

Examining Heritage Tourism Sites in the South West Region of Cameroon – A Case Study of Fako Division

EvaristusNyongAbam, MSc

Catholic university institute of Buea, department of tourism and hospitality management

**Corresponding Author: Evaristus NyongAbam, MSc, Catholic university institute of Buea, and department of tourism and hospitality management, UK, Email: enyongabam@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

Tourism offers a powerful incentive for preserving and enhancing intangible cultural heritage, since the revenue it generates can be channeled back into initiatives to aid its long-term survival. The activities and services which provide international and domestic visitors with the opportunity to experience understand and enjoy the special values of a region's heritage, are sometimes referred to as heritage tourism. The recognition of the significance of heritage assets, and ensuring their long-term protection, is essential for sustainable and appropriate tourism and visiting heritage places can be part of a range of activities undertaken by tourists or it can be the sole reason for travel for people with a high level of interest in natural and cultural heritage. Historic buildings and open spaces that are left abandoned are at risk of physical decay or redevelopment, and represent a loss of opportunity to revitalise structures that contribute to the identity of a community and its social traditions and the pride and joy many of us now feel at being a part of recorded history is undeniable. Fako Division is endowed with lots of heritage sites which when well-interpreted not only teach visitors about history, but they also provide know-how that visitors can take back home to start or contribute to their own preservation efforts.

Keywords: *Heritage, Tourism, heritage tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Heritage and culture have become interchangeable and elastic terms and in the context of the arts for example, the use of the term culture relates to how a society's history, beliefs, values, traditions and icons are manifested in an artistic format. The term often embraces Indigenous and natural culture, depending upon the perspective of the proponent.

Sustainable activity of these sites has leads to physical heritage and they include built structures and surrounds; cultural landscapes; historic sites, areas and precincts; ruins, archaeological and maritime sites; sites associated with mining, industrial, scientific and agricultural heritage; sites of important events and commemorations; collections that house or collectively promote objects of heritage significance (e.g. museums, tours, trails and festivals) and created landscapes (e.g. botanic and public gardens).

While intangible heritage include oral traditions, languages, rituals and beliefs, social practices, knowledge, human activities, multicultural interactions, and stories and histories that shape

the essence and character of a host community (Abam, 2017). Heritage tourism occupies a significant proportion of the 'cultural tourism' spectrum, and while it often overlaps with and links to other tourism product, the historic or human dimensions considerably inform and shape all parts of the spectrum. In this sense, heritage provides an 'overarching' component or common thread for many tourism products in a country or localised area ([www .tourism planning professionals.com](http://www.tourismplanningprofessionals.com)).

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism(Article 4) prescribes the protection of natural, artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage, to allow traditional cultural products, crafts and folklore to survive and flourish, rather than causing them to degenerate and become standardised. The world heritage sites are among the most emblematic tourism destinations and attractions, facing numerous challenges due to an ever increasing tourism activity and related development issues. This Conference was held as part of a strategic collaboration between UNWTO and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in order to address key tourism policy and management issues, such as coordination

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between heritage management and tourism organizations, extending benefits to local communities, reducing tourism congestion and environmental impacts, increasing site financing and enhancing the interpretation and communication of heritage values through tourism (UNESCO, 2003).

Background of Fako Division

Fako Division is a second-order Administrative Division; it is located in the South-West Region of Cameroon. The department covers an area of 2,093 km² and as of 2001 had a total population of 534, 854. The capital of the Fako Division is at Limbé and it is divided administratively into seven Council areas namely: Buea rural, Limbe I, Limbe II, Limbe III, Muyuka, Tiko and the West Coast councils. This Division is located at latitude: 4°10'0.01" and longitude: 9°10'0.01" (annuairestatistique du Cameroun, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heritage Tourism is a branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring. The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States defines heritage tourism as “travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past,” and cultural heritage tourism is defined as “travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present (www.culturalheritagetourism.org).

Heritage tourism can also be attributed to historical events that have been dramatized to make them more entertaining. Heritage tourism focuses on certain historical events, rather than presenting a balanced view of that historical period. Its aim may not always be the presentation of accurate historical facts, as opposed to economically developing the site and surrounding area. Another problem with heritage tourism is the effect on indigenous peoples whose land and culture is being visited by tourists. If the indigenous people are not a part of the majority, or ruling power in the country, they may not benefit from the tourism as greatly as they should. As a result, heritage tourism can be seen as a blend of education, entertainment, preservation and profit (Timothy& Olsen, 2006).

Today many tourism sites are receiving huge influx of visitors, especially in peak periods, which might cause severe management difficulties, deterioration of the visitor experience, as well as the general site conditions. Successful management of congested tourism attractions goes much beyond the sites

themselves; it is dependent on the effective coordination between a range of actors involved, such as site managers, local authorities, tour operators, transportation companies, information managers at different levels, etc. (www.sdt.Unwto.org).

The UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme represents a new approach based on dialogue and stakeholder cooperation where planning for tourism and heritage management is integrated at a destination level, the natural and cultural assets are valued and protected, and appropriate tourism developed (www.whc.unesco.org).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this research work, the researcher used only secondary data that was information collected from the bulletins, magazines and websites of the Regional Delegation of Tourism and Leisure for the South West Region

Table1. Showing heritage sites in Fako Division (South West Region)

| No | Name of site | Locality | Division |
|----|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1 | Slave trade market/port | Bimbia/Limbe 3 | Fako |
| 2 | Nicol Island | Buea | Fako |
| 3 | Prime Minister's Lodge | Buea | Fako |
| 4 | First oil mill in Cameroon (1849) | Bimbia | Fako |
| 5 | Mondoni oil mill | Mondoni | Fako |

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Slave Trade Market/Port

Cameroon slave trade served a very important supply zone for the export of African slaves to the New World after the Portuguese exploration on the Cameroon coast. Cameroonian slaves were mostly sold to the Fernando Po collection centre. The island of Fernando Po was one of the main collection points for slaves taken along the Bight of Benin. The Duala Kings were the predominant slave-trading middlemen in these transactions.

The majority of slaves traded from the Cameroon coast came from inland invasions as well as from the neighbouring Bataga, Bassa, and Bulu. Four groups Tikari, Douala-Bimbia, Banyangi and Bakossi, Bamileke accounted for 62% of the people carried out of the River and from Bimbia in these years. Bimbia was an independent state of Isubu people of Cameroon, in 1884 annexed by the Germans and incorporated in the colony of Kamerun.

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It lies in Southwest Region, to the south of Mount Cameroon and to the west of the Wouri estuary. It is situated at the East coast of the Limbe Sub Division. Bimbia consists of three villages: Dikolo Bona Ngombe and Bona Bille. In 1932 the population of Bimbia was about 2500 peoples. Bimbia is just endowed with lavished tourism potentials with historical tourism being one of its greatest attractions. Slave trade may have come and gone but relics of this callous activity which saw the buying and selling of human beings like commodities can still be spotted in the old time classic village of Bimbia. Though in ruins, this over a century old slave market still has vestiges that can be used to tell the story to future generations. The “door of no return” still stands tall as no slave returned after passing through it (www.cameroonweb.com).

Nicol Island

It is an island that is located in South-West Province, Cameroon. The estimate terrain elevation above the sea level is (999 m). Latitude: 3°56'35.99" Longitude: 9°15'56.02" (www.cm.geoview.info). Nicol Island is an island within Cameroon and is southeast of Fishing Point near Bimbia and east of cape Bimbia.

Prime Minister's Lodge

The Prime Minister's Lodge is a historical monument built in 1902 by the Bakweri people under forced labour. The house is said to be a copy of one of Kaiser's (a German king) hunting lodges in Germany. Drawn from historical antecedents, the story begins when the German government launched a military expedition to occupy all the areas around Mount Cameroon due to the fertile soil. They invaded the jurisdiction of the then chief of Mount Fako, Chief KuvaLikenyé. By 1895, Chief Endeley signed a brutal peace treaty, imposing on, and obliging the Bakweri people to pay war indemnities in land, livestock, and men. These men were then forced to build the palace of the late German governor, Von Puttkamer. This building later became the Prime Minister's Lodge and for the first time, hosted the Presidential couple on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration of Cameroon's Reunification in Buea. Today, it remains a living symbol of the relentless efforts put in place by the “Bakweris” to be free from German colonial rule. It is full of history and serves as a great haven for historical tourists and researchers (www.wonderoom.com).

First Oil Mill in Cameroon (1849)

It is situated in Bimbia

Mondoni Oil Mill

It deals in production of refined and crude palm oil, kernel oil. We have decided to make sure that our customer service team ensure that all orders are processed efficiently, effectively and timely (www.tradeboss.com).

CONCLUSION

Travelling to experience places, artefacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and heritage tourism can include cultural, historic and natural resources. Heritage tourism is one of the most important things to a country as each and every tangible and intangible heritage is very valuable to attract tourists. Because a lot of people like to go and see the heritages that other countries have, heritage tourism fosters a sense of community pride. Well-interpreted sites not only teach visitors about history, but they also provide know-how that visitors can take back home to start or contribute to their own preservation efforts (Abam, 2017).

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