts listed above are quantified and added together. “The true impact of tourism is not the actual expenditure by tourists, it is the final impact that this expenditure has on the economy” (Nedelea et al. 2008, 241).

The indirect and induced impacts are often calculated by multiplying the direct impacts with a multiplier factor. This concept is adopted in this paper and will be elaborated in the analysis chapter.

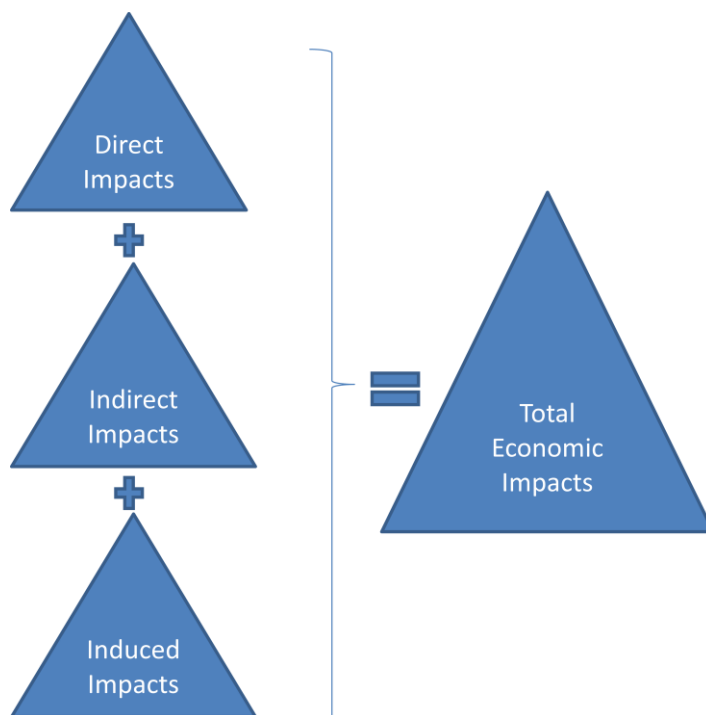


FIGURE 1. Calculating the economic impact of tourism (<http://web4.canr.msu.edu>)

Beyond these impacts, there is also evidence that suggests that tourism may also encourage entrepreneurship and the development of new small businesses, particularly among groups who might not have easy access to formal labour markets (Nedelea et al. 2008, 242). Tourism can thus act as a catalyst in the local economy.

The multiplier effect refers to the notion that every franc or euro of tourist spending in the area has a re-occurring impact on the economy of that place (Nedelea et al. 2008, 283). Essentially, the multiplier is a factor that is applied to any estimation of the direct economic impact of tourism in an area. The multiplier makes it possible to estimate the

impact of indirect and induced impacts of tourism. Saayman and Saayman (2006, 70) indicate that multipliers are often used to quantify the total impact of tourism.

Large multipliers (greater than 1) indicate a greater impact of each unit of visitor spending on the local economy (Pao 2005, 70). Low multipliers, on the other hand, are indicative of leakages out of the economy (Krause 2005, 28).

“The value of the multiplier increases when interrelationships are high and decreases when outflows increases. There are no doubts that multipliers’ values correlate with several variables. The most important of these are the number of and quality of tourists, tourist facilities, domestic expenditure and future trends in these variables” (Loutfi et al., 2000, 2).

Stynes (1998, 13-16) maintains that multipliers can be calculated from input-output models, borrowed from an economic base or derived from similar studies. He recommends the use of multiplier between 1 and 1.5 to estimate local impacts. Where one has no idea of the size of the multiplier, a figure 1 should be used. The effect of this is to re-focus on the direct effects of tourism (Stynes 1998, 16). This author further recommends that “focus most of your efforts on estimating the direct effects of tourism usually as tourist spending in the area. Multiplier effects are not nearly as important in most cases as their use would suggest and multipliers tend to introduce complexities that most users of the results do not fully understand”.

There are opinions advising against the use of multipliers. The argument is that multipliers may tend to overstate the impact activity such as tourism. “From this view of the theory it is proposed that tourist multipliers will tend to significantly overestimate the impact of tourism on an economy” (Egan & Nield 2003, 1).

Another commonly used regional economic model is the input-output model (I-O model). This is a mathematical model that describes the flows of money between sectors within a region’s economy (Stynes 1997, 13). The flows are predicted by knowing what each industry must buy from every other industry to produce a dollar’s worth of output. Using each industry’s production function, I-O models also determine the proportions of sales that go to wage and salary income, proprietors’ income, and taxes. Multipliers can be estimated from the input-output models based on the estimated re-circulation of spending within the region. Exports and imports are determined based upon estimates of the propensity of households and firms within the region to purchase goods and services from

local sources. The more a region is self sufficient and purchases goods and services from within the area, the higher the multipliers for the region.

Input-output models make a number of assumptions as follows;

- There are no economies or diseconomies of scale in production or factor substitution. I-O models are essentially linear (double the level of tourism activity like jobs, income earned and so on)
- All firms in a given industry employ the same production technology and produce identical products.
- The model doesn't clearly keep track of time, but analysts generally report the impact estimates as if they represent activity within a single year
- One must assume that the various model parameters are accurate and represent the current year. I-O models are firmly grounded in the national system of accounts, which relies on a standard industrial classification system (CIC codes) and various federal government censuses, in which individual firms report sales, wage and salary payments and employment. I-O models will generally be at least a few years out-of-date, although this is not usually a major problem unless the region's economy has changed significantly. The model represents the region's economy at a particular point in time and tourist spending estimates are generally price adjusted to the year of the model
- Multiplier computations for induced effects generally assume that jobs created by additional spending are new jobs, involving new households in the area. Induced effects are computed assuming linear changes in household spending with changes in income. Estimates of induced effects tend to account for the vast majority of the secondary effects of tourism, and therefore should be used with caution.

In the Mount Cameroon situation, applying the concept of multiplier effect and the input-output models is not feasible considering the lack of tourist data in the region. However, direct economic contribution of ecotourism will be highlighted in chapter 5 based on income earned by the local guides and porters, village projects from the shareholder fund as well as the monetary side effects for tourism related industries in the region.

1.3 Research questions

Since economic impact studies are based on the theory that money flowing into the local economy from outside sources benefits the local population in creating new jobs, revenues and other developmental projects, it is of vital importance for this study to estimate the economic contribution of ecotourism in the region of Mount Cameroon. This paper will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ What are the economic impacts of ecotourism in the Mount Cameroon region?
- ✓ How are the benefits shared amongst the local communities?

1.4 Data and methods

Data for this research is obtained through several methods which includes qualitative research approach, direct conversation, and personal research among others. The type of qualitative research approach that is applied in this study includes interviews, observations, information gathered from tourism experts, as well as people living and benefiting from ecotourism in the region. In other words, the research method includes data collection and analysis of quality information from the real source rather than numerical data (Veal 2006, 193). Taking into consideration the economic contribution of this activity to the local economy, the opinions of the local people were very important in determining the extent of the impact of the subject matter. As a matter of fact, the information gathered from both the people from the destination and the views of the experts, combined with a few observations, will be regarded as the authentic base for the outcome of this research. Meanwhile, the reliability and validity of this research work will be based on the qualitative research approach applied. Secondary data such as academic journals, thesis, official documents and promotional material were also explored during the research.

Concerning the methods, this study began at the end of the academic year 2009-2010, after a participation in a thesis seminar organized by the coordinators of the Degree Programme in Tourism. Since then, a thorough examination of literature relating to tourism, ecotourism and its impacts has been made from academic journals, thesis, consultant reports as well as books. Consultations with Dr. Sari Matala were very

important in helping to narrow the focus of this work that led to the choice of this topic. The interview questions were designed by the author with the help of the coordinator and were reviewed by Dr. Sari Matala before being taken to the field in order to make sure that interviews would be comprehensive and ethical. (See appendix 1 below for the interview questions).

1.5 Content of the research

This thesis consists of six main chapters, whereby the first chapter (1) introduces the reader into the research problem, its aims and objectives as well as the main significance to the study. It also gives an overview of the topic and introduces the research questions.

Chapter two (2) introduces the Mount Cameroon Region, Mount CEO, its concept of ecotourism and the current condition of the business in the region; Chapter three (3) covers information concerning former research on the economic impact of tourism and some important theories of this subject; Chapter four (4) explains the whole research approach and the methods used to conduct this research as the whole approach of data collection, data analysis as well as the aspect of validity and reliability. In chapter five (5) key findings and discussions are discussed. In chapter six (6) recommendations to increase the economic effects of this activity on the region's local economy is considered. This last part will also contain a summary of the report in form of conclusions.

2 ECOTOURISM IN MOUNT CAMEROON REGION

2.1 The Mount Cameroon region

The Mount Cameroon region is situated in the South West (S.W) province of Cameroon in Central Africa. At present, tourist attractions in the region, put together, compose an outstanding package. Planning a vacation in the region requires a combination of beach relaxation, with exploration of the rain forest, wildlife watching, cultural events and a hike on the mountain. The major focus in the region is the mount Cameroon also known as Mount Fako, situated in Buea, Fako division of the S.W region of the country. It measures 4100 meters and is the highest point in Central Africa and the second highest point in Africa after Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

The forests in the region are under threat from uncontrolled forest exploitation and encroachment for agricultural production. A population of approximately 350.000 people lives within the immediate vicinity and around half of this population lives in urban settlements of Buea and Limbe. The people of Bakweri, Bomboko and Balundu traditionally live in and around the mountain, together with the coastal Bimbia clans. The livelihood of these people are directly or indirectly supplemented through the harvesting of forests resources such as timber and non timber products, for example, removing woof for medicines, gathering natural vegetables, collecting materials for furniture and hunting. See figure 2 below for the location of the region on the map of Cameroon.

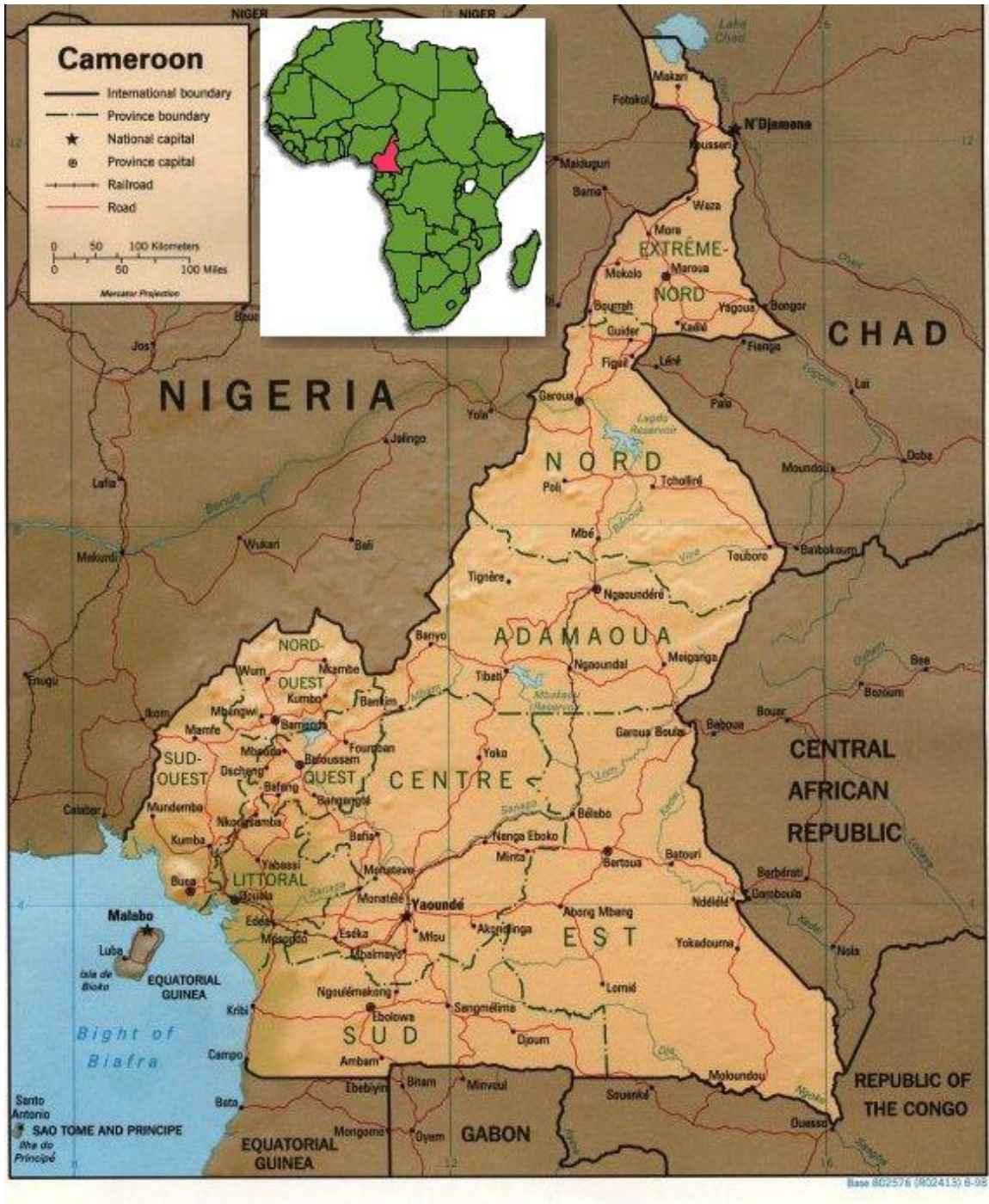


FIGURE 2. Location of the region on the map of Cameroon (Google.fi)

2.1.1 Some eco attractions in the region

The mountain is an active volcano as it has erupted six times in the previous century, the latest recorded in March and April 1999. During the eruption, the lava flow destroyed farmlands in localities found on the slope of the mountain such as Bakingili, Batoke and upper farms in Limbe (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Board).

According to Mount CEO, traditionally the god of the mountain is called Efasah Moto, believed to be composed of two halves, i.e. “man and stone”. It is also believed that it takes care of people by providing them with food, water and shelter during their journey up and down the mountain. Visitors are allowed to harvest what they can consume while on the mountain but are not allowed to take away anything provided by Efasah Moto. “Belief in the god” provides an interesting cultural link to ecotourism and sustainable use of resources.

Apart from individuals or groups who go for hiking and excursions to the mountain there is an annual international race that is organized by the government known as the “Mount Cameroon Race of Hope”. The initiative was started in 1995 by Guinness Cameroon LTD. This race brings together hundreds of athletes with a good number of them from abroad. The starting point of the race is the Molyko Omnisport stadium via upper farms, huts 1, 2 and 3 before reaching the summit and back to the starting point.

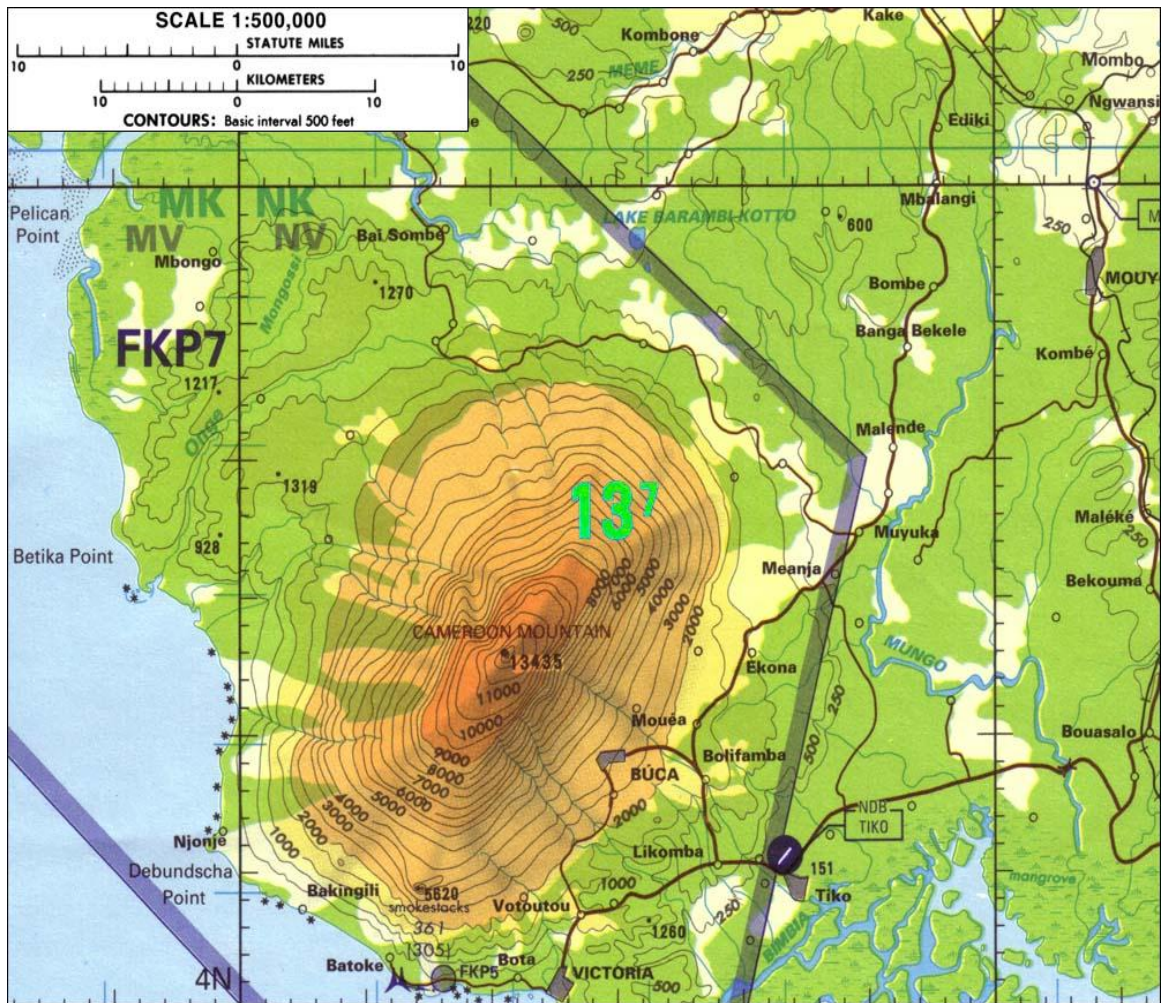


FIGURE 3. Topographic Map of Mount Cameroon (1:500,000 scale), (Tactical Pilot age Chart L-3A)

An added major attraction in the region is the Limbe botanical garden, which was created in 1892 by the German horticulturists to acclimatize economic and medicinal plants such as quinine, coffee, rubber, cocoa and banana. It is also an international research centre in the area of biodiversity. A tourist attraction centre known as “jungle village” has been developed in the garden, where popular cultural activities take place during certain events or simply for tourists’ pleasure. Several routes have been mapped out to enable tourists an easy access to the garden. These routes are: the coastal trail which enables visitors to have a good view of the western part of the garden; the biodiversity trail facilitates tourists to get a picture of the biodiversity found in the area; the Bota adventure trail permits nature lovers to see big trees and some wild animals (Limbe Botanical Garden).

Additionally, one more unique experience is the rich cultural heritage in the region. The Bakweri tribe settles at the slopes of Mount Cameroon, where most villages are still traditional and remote. Culturally, a chief stays at the head of a village with an elected village committee where a chairman serves as administrative authority. Also, the local people (Bakwerians) have a rich culture and still perform their traditions. The best known and very spectacular is the “Male Dance” performed only once a year by every village in the region (figure 4). This dance presents the strong relationship of indigenous people to the elephants living in the forest around the mountain and nature in general. Mount CEO offers a special cultural tour via Bova village intended to give tourist the opportunity to learn about the lifestyle and traditions of the locals.



FIGURE 4. The traditional male elephant dance.(<http://www.mount-cameroon.org>)

The region is also one of the world's biodiversity hot spot, as the area harbours one of the highest biodiversity in the world. Various ecosystems created by nature on relatively small area between the Limbe Sea and the mountain represent different ecological compositions. These are not only different vegetation zones, but also a home for various unique plants such as *Prunus Africana* and animal species living only under particular conditions can be met in the region. (<http://www.mount-cameroon.org>)

Moreover, Mt. Cameroon region is a home for many big animal and bird species. In the tropical rainforest around the mountain and in the mountain rainforest on the slopes of Mount Cameroon tourists can find a wide variety of birds, butterflies and insects. The most important animals are: elephants, white collared mangabeys, chimpanzees, white nosed monkeys, drills, western bushbucks, western bush pigs, giant Pangolins and so on. Other beautiful and most interesting small animals and birds include the mountain francolins, sunbirds, kingfishers, eagles, lizards and chameleons. It should be noted that there are possibilities for observation of wild animals during tours into the rainforest or hikes on the mountain. (<http://www.mount-cameroon.org>).

The above mentioned natural attractions were being initiated, developed and are operated under the umbrella of ecotourism by a NGO called the Mount CEO. This organization is the sole developer of the business of ecotourism in the region and has been recognized at the institutional level and by the Cameroonian government for its effort in initiating, planning and developing ecotourism in the region. The NGO's full operation shall be revised in the subsequent paragraphs.

2.1.2 Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation (Mount CEO)

Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, (logo in figure 5 below), abbreviated as Mount CEO is a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) created and funded by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in support with the German Development Service (DED) in 1998. Its aim was to develop and promote sustainable tourism in the Mount

Cameroon region. The NGO is the only sole provider of all tours undertaken to the summit and other areas of the Cameroon Mountain.



FIGURE 5. Logo of Mount CEO (<http://www.mount-cameroon.org>)

The main objective of Mount CEO is to develop and promote ecotourism as an instrument for biodiversity conservation in the region and the improvement of the livelihood of the local population. Its motto is: “Income for village communities and conservation of biodiversity through ecotourism”.

The NGO operates on two different levels, the regional and the local levels. On the regional level, the board of directors determines the policy while the village ecotourism committees coordinate their own activities on the local level. The ecotourism office was established in order to manage the day to day activities. Part of the whole concept is a benefit sharing system, although the wages of porters and guides are paid directly to the beneficiaries, a supplementary tourist fee known as stakeholder fund is collected by the organization and shared at the end of each tourism season amongst the stakeholders. A certain percentage of the income from the business goes into the village development funds. In all, the local population benefits in three ways as follows:

- Through the village development fund
- Through the hunters working as guides and porters
- Through side activities related to the business and based on the self initiative of the village communities like performances, traditional cooking, production and selling of handicraft along with others. Details of these impacts shall be analysed in chapter five below.

Other sources of income for the organization include the sale of materials, articles and the hiring of camping equipment. Mount CEO used to get financial and technical support from the DED and GTZ. Two years ago, this support was withdrawn and has left the NGO's financial sustainability hopes in jeopardy.

2.2 Activities of Mount CEO

According to the information found on the official web site of Mount CEO, the main activities of the NGO consist of the following;

- ✦ Training of hunters as guides and porters:

Mount CEO organizes training courses for hunters as guides, with emphasis on communication and guiding skills, ecology, volcanism, waste management and first aid. At the moment, the organization is working intensively with 30 guides and more than 100 porters as cited by the manager.

- ✦ Organizing tours to the mountain:

The office of Mount CEO registers arriving tourists and advertises various tours to the region, which include the mountain and the surrounding attractions like the craters, lava flow, caves and others. As soon as a tour is booked, the office cooperates with the village ecotourism committees in handling the selection of guides and porters. At the moment Mount CEO is working to include other attractions like the coastline beaches and waterfalls for instance.

- ✦ Formation of village ecotourism committees (VECs)

The NGO has created twelve VECs in the region. These villages are taking part in the benefit sharing system and receive financial support to their community development fund. At the same time, they generate additional income through the production and sale of handicraft articles, traditional dishes as well as dance and choir performances. Mount

CEO assists in building the capacities of the villagers through meetings and workshops. This also contributes to monitor the impact of ecotourism activities at village level.

- ✘ Information about the Mount Cameroon region and marketing

One of the main objectives of Mount CEO is the promotion of the region as a biodiversity spot. The organization has advertised its services in international trade fairs and has produced material in the form of leaflets and brochures. The NGO has participated in various fairs and symposiums at provincial, national and international level like the 2000 Expo, and in 2002 and 2004 in Reise pavillon both in Hannover, Germany.

Contacts to other tour operators, hotels as well as other stakeholders are established. All of these efforts are attracting rising numbers of tourists to the region. According to the region's statistic office, the recent records show a development from 72 international tourists in 1998/1999 to about 205 in the 1999/2000 tourism season. During the 2000/2001 season the number rose to 322, by 2002/2003 season, there was a boost of 692 tourists in the region. In 2006/2007, a total of 1286 tourists were received.

- ✘ Organizing cultural manifestations

Mount CEO identifies cultural groups at the village level through the village ecotourism committees. It assists in the organization of traditional performances as an income generating activity for the villages.

- ✘ Acquisition and renting of camping equipment

The organization has obtained camping equipment which includes: tents, sleeping bags, mats, blankets, rain coats, rain boots and some utensils. There is a need for the acquisition of more camping equipment due to the increasing number of tourists.

- ✘ Impact monitoring

The introduction of the evaluation forms to be filled out by tourists represents an indispensable means in monitoring the impacts of the various activities. Feedbacks and reports gathered from guides, porters and village committees are also useful for monitoring. Additionally, the NGO develops and implements wildlife monitoring

activities in close collaboration with the Limbe Botanical Garden and the Limbe Wildlife Centre.

- ✘ Networking with other conservation and ecotourism projects

Mount CEO has identified other environmental projects within the S.W Region, which share common goals, and has started to create links through training of hunters from those areas. The Korup National Park, Limbe Botanical and Zoological Gardens, Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest are some of the projects linked with the organization. The NGO is an active and foundation member of the Mount Cameroon Tourism Network (MCTN), a network of different tourism stakeholders in the region. For reasons of exchange of information, the organization is also a member of Western Highlands Nature Conservation Network (WHINCONET), a network of conservation non-governmental organizations based mainly in the North West Province of Cameroon.

- ✘ Supervises social village projects

During the benefit sharing of 2002/2003, it was agreed that the benefit for villages should be used for visible infrastructure. Consequently, two community halls are completed in the villages of Wotewa and Mapanja. The NGO has also supported water and electricity projects in Bokwaongo and Wonganjo villages respectively. (<http://www.mount-cameroon.org/attractions.htm>)

3 FORMER RESEARCHES ABOUT ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF TOURISM

3.1 Literature review

While a multitude of information exists on the economic impact of tourism, it seems that the more localised the required information is, the greater its scarcity. According to Visser and Kotze (2006, 88), smaller tourism destinations have generally received little research activity. The same can be said for the Mount Cameroon region.

Available literature varies from theoretical work models that measure impact, to case studies and regional tourism information. These different models and approaches will be discussed in more detail in this section.

Both Pao (2005) and Nedelea, Elmazi and Totska (2008) provide a general perspective on the economic impact of tourism in their respective countries and provide a brief overview, including disadvantages, of the most popular models used to estimate the economic benefits of tourism. However, both these articles remain academic in nature and no attempt has been made to apply them practically. These publications also provide insight into the use of multipliers, which Nedelea et al. (2008, 241) describe as the process of spending and re-spending tourism expenditure and income.

In *Developing Tourism in South Africa*, Kayser (2009) provides comprehensive theories on tourism in general. This publication deals with concepts in tourism, destination marketing, sustainability and economic and social impacts of tourism in South Africa. Despite its pragmatic and practical approach the publication stops short of providing a useful methodology for measurement of economic impacts.

On a more practical level, several guidebooks and other resources aiming to provide practical assistance to people who wish to conduct economic impact studies on tourism are also available.

Guidance Tourism (1998), distributed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (UK), provides technical advice to conduct impact studies. "The best source of

information on the pattern of tourism activity in the local area will come from a well conducted local visitor study. Such a study will usually involve tourist surveys to collect data on the character and proportions of different types of visitors to an area and the calculation of the volume of tourism throughout the year” (Guidance Tourism 1998: 3).

The document further advises that researchers should “develop some kind of model, which by local area information can be estimated and be robust enough for purposes required. Models can come in various guises from exemplars to mathematical or statistical approaches” (Guidance Tourism 1998, 5). These documents were very useful in the formation of an approach for this study.

Gopaul (2006, 8) states that “rural tourism has a strong influence on rural communities in terms of development”. The author concludes that rural communities are receptive to the idea of tourism as a viable economic activity. Rural tourism is normally based on some natural resource or nature based tourism. This information provides insight into the tourism landscape, dynamics and current status of tourism in the Mount Cameroon region. It is therefore clear that to obtain specific information for this study’s practical research will have to be conducted to generate localised information. Attention must now be focused on the method of data collection and the model that will be applied in understanding the economic impacts.

Stynes (1998, 2001), Frechtling (2006) and Saayman and Saayman (2006) have produced some of the most appropriate literature for this study. All their publications deal with either actual case studies or with the construction of models to measure the impact of tourism.

Stynes (1998) is quoted throughout much of the literature reviewed and is regarded as an expert in the field of determining the economic impact of tourism (Wilton & Polovitz Nickerson 2006, 17). Stynes (1998) provides a basic guide to measure tourism impact, “The purpose of this bulletin is to present a systematic introduction to economic impact concepts and methods”. “The principal methods here are visitor spending surveys, analysis of secondary data from the government economic statistics, economic base models, input-output models and multipliers” Stynes (1998, 2). He further goes forward to provide basic equations for the estimation of economic impact and practical advice regarding the use of multipliers. Stynes (1999, 5) defines economic impact analysis as

tracing the “flows of spending associated with tourism activity in a region to identify changes in sales, tax revenues, income and jobs due to tourism activity”.

Frechtling (2006, 31) relates that most models begin with the estimation of the expenditure of visitors in a defined geographical area.

According to Wilton & Polovitz Nickerson (2006, 18), visitor surveys are one of the best ways to establish the economic impact of tourists. However, the author doesn't caution that surveys must be completed at the time of the visit or shortly afterwards since a recall bias becomes apparent as time passes by.

Saayman, Saayman and Naude (2000) and Saayman and Saayman (2006) also present a variety of case studies in which economic impact of tourism is estimated. These provide a useful insight into the methodology and used for localised economic impact studies. A particular study (Saayman & Saayman 2006) on the economic impact of tourism in the Kruger National Park provides a practical approach to the measurement of tourism expenditure.

Stynes (1998, 20) maintains that one can fine-tune a model to suit a particular situation by adding different levels of complexity in terms of “visitor segments, spending categories and multipliers”. He also advises that “estimate of tourism expenditure will generally be more accurate if district spending profiles and use estimates are made for key tourism segments”.

Another important factor to keep in mind would be the ability of tourism to sustain employment in the tourism destination. According to Pan African Investment (2008, 31), in 2008, one job was created in the tourism sector for every foreign tourist that arrived in South Africa.

Crompton et al. (2001, 80) state that economic studies are an inexact science and warn that the motivation behind conducting them is often strategic and to garner support for projects.

It is important to know that direct impacts of tourism have many secondary effects, most of them not economic but rather social. Keyser (2009, 27) discusses these impacts in depth and comes to the conclusion that environmental and social sustainability is crucial for the success of any tourism destination.

Krause (2005) moves beyond the actual economic impact of tourism and poses the question of how equitable tourism income is shared in communities. She concludes that even fair trade environments income is not equally shared as is hoped for. The extent to which the products and organisations actually are fair is rather unclear and hard to measure (Krause 2005, 53).

This document represents an exploratory study aimed at estimating the economic impact of tourism in the Mount Cameroon region, and attempt to gain an understanding of factors that affect the economic contribution of tourists to this region. While much research has been done on this topic at international level, it seems that this type of information is lacking at the national and local levels including the Mount Cameroon region.

Analysis of the available literature suggests that the impact of tourism on economies is well documented and that the methodology for calculating the economic contribution of tourism to an economy is well established. There seems to be consensus that the existing models need to be adapted to local situations based on the availability of data. To gain insight into the local impact, it is essential to collect local information. This information can be fed into a model that will provide estimates of economic impact. This may not be true in the region in question because of the lack of essential information. As a result of this, only tangible and direct economic contributions shall be analysed in this study.

While the economic impact of tourism and its effect on employment is an important dimension of tourism, it is equally important to understand that tourism also has social and environmental implications which should not be neglected in favour of economic importance. The Mount Cameroon region as compared to other developed areas of the world is very underprivileged and poor. Therefore, basic equipments like computers and the technical know-how to measure the economic impact of tourism in the area is lacking.

3.2 Economic impact assessment

Economic impacts are those that affect the level of economic activity in a municipality positively or negatively. For instance they directly affect the economic well-being of the local people and businesses by changing employment levels and retail expenditures. The impact can also be felt by the local council financial situation by increasing or decreasing the assessment base and the demand for services.

An economic impact assessment traces spending through an economy and measures the growing effects of that spending. The impact region is determined by the nature of the proposal and can be the entire country, province, an individual municipality or a combination of municipalities. Estimating the economic impact of ecotourism in the Mount Cameroon region is a helpful process for understanding the potential benefits of various forms of growth. It should be noted, however, that the means of estimating these benefits are more useful in understanding the likely order of the magnitude of impacts rather than specific amounts.

Economic impact assessment generates an estimate of the economic consequences of a particular project on the local economy. However, this provides only one piece of the puzzle in a broader evaluation process. For instance, there may be social benefits and ecological consequences that need to be taken into account, which would require a different methodology. In some cases a more general cost benefit analysis will attempt to place a monetary value on environmental and social impacts (Daniel J. Stynes 1997, 7)

3.3 Measurement of economic impact of tourism

An economic impact analysis will assess the contribution of tourism activity to the region's economy. The basic questions this type of study usually addresses are;

- I. How much do tourists spend in the area? (business volume or spending)
- II. What portion of sales by local businesses is due to tourism? (wealth, including property values)

- III. How much income does tourism generate for households and businesses in the region? (aggregate wages and salaries)
- IV. How many jobs in the region does tourism support? (employment levels)
- V. How much tax revenue is generated from tourism? (value added or gross regional product)

Each of these measures reflects a particular dimension of improvement in the economic well-being of the area residents, which is usually the major goal of economic development efforts. This study focuses on the changes in the employment levels and spending as the most easily determined and understood measures of economic impact. Conversely, economic impacts can also be measured by the rise in personal income and property values (Daniel J. Stynes 1997, 18).

3.4 Factors contributing to economic impacts of tourism

The idea of destination management is important for the concept of tourism. According to Practical Guide (1998, 2) a local tourist destination is a physical space with physical and administrative boundaries. It has tourism products such as attractions, services and tourism resources. Its physical location and tourist appeal play a role in defining its competitiveness in the market. Local destinations also include stakeholders and host communities (Keyser 2009, 6).

All tourism destinations have certain elements or basic conditions in place. Practical Guide (1998, 4) states that the appeal of an area from a tourism perspective is shaped by the following:

- I. Attractions represent the focal areas of attention for the visitor and can be natural or man-made and may be publicly or privately owned. Beyond these tangible factors there may also be intangible factors such as history or emotion.
- II. Amenities refer to the range of services and facilities that support visitors during their stay. These include accommodation, transportation, road

provision shopping, and information for visitors and opportunities for recreation.

- III. Accessibility refers to the ease in which a destination can be accessed. It include road, rail way and air as well as administrative accessibility such as visa requirements.
- IV. Image of the destination includes uniqueness, sights, scenes, environmental quality, safety, service delivery and the friendliness of the people. The correct image is of utmost importance to attract visitor to a tourist destination. Image must be marketed, communicated and must have substance.
- V. Pricing plays an important role in terms of competition with other destinations. It relates to cost of getting to the destination and the cost of services and accommodation at the destination.
- VI. Human resources, “tourism is labour intensive and interaction with local communities is an important aspect of the tourism experience” (Practical Guide 1998, 4). Trained staff members are therefore essential to provide good service and to put into action the destination’s strategy.

All of these factors affect tourism in the study area. Some of these are better developed while some lad behind. It is vital that tourism organizers and the local government take consideration the above mentioned factors in order to make a concerted effort to improve them. “On this basis, the role of local government can have a profound influence on the success of its local tourism industry, and plays a part in conserving the very asset on which its future depends” (Clark 2006, 7).

The relevance to the economic impact of tourism is that image, branding and competitiveness shaped by the factors above determine the level of demand for the destination, while the level of demand directly influences the magnitude of the economic impact of tourism (Occasional Paper 65 2006, 14).

4 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

4.1 Research area and population of study

This research was conducted in Buea, the capital of the South West Region of Cameroon. The main reason behind the above choice was based on the fact that the head office of Mount CEO is located there. The office is the meeting point for tourists, porters, guides, the local population as well as the other players involved in the business of ecotourism in the region. With a population of approximately 57.000 residents, the town is one of the most developed urban towns in this part of the country. It was also very cost effective for the researcher to complete this study since most of the stakeholders or their representative could be reached easily within the town. More so, the author could without difficulty gain access into the higher tourism offices in the town.

The entire process of this study involved Mr. Mosima David (Managing Director of Mount CEO), Regional Delegate of Tourism in the S.W region, head of statistic bureau, twelve guides, porters and representatives from the local population. The representatives from the local population group were chosen randomly and interviewed confidentially.

4.2 Research approach

Since qualitative study seeks to understand a given research problem from the perspectives of the local population it involves, and because it is an effective way of obtaining information about opinions and behaviours, personal interviews, observations, information gathered from tourism experts, as well as people living and benefiting from the region were vital to complete this study.

The aspects of reliability and validity of this work is based on the qualitative research approach applied. Reliability is an extent to which a questionnaire, interview,

observation, conversation and any other research measure produce the same result on repeated trials. That is the degree at which interviewee's responses would remain the same on a particular survey over a period (Joppe 2000, 1).

On the other hand, reliability is considered to be at risk when a survey is carried over time, performed by different people or the survey is highly subjective (Joppe 2000, 1). In this vein, different results are bound to be generated thereby rendering the research work unreliable. For this study, the research was carried out by one person with a reliable method of research which extensively reveals the reliability of this work. Validity tends to measure two essential parts namely; internal and external. Internal validity measures the legitimacy of the result of a particular research study because of the way the group is selected and how data were analyzed, while external validity, also known as generalization involves whether the result produced by the research is transferable to other groups of interest to confirm its validity (Joppe 2000, 1). These measurements will be discussed and assessed in detail in later chapters.

Considering the quality of this research topic, semi- structured interviews were conducted since it is the most regularly used methods in qualitative research. Semi- structured interviews concludes a few numbers of some qualitative procedures and different kinds of materials representing a particular situation. The methods of qualitative research are described as too easy; this means that there are no forms of guidance on the qualitative techniques. This notwithstanding, in an industry such as tourism which is more descriptive, this type of method still remains the best (Veal 2006, 194). In this vein, a qualitative research approach was totally opted out because it is more evaluative rather than descriptive.

Meanwhile, there remain big differences between qualitative and quantitative method. While the former is based on analysis on qualitative information through interviews and observation, the later has a basis of numerical data collection. The flexibility of a qualitative method makes it suitable for interviews in this thesis. In addition to that, with a few interviews, the aim of carrying out the research is revealed. In other words, there is no need for excess information, rather, little information with concrete facts are realized (Stephen & Smith 2010, 109).

The qualitative research approach is based on the natural settings of the subject matter which attempt to make sense and penetrate the phenomenon in terms of natural meaning

brought into it. It also intends to collect all necessary information about relatively few cases rather than the more limited facts about each of the large number of cases which is a typical method used in quantitative analysis (Veal 2006, 193). This method can also be interpretive and naturalistic in nature to its subject and gives priority to what the data has contributed in the research or interview questions.

Interview is a formally arranged interaction where questions are involved and information is exchanged. There are three types of interviews namely structured, semi structured and unstructured interviews. In this study, the semi structured interview was adopted in order to get to the root of the research. A total number of 20 individuals were interviewed during the entire process. Appendix 1 and 2 beneath contains a list of those interviewed during the research and the interview questions respectively.

Observation, one of the easiest techniques was part of the research methods explored. This method involves looking and sighting and in most cases is referred to as an obstructive method of research. Obstructive in such a way that the observer is not in contact with the observed and still carries out the observation successfully (Veal, 2006: 173). Observation is quite necessary in qualitative research because it helps in backing up and finalizing the findings.

It should be noted that qualitative research approach were the best for this investigation as it enabled the researcher to get into the root of the study, properly examine and make genuine report on the economic impact of tourism in the region.

Documentation refers to various kinds of documents in form of texts, photographs, maps or drawing that are produced as part of the current social processes that is not for the purpose of the research project in which they are used. Documentations are a constructive part of this project since they provide data and remains of life in many years. The main purpose of documents is to fix aspects of current events and actions for future examination. Even though important statistics and information regarding the past and recent operations of Mount CEO were rare to find, various documents such as reports from UNWTO, TIES and numerous publications of scholars, brochures, magazines, reports and web pages were explored during the entire research process.

4.3 Analysis

The research interviews were done with the main tourism experts in the region comprising authorities of the Provincial Delegation of Tourism in the South West Region of Cameroon (expert's interview category 1), top officials of Mount CEO (expert's interview category 2) and some local residents (category 3). Twenty interviews were conducted in total under the above categories and the average age of the interviewees ranged between 30-55 years. Even though twenty interviews seemed not sufficient to make general conclusions, observation played a vital role in bringing out the best in this research work. Thorough observation was made and the conclusions were drawn based on two qualitative methods applied. The residents and the tourism experts mentioned above are two classes of people that would be most effective to reveal the economic contribution of ecotourism in the region of Mount Cameroon. While the local residents shed more light on the impact of tourism as it affects their lives, the experts gave a general overview of the whole subject matter.

4.3.1 Analysis of the experts' interview (category 1)

The theme of the interview was about the economic impacts of tourism in the region and consisted of three officials of the regional delegation of tourism (details in appendix 1 below). This question was meant to measure or estimate the economic effects of ecotourism activity in the region. All the interviewees based their thoughts on recent developments and revealed that since the creation of ecotourism board in the region, the business has played a significant role impacting the lives of the local people, businesses and the local economy in general in the following ways; a lot of unverified jobs have been created by tourism related industries, source of income generation for the locals, village development projects and the general monetary impacts to the local economy

(South West Delegation of Tourism, interviewed 20.12.2010). Despite all these positive impacts, some of the experts emphasized their view that tourism development in the region is slow and has suffered a great negligence and setbacks. They revealed that the government plan is focused on tourism development as one of the means of revenue generation for the Cameroonian people. Regarding the question of benefit sharing, all the experts made mention that the local residents, especially the youths who work as porters and guides gain a lot from the business, along with the office of Mount CEO, villages around the area, local businesses and government services.

4.3.2 Analysis of the experts' interview (category 2)

This category comprised of the Managing Director of Mount CEO and the accountant of the same establishment (details appendix 1 below). The interviewees in response to the theme of the problem said “part of the whole concept is a benefit sharing system, though the wages of porters and guides are paid directly to the beneficiaries, a supplementary tourist fee known as stakeholder fund is collected by the organization and shared at the end of each tourism season amongst the stakeholders”. They emphasized that a certain percentage of the income from the business goes into the village development funds and reviewed that the local population benefit in three ways as follows: Through the village development fund, the hunters working as guides and porters and side activities related to the business and based on the self initiative of the village communities such as cultural performances, traditional cooking, production and selling of handicraft along with others.

4.3.3 Analysis of the local residents' interview (category 3)

This involved 15 local residents, some of them porters and guides with Mount CEO. They all shared their views on the personal effects that the business of ecotourism has on them and their communities. Nine of the candidates said, “due to huge unemployment in the country, working for Mount CEO as guides and porters was the only means of earning a living”. The interviewees declared that their standard of living has improved as compared to when they were unemployed and that they now support their families in providing them with food and other household needs.

On the community level, two of the locals validated that their respective villages had benefited from the share holder fund with the building of a community hall and the expansion of pipe born water.

From the residents’ point of view, tourism in the vicinity has improved and many hotels are springing up everywhere as a result of an increase in the awareness of tourism in the region. They praised the efforts of Mount CEO and the government in promoting tourism in the area and wish that money should be spent to train more local youths, develop roads and other tourism infrastructures. Two of the candidates expressed their concerns about the negative impacts that tourism has brought to their communities such as pollution, congestion and the problem of waste management.

The results of this work were concluded based on the perspectives above, combined with the collective point of view from observation which provided the author with a deeper quality and richer understanding of the opinions of all those interviewed against the actual situation on the ground.

5 KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the monetary impacts of ecotourism activities on the local and regional economy of the Mount Cameroon. Economic impact refers to the change in sales, income, jobs or other parameter generated by ecotourism. A common ecotourism goal is the generation of economic benefits, whether they are profits for NGO, jobs for the local people, or revenues for other stakeholders. This activity, though not well organized and monitored plays a particular important role in the region because it creates jobs at least to a few local youths. In an underdeveloped, corrupt society such as Mount Cameroon, even a small number of jobs are significant especially as the locals have very few alternatives to earn a decent living. The number of direct jobs created in the region is really low but still the benefits associated with this business are tangible (Manager Mount CEO, 12.2010 interview).

The impacts of ecotourism in the region are grouped into three categories: direct, indirect and induced. The direct impacts are those arising from the initial tourism spending, such as money spent at restaurant. It is the value added of those sectors that interact directly with the visitors. The restaurant buys goods and services (inputs) from other businesses such as food suppliers, thereby generating indirect impacts. In addition, the restaurant employees spend part of their wages to buy various goods and services, thereby causing induced impacts. Even though the region is the highest producer of food stuff in the country, restaurants and hotels still rely heavily on supplies from bigger cities like Douala outside the region. Consequently, the money provides little impact to the region, it leaks away.

The economic impacts analyzed in this study are based on the travellers spending as reported by the statistic bureau of the South West regional office of tourism. The Implan model (figure 5) was also edited to reflect the region's differences and to estimate the direct, indirect and induced benefits.

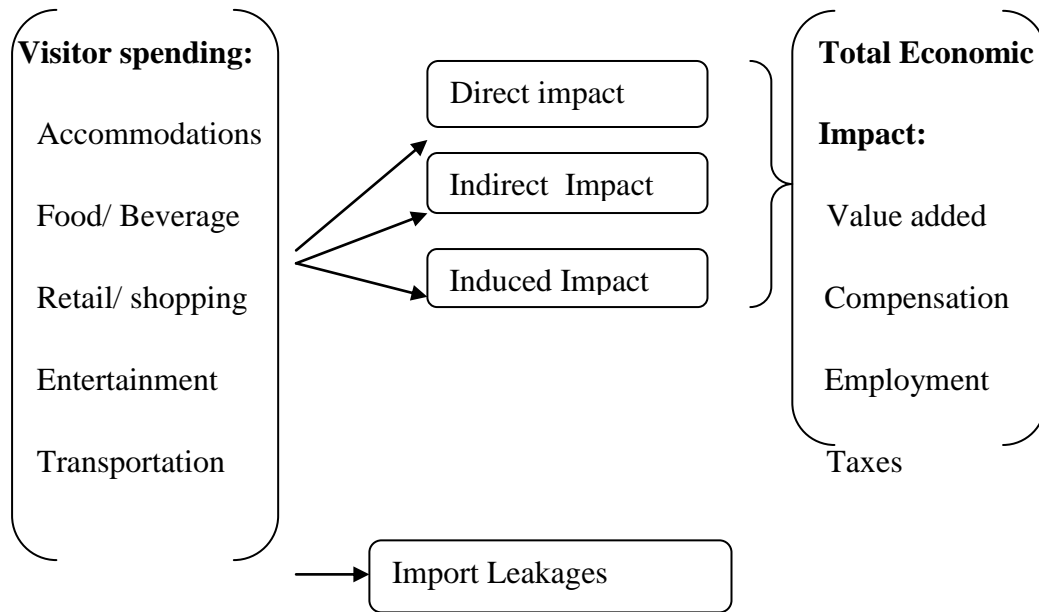


FIGURE 5: Implan Model, University of Minnesota, 1985

5.1 Key Findings

5.1.1 Income for the local youths

In the session 2008-2009 Mount CEO worked with 29 trained guides and 116 porters. A total of 11.6 million CFA Francs (17.684 Euros) were generated through tourist guiding services for the young villagers. 14 out of the 29 guides had an average income of more than 12.000 CFA Franc (18,30 Euros) per month (including the non active months in the rainy season). The most experienced guides even had an average income of 30.500 CFA Franc (46, 50 Euros). Three other guides gained more than 20.000 CFA Franc (30, 50 Euros) through guiding services per month. During this season, only a fee of 3.000 CFA Franc (4, 6 Euros) was charged from each tourist for trips to and from the mountain. Recently the amount has been augmented to 5.000 CFA Franc (7,6 Euros) and 7.000 CFA Franc (10,7 Euros) respectively.

The table 1 below shows that there has been a light decrease in the total number of tourists. Never the less, the contribution to the SHF has been on a steady rise, the income for guides and porters have also been increasing over the years. During the research, it was observed and confirmed by the tourism authorities in the region that the number of foreign visitors has doubled, leading to an increase in the porter and guide fees.

TABLE 1. Number of tourists and income generated for guides and porters and through stakeholder fund (SHF)

Season	No of Tourists	SHF(CFA Franc)	Guides/Porters	Total
2001-2002	100	414.000	1.006.000	1.420.000
2002-2003	205	994.000	2.634.000	3.628.000
2003-2004	322	2.068.00	4.125.000	6.193.000
2004-2005	338	1.517.500	4.056.000	5.573.500
2005-2006	692	4.148.675	7951.500	12.100.175
2006-2007	760	4.398.000	9.603.000	14.001.000
2007-2008	885	5.130.000	10.709.000	15.839.000
2008-2009	856	5.176.000	11.643.000	16.819.000
	4.130	23.846.175	51.727.500	75.573.675

5.1.2 Village projects from SHF

According to Mount CEO, 15 villages around the region are members of the VECs. Every tourist pays the sum of 3.000 CFA Franc (4,60 Euros) a day to the stakeholder's fund otherwise known as the village development fund. At the end of every season, these

benefits are shared as follows; VECS 15 percent, Mount CEO 77 percent, Local council of Buea five percent and the Cameroonian Ministry of Tourism receives three percent. It was also reported that each year the member villages write proposals to carry out community projects with the above mentioned benefits. Two villages are selected by the NGO to benefit each year and a rotation system enables that after eight years all villages would have benefited from the ecotourism development fund.

During the 2005-2006 seasons two villages profited from the stakeholders fund, namely Bokwango (a water extension project) and Wonganjo (installation of electricity). These projects were assisted by Mount CEO through the SHF with the provision of water pipes, wires, poles, meters as well as the labour.

5.1.3 Other projects

A statement from the office of Mount CEO reported that some other important development projects have been accomplished as follows;

- Over the years, Mount CEO, with the financial assistance from the French Geological Mission have maintained and cleared new tracks to and from the mountain. Recently, one track leading towards Bakingili was opened. The impact of this project was an additional income of 1.620.000 CFA Franc (2.469 Euros) for guides and porters during the 2007-2008 seasons. In the long term, these tracts will provide more options for longer duration of stay. Mount CEO also assisted in a solar project with Total ELF by carrying solar panels to ELF station. ELF Douala financed this project that generated an extra 3.530.000 CFA Franc (5.381 Euros) for the local youths.
- Bird watching guides training involving thirteen NGOs from the South West and North West regions gained skills in promotional tours. This project financed by United Nation World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), German Development Service (DED), and German Technical cooperation (GTZ), Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS) and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSBP) attracted 400 additional tourists in the region, thereby adding 6.000.000 CFA Franc (9.146 Euros) to the local economy.

5.2 Monetary side effects for tourism related industries in the region

During the research, it was observed that not only Mount CEO benefits from the tourists activities; many other providers of tourist services also enjoy the fruits of the business. Mount Cameroon is close to many beautiful beaches of the coastal town of Limbe. The effect is that most visitors combine a tour to the mountain with few days of vacation at the beach in Limbe. Assuming that the tourism business of Mount CEO result in 1400 overnight stays with the costs of 9.000 CFA Franc (13,70 Euros) average per tourist, the support for the hotels in Limbe and Buea stand at 12.600.000 CFA Franc (19.208 Euros) per season. The impact for restaurants and transportation companies can be assumed to be at 9.100.000 CFA Franc (13.872 Euros) (1400 overnight stays with a consumption of 6.500 CFA Franc (9, 90 Euros) per person a day for breakfast, lunch and supper).

It was also discovered that through the sale of locally produced articles and services such as arts and crafts, as well as cultural performance, Mount CEO contributes with 2.130.000 CFA Franc (3.247 Euros) to the local economy.

5.3 Detailed results

The Mount Cameroon project with the support of the German Development Fund contributes about 47.798.000 CFA Franc (72.863 Euros) every season to the local and regional economy in direct benefits for the organization and its members. This excludes indirect effects on income and multiplier effects for non tourist jobs in upstream and downstream industries.

Beneficiary	Amount in CFA Franc	Amount in Euros	Remarks
Mount CEO' office	5.560.000	8.476	
Guides and porters	11.643.000	17.748	Tourist guiding services
Villages development projects	1.000.000	1.524	Share of SHF to villages
Government services	415.000	633	SHF share
Guides and porters	5.150.000	7.850	Extra services to projects
Profit from guides and porters piggery project	200.000	305	
Accommodation	12.600.000	19.207	
Transportation and Restaurants	9.100.000	13.872	
Direct sales	2.130.000	3.247	sales of locally produced crafts and services
Total benefits for the local and regional economy	47.798.000	72.863	
Bird watching guides training	6.000.000	9.146	This project was carried out in 2008 season. Its real impact was measured in the subsequent years.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Enhancing tourism's economic impact in the region

While this study has been able to outline the undoubted economic significance of ecotourism in the region of Mount Cameroon, it has also highlighted some worrying features about the state of economic impact related statistics and information in the region. From the results of this study, it is evident that in order to increase the economic impact of tourism in the region the following needs to be achieved:

- An increase in the volume of tourists will require that packages must be developed that will increase their stay in the region. Also, local tourists can be encouraged to visit the region more often by offering some kind of royalty scheme programmes.
- An increase in the length of stay result to increasing and escalating daily spending. Strategies such as specials on accommodation during certain periods of the year can lead to further increase the economic impacts of tourism in the region. In addition, the development of more diverse tourism products will encourage an increase in the length of stay. According to the management of Mount CEO, 2011 “this is currently a strategic focus for the region”. Again, big group of persons doing for example one day tour can be convinced to extend their stay to two or possibly three days. The advantages of longer stay should be emphasized; relaxing, more interesting and diverse landscapes for example.
- Investment in infrastructures such as roads, maintenance and cleaning is an essential foundation that needs to be laid to facilitate an increase in tourism. The region can also develop more business tourism opportunities by improving access to the area. The region must develop new hotels or at least modernize the existing ones, air links, and more attractions in order to increase the duration of stays and encourage tourist expenditure and augment the benefits of their activities.
- An increase in the daily spending levels of visitors requires interventions in tourism activities which will result in the sale of a greater variety of goods and services to stimulate spending by visitors.

- Leakages have to be reduced by encouraging tourism operators and establishments to obtain as many as possible of their services locally and by training and employing local people.
- A radical marketing strategy is badly needed. In the 21st century, it is difficult for any business to achieve its goal without a proper marketing strategy. Mount CEO need to take this measure seriously if they want to maintain a sustainable business and increase the economic impacts of the business.
- The region must ensure that information and tourism statistics are comprehensive and up-to-date, and are utilized effectively to guide policy and marketing.
- The experts must initiate tourism awareness programmes for local inhabitants. Greater awareness will lead to greater tourism involvement and more equitable spread of benefits
- Conduct further investigation into market segments and marketing avenues.
- Ensure adequate protection of the environmental resources so that the natural beauty and the environmental integrity are not eroded to the detriment of tourism.
- Augment spending per visitor through the provision of handicrafts, increase in the tourist fees, sales of souvenirs and many other locally produced products. Fair business practices and collaboration with the local service providers is also required.

6.2 Conclusions

In the course of conducting this study, a lot of things were noted regarding the business of ecotourism and its economic impacts in the region. The following were analyzed from the study:

This research provided a major step forward for Mount CEO and the region in general on the problem of lack of statistical tourism data and is the first ever research conducted. It is a measurement tool on the economic impact of ecotourism in less privileged areas of the society. The total number of foreign tourist to the neighbourhood has been significantly on the rise. Today, Mount CEO receives more than 4130 foreign tourists per season.

- ✓ The project Mount CEO contributes with 47.798.000 CFA Franc (72.863 Euros) per season to the local and regional economy in direct benefits for the organization and its members excluding indirect effects on income and multiplier effects for non-tourist jobs in upstream and downstream industries.
- ✓ About 2.000 direct, 5000 indirect and more than 3000 induced jobs are created each season for the local population.
- ✓ It was also noted that the visitors spent about 12.600.000 CFA Franc (19.207 Euros) on accommodation and 9.100.000 CFA Franc (13.872 Euros) for transportation.
- ✓ Other projects such as the village development fund otherwise known as the stakeholder fund realize around 1.000.000 CFA Franc (1.524 Euros) in support of village projects twice yearly. The bird watching program contributes with approximately 6.000.000 CFA Franc (9.146 Euros) to the local economy.

This notwithstanding, ecotourism has brought a lot of negative effects in the region such as environmental pollution, cultural decline and waste dumping just to mention few. Another social impact that strongly holds back the advancement of this activity in the region is corruption and lack of accountability from the top managers. Should these harmful practices be diminished, ecotourism may live up to its advocated benefit.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

List of those interviewed during the research

Ministry of Tourism, S.W regional office	Mount CEO	Local representatives, Guides and Porters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mr. Elangwe Peter Pel (Regional Delegate of Tourism) – Mr. Mboh Johnson Kobi, (regional controller) and – Head of statistic bureau. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mr. Mosima David, Director, Mount CEO – Mrs. Mietu Christina, (accountant) 	Bruno Eko, Ferdinand Ikome, Ferdinand Ikome, Isume Njoki, Georgiana Fotabong, Agbor Daniel, Patrice Mbollo, Princewill Ndive, Eko Victor, Ekame Ndumbe, Ekonje John, Mbolo John, Oben Henry, Sara Sako and Ngomba Daniel

APPENDIX 2

Interview questions

Dear Sir/Madam:

My name is Njumba Oscar. I am a degree student from Tamk University of Applied Science, Tampere, Finland. I am conducting research on the Economic Impacts of Ecotourism in the Mount Cameroon Region. In particular, I am interested in the impacts of ecotourism developments on local communities in the region. As a member of this community, your opinions are very valuable to this research. Your cooperation in answering some questions would be most appreciated. The questions should take between 15 and 30 minutes.

Your participation is absolutely voluntary, and you are free to not answer any question(s) you are not comfortable with during the interview.

Thank you for your cooperation.

- Interview questions (**Questions aimed at estimating the economic impacts of tourism in the region and to outline the main beneficiaries**).

- **The local people**
 - What economic impacts do you see in the region as a result of ecotourism business?
 - Did you and your local community benefit anything yet from this business?
 - Can you please outline some of the benefits you and your community have enjoyed so far?
 - Where do you think money is spent on?
 - Where do you think the money should be spent on?
 - Are you aware of the existence of the ecotourism board in the region?

- **Mount Cameroon CEO and the Regional Delegation of Tourism (Tourism experts)**
 - How many jobs in the area does ecotourism support?
 - How much income does this business generate for households and other businesses in the region?
 - How much do tourists spend in the area?
 - How much tax revenue is generated from ecotourism?
 - How are the benefits shared amongst the population?