

Examining the Role Played by Museums in the Development of Cultural Tourism in Cameroon - A Case Study of the Babungo Meseum of the North West Region

Evaristus Nyong Abam*

Evaristus Nyong Abam, MSc. in international hospitality management, College of Business, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Catholic University Institute of Buea, UK

***Corresponding Author:** *Evaristus Nyong Abam, MSc. in international hospitality management, College of Business, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Catholic University Institute of Buea, UK, Email: enyongabam@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism being a subset of tourism is more concerned with a traveller's engagement in a country or regions, particularly the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, their history, art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that can helped shape their way of life. Recording day after day life within a culture is one of the most significant pieces of preserving it and looking at the rate at which cultures are fading, the careful safeguarding of daily life is the only hope a heritage group has for recovering its culture. Therefore it should be noted that every day life encompasses rituals, religion, foods, art and any other facets that make a culture unique and in spite of of what type of museum it is and the likelihood are it has some cultural artifacts, art, music, or technology displayed. Museums are known to play a crucial role in the preservation of local culture and with cautious certification and artifact preservation, a culture can be recorded and remembered regardless of its future and not leaving out the fact that it can also be shared and understood by those from different cultural backgrounds. Babungo is having a high reputation when it comes to craft work because of these craft works of their former kings and as such they possess one of the numerous well kept artefacts in Cameroon. Like other museum around the world, the Babungo museum presents a sample of main and important objects from the rich cultural and artistic heritage of Babungo, and coupled with the rich treasure of the talented sculptor and especially the kings and for this reason these pieces has still remain the most impressive of the grassland area.

Keywords: *Museum, cultural tourism, tourism development*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Cameroon may well become a strong global brand for the country when it receives the concerted attention of all the stakeholders meanwhile cultural tourism which is a subset of tourism should not be also neglected as it is concerned with a traveller's who are committed to visiting a country or State because of its culture and specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, their history not leaving out their art work or artefacts (Abam, 2017).

Cameroon, Africa in miniature is one of the best places in West Africa to buy locally produced carvings and some of these carving in Cameroon dates back many generations and are used in many ceremonies, particularly the masks popularly used to showcase most of the traditional cultures of the grass field areas. Museums are critical components in the effort to prevent culture and

language loss and these losses may occur when the minority culture feels inferior and they strive to make its children or indigenes like those of the dominant culture. It should be noted that a museum could be used to cultivate respect and interest in these minority cultures (www.njmaritimemuseum.org).

Accruing profits or benefits of cultural tourism in particular and tourism in general to states or nations or countries are indeed all-around and multi-dimensional which underline its increasing global acceptance, its recognition and application through domestic and international tourist movements of people and this touches on the economies of so many tourism destinations. Since the tourism industry today is highly a competitive business there should therefore be the effective marketing this in an effort to market or showcase all the tourism potentials that a nation may possess as this is a key method

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of communication between an organisation or a nation and its existing and potential customers (Abam, 2016).

BACKGROUND OF BABUNGO MUSEUM

Babungo is situated in Ngoketunjia Division of the North West Region and one of the four villages of Babessi Sub Division along the Ring Road from Bamenda approximately ten kilometres from Bamunka. Babungo Museum started to contribute to the development of the cultural values since October 2003 and it opened up new job opportunities and possibilities for development that linked to the improvement of an important resource of the country whilst reinforcing the conscience of a rich cultural identity opened to encounter and exchange with the cultures of the world. This museum was designed using local materials, techniques and labour thanks to an Italian architect Antonio Piva, lecturer and a UNESCO collaborator (www.njmaritime museum.org).

Since the opening of this museum to the public, it has been attracting lots of visitors to Babungo village to see the sculptures and where several and most significant highest quality pieces and arts work were displayed in the museum namely carved and beaded thrones, stools, staffs, musical instruments, jewellery, masks, containers, pipes, etc. Also A lot of the work displayed royal symbols like the double gong, leopard, tortoise, lizard and two-headed snake. This museum presents a sample of major and significant objects from the rich cultural and artistic heritage of Babungo, which was formerly the most important iron-work centre in Cameroon and the treasure of the talented sculptor-kings of Babungo with thousands of pieces still remains the most impressive of the Grassland. Babungo, Fons have an age old tradition of skills in wood carving and the palace contains more than 30,000 traditional masks, some from more than 300 years ago and history have it that Babungo has a high reputation when it comes to craft work because of the craft works of their former Fons (www.cameroontourismlink.wordpress.com).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the International Council of Museum (2010) a museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution that is at the service of the society and of its development, thus it is also open to the public which helps to conserves, carryout researches thus helping to

communicate and exhibits what it achieves for the purposes of study or education and also enjoying the material which are evidence of people and their environment. It should be noted that though being a non-profit organisation at the service of society the museum is solely dependant on the society for support and development.

Museums can even be tools for self-expression and self-recognition and they are used to create and represent identity and most museums are even important centres of information and knowledge about a community or destination. Therefore museum audiences have a strong link to tourism , since tourists are a part of the audiences and for some museums even a large part of the total number of visitors (Kotler and Kotler, 2008).

According to Chen, & Chen (2012) cultural heritage tourism is known as one of the best parts of the tourism industry as it talks about a people and its culture therefore it is a more powerful economic development tool of nations of the world and researchers are of the opinion that museums are now playing a major role not only in the wider sphere of arts, but also within tourism and leisure.

Cultural tourism is that branch or type of tourism that involves travelling that brings people into contact with each other and since tourism has an educational element; it can therefore foster the understanding between peoples and cultures and thus provide the cultural exchange between the hosts' community and visiting guests thus there is therefore the chance for people to develop communal sympathy and understanding and to lessen their prejudices (Abam, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A primary research was used for this research work and a questionnaire was the instrument of the primary research method that was used to examine the role played by a museum in the development of tourism in Cameroon. It should however be noted that some researchers think that a single research technique may use both qualitative and quantitative techniques and also it can use both primary and secondary data but each of them have its strength and weaknesses (Veal, 2006).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1. Showing the role played by museums in the development of cultural tourism in Cameroon - a case study of the Babungo museum in the of the North West Region

VARIABLE	AGREE	DISAGREE	NO IDEA
Museums educate people about other cultures	85%	10%	5%
Museums are known to document daily life	90%	5%	5%
Museums display alternative perspective on history	88%	10%	2%
Museums connect people of different backgrounds	75%	15%	10%
Museums brings in revenue to the host community	95%	3%	2%
Museums provide opportunity for the employment of some members of the community	85%	10%	5%

Source: *fieldwork, 2019*

In order to examine the role played by museums in the development of cultural tourism in Cameroon - a case study of the Babungo museum in the of the North West Region, the researcher gave two hundred (200) questionnaires to employees of the Babungo museum as well as the indigenes of Babungo village.

Museums Educate People about other Cultures

From table 1 above, 85% of the respondents think that museums educate people about other cultures, 10% say that they do not believe that museums educate people about other cultures and finally 5% of the respondents say they are not sure museums educate people about other cultures.

Museums are known to Document Daily Life of a People

From table 1 above, 90% of the respondents agree that **museums are known to document daily life** of a people, 5% of the respondents disagree with the above statement finally 5% of the respondents reveal that **museums are known to document daily life** of a people

Concerning Museums Displaying Alternative Perspective on History

From table 1 above, 88% of the respondents are of the opinion that museums display alternative perspective on history, 10% of the respondents disagree with the above statement and finally 2% of the respondents say museums display alternative perspective on history.

Looking at Fact that Museums Connect People of Different Backgrounds

From table 1 above, 75% of the respondents suggest that museums connect people of different backgrounds, while 15% of the respondents does not believe or disagree with the above statement and finally 10% of the respondents say that

museums connect people of different backgrounds.

Museums Brings in Revenue to the Host Community

From table 1 above, 95% of the respondents suggest that museums brings in revenue to the host community, while 3% of the respondents does not believe or disagree with the above statement and finally 2% of the respondents say that museums brings in revenue to the host community.

Museums Provide Opportunity for the Employment of Some Members of the Community

From table 1 above, 85% of the respondents suggest that museums provide opportunity for the employment of some members of the community, while 10% of the respondents does not believe or disagree with the above statement and finally 5% of the respondents say that museums provide opportunity for the employment of some members of the community.

CONCLUSION

Cultural tourism is that form of tourism that involves the involvement of all stakeholders and where the participants or stakeholders may learn about other cultures and experience the cultural or arts work of a tourism destination. In order to be that part of tourism which must be successful its cultural heritage and history require more than just preservation that is its meaning should be conveyed to those who come to visit the destination thus this will help to enrich community the and it is the collective responsibility of all the stakeholders sustainable economy and for to protect it for future generations.

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