

## Evaluating the Culture of Gratuity or Tips Giving in the Hospitality Establishment in Fako Division, South West Region - Cameroon

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### ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality establishments or industry is built on showmanship and flattery, when you arrive at a hotel, people spring into motion to make your life easier namely: the door attendant helps you with your bags, the bellhop takes them to the room, housekeepers clean and refill your room and the concierge knows where to get the best steak in town etc. With all this extra work it therefore warrants extra pay and knowing how to tip isn't just good manners, it can help ensure quality service throughout your stay. Although tipping is a multibillion-dollar industry, it isn't a globally consistent phenomenon as in some countries, tipping is illegal. However in some countries especially in the United States of America, people are so accustomed to leaving a tip for good service and uncertain about protocol that we end up leaving our servers money anyway. In Fako Division in particular and Cameroon in general, people are not so accustomed to or do not have the culture of leaving a tip for good service. However, tipping is up to the customer and sometimes the service is worth a tip, but other times it is not if you have a bad restaurant experience, however, many people especially those in the food service industry feel quite strongly that refusing to tip is not the best way to respond. Dining is all about customer experience and we leave the choice of tipping to the customer and no customer should feel pressured to provide a tip or accept an optional service charge.

**Keywords:** Tips, gratuity, tipping

### INTRODUCTION

Tip is also thought to be an acronym for "to insure promptness," with its origins in 16th-century English coffeehouses. This idea is challenged, however, because some say acronyms weren't widely used until the 1920s. In addition, the more correct version would be "to ensure promptness." Many people who haven't worked in this industry don't realize that the servers, guides, drivers, concierges and others who help improve our dining and traveling experiences sometimes aren't paid even minimum wage by their employers not to mention cost-of-living increases. They depend on the gratuities that their customers give them for good service and friendly help. There are also several theories about where the word "tip" comes from. One holds that in the 17th century, the word was used as a verb to mean "hand it over" or "to give." This follows suit with the stories of feudal lords throwing gold coins as "tips" to the peasants in the street to ensure their

own safe passage. Furthermore, Random House's Word of the Day column disputes the tip-acronym-hypothesis, stating, tip was originally thieves' slang then called 'cant' and meant 'to give; pass along' ([www.people.howstuffworks.com](http://www.people.howstuffworks.com)). Restaurant owners are grappling with the spiky and composite issue of balancing the huge inconsistency in income between servers and kitchen staff created by the current practice of tipping. Front-of-house staff generally receives a gratuity of between 15% and 22% while cooks who make the food may labour for minimum wage. The truth is labour costs are going up, minimum wages are going up, restaurant margins are going down, and so in order to close that gap and keep people working in the kitchen, restaurants are going to start taking control of that tipping revenue as a way of just making sure they can continue to meet labour costs ([www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)).

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It is also a good idea to tip in hotels but remember tipping at hotels does not stop with the hotel staff who bring baggage to a guest room and in some tourist destinations, "tip jars" have started appearing in places that provide counter service, coffee shops, ice cream shops, cafeterias etc. , and even in some retail stores. Aside from situations in which a gratuity is charged by the establishment, remember that tipping is your choice. It is common to tip in restaurants, but it is not required. It is not as common for other service providers (hairdressers, manicurists, etc...); again it is a choice. If the service is slow because the kitchen is slow, it is unfair to not tip. If a server is rude to you, you should do more than just withhold a tip. If your experience was so poor that you are considering not leaving any tip, consider speaking to a manager instead as most managers want to know about problems so they have an opportunity to make things better for their customers and that could extend to offering you a free meal, which is a much better solution ([www.tripadvisor.ca](http://www.tripadvisor.ca)).

### Background of Fako Division

Fako is a Division in the South West Region of Cameroon with Limbe as its capital, it has a total surface area of 2.093km<sup>2</sup> and it's divided into seven (07) administrative units' also called subdivisions i.e. Buea, Tiko, Limbe 1, Limbe 2, Limbe 3, Muyuka, and West Coast subdivision. The indigenes of Fako Division are the Bakwerians but today migration and other administrative functions have transformed the Division into a multicultural conglomerate with both nationals and internationals cohabitating as one. This Division harbours most of the touristic sites of the Region hence making it the highest visited division in the Region. This Division have the dark sandy beach that stretches from the cricks in Tiko, Limbe right to the West Coast District of Idenau. This dark sandy beach does not only make this area unique but also the only unique dark sandy beach in Central Africa and this grows inward to culminate on Mount Cameroon, at 4100m, the highest peak in West Africa and Central Africa. In Limbe we have renowned sites like Bimbia slave site, down beach, Zoological garden, the Limbe botanical garden, Alfred Saker monuments, the Bakingili lava site, Lake Nachtigal, the German light house, etc. In Buea, we have the Mountain which is the main attraction solicited by many, we have all the German relics, the Tole tea plantation, our lady of Grace Sanctuary, Bonjongo Catholic church amongst others

(echoes, quarterly magazine of Limbe city council).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A tip is where the restaurant or hotel hasn't suggested a service charge and the customer decides what additional or optional payment to tip, over and above the amount set out on the bill. If the customer is providing a tip, it is intended to go to the employees and for tax reasons, those employees will receive a greater portion of the sum if it's provided as a tip or service charge rather than as part of the bill. Customers should not feel obligated to tip; especially when services is substandard and remember that tipping fosters a service culture and it encourages people to work in the industry. Therefore each hospitality establishment will have own policy and in some establishment individual staff or employee either keep their own tips or shares it out between waiting, front of house and the kitchen team ([www.bha.org.u](http://www.bha.org.u)).

A gratuity also called a tip is a sum of money customarily given by a client or customer to a service worker, in addition to the basic price. Tipping is commonly given to certain service sector workers for a service performed or anticipated. Depending on the country or location, it may be customary to tip servers in bars and restaurants, taxi drivers, hair stylists and so on. Tips and their amount are a matter of social custom and etiquette, and the custom varies between countries and settings. In some locations tipping is discouraged and considered insulting; while in some other locations tipping is expected from customers. The customary amount of a tip can be a specific range of monetary amounts or a certain percentage of the bill based on the perceived quality of the service given. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "tip" originated as a slang term and its etymology is unclear.

Majority of customers think that service charge, tips and gratuities are all the same thing and so if paying a service charge that is automatically put on their bill, they are less likely to also tip. Tip or Gratuity is an additional payment given voluntarily over and above the amount of the bill to reward good service. Any cash tips given to your server, they are entitled to keep. If given via credit card it is known as a gratuity and this belongs to the restaurant and management can share it out with their staff how they deem fit while the administration fee from the credit card

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company is deducted from this amount first (www.hotel-industry.co.uk).

Tipping practices can vary wildly depending on where you and what you are doing, while tipping is not mandatory in most states, it is nonetheless a customary practice that is often closely tied to our understanding of social etiquette. Within certain sectors of the hospitality industry, the most notable of which are sit-down restaurants, servers more often than not rely on the tips they receive to make up an essential portion of their wage. In such cases, the words “don’t forget to tip your server!” represent more than a mere reminder to showcase our casual generosity (www.theculinaryacademy.org).

It is also important to remember that in many restaurants, the server is required to “tip out” that is, to give a percentage of his/her total sales to cover tips for hostesses, bussers, and similar service staff and this normally happens regardless of what level of tip he/she received from you, because it's based on sales, not on tips. If you choose not to tip, the server still has to tip those other support workers and so by choosing not to tip, you will actually cost the server money from his/her own pocket (www.tripadvisor.ca).

**Table1.** *Tips or gratuity situation among employees in hospitality establishment in Fako Division*

Variables	Number of employees in hospitality who responded to the questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Knowledge of tip or gratuity by employees of hospitality establishment	10	25%
No knowledge of tips by employees of hospitality establishment	30	75%
Employees who have receive tips or gratuity	14	35%
Employees who have never receive tips	26	65%
Tips have a relationship with service offered	30	75%
Tips have no relationship with service offered	10	25%

**Source:** *fieldwork*

75% of employees who answer the questionnaires at their various hospitality establishments think that tips have a relationship with service offered as dining is all about customer experience and the choice of tipping is a decision of the customer with regards to the service received. And finally 25% of the employees noted that gratuity or tips have no relationship with service offered, it is the choice of the customer.

### CONCLUSION

Although tipping is a multibillion-dollar industry, it isn't a globally consistent phenomenon and hospitality guests might also leave a very low tip or no tip at all, as a signal

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this research work, the researcher used both primary and secondary data that was information collected from the field through the use of interview and also from the websites.

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

From table 1 above, 75% of employees in the hospitality establishment indicate that they have no knowledge of tips or gratuity, although tipping is a multibillion-dollar industry, it isn't a globally consistent phenomenon and in fact, in some countries, tipping is illegal and it is not part of our culture. While 25% of employees in this sector reveal that they have no knowledge of tip.

35% of employees in the hospitality establishment visited by the researcher reveal that they have receive some form of gratuity or tips as a result of services rendered to customers. Tip or Gratuity is an additional payment given voluntarily over and above the amount of the bill to reward good service. While 65% of the employees indicated that they have never receive any gratuity from customers after serving them.

that the service was substandard. Employees in this industry depend on the gratuities that their customers give them for good service and friendly help despite their low minimum wage and extra work warrants extra pay, and knowing how to tip isn't just good manners it can help ensure quality service throughout your stay (traveltips.usatoday.com).

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