

## The Effect of Political Instability on Tourism – A Case Study of Limbe Wildlife Centre, South West Region-Cameroon

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy and it is widely recognised for its contribution to regional and national economic development. The concept of political instability or turmoil and war seems unrelated to tourism however according to the world travel and tourism council (WTTC) report, tourism is the leading foreign exchange earner and it represents one in every seven jobs. There are a number of factors that can have an influence on peoples travel decisions including political stability, terrorism, civil/world war and natural disasters, this makes Tourist's sensitive towards events of violence in holiday's destinations. The political situation of a country is recognised as an important factor that influences tourism development. A stable political condition is a significant requirement that enables tourists to visit and good media report too will help to attract more tourists to a destination as tourists have many sources through which they get information about a destination. Apart from the positive impact that comes along with tourist's movement, a huge variety of problems caused by mass tourism has become increasingly evident over recent years. Ahead of all negative effect there is environmental, social and cultural degradation followed by unequal distribution of financial benefits which all have raised public awareness. Painting a good image about the destination or positive media report will go a long way to bring back tourists to visit this destination.*

**Keywords:** Political instability, instability, politics, destination, destination image, tourism

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is now one of the biggest industries in the world and has become extremely important to the world's economy, it does generate quality jobs and substantial wealth for economies around the world and despite its size, it has become a very volatile industry (Abam, 2017). International tourism industry has come to play an increasing important role in many developing countries and it is recognised as a means to diversify the economy and thus reduce reliance on traditional agriculture and industry. It is characterised by a high degree of instability overtime due to factors such as political instability, exchange rates etc. (www.fama2.us.es) . The political instability in the north and south west regions of Cameroon began on 10 October 2016 with claims from trade unionists, but it quickly transposed into the political arena. This was supported by the fact that some fellow compatriots whose confessed purpose was none other than the partition of Cameroon for the

most extremists, or the revision of the present form of the State, saw it as a kind of panacea to the issues raised. This situation has prompted some foreign and accredited embassies in Cameroon to ask its citizens not to visit these two regions (www.allafrica.com).

There are a number of factors that can have an influence on peoples travel decisions namely: political stability, terrorism, civil war, world war and natural disasters. According to TalebRifai Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (W.T.O) tourism is a sector of hope. With its manifold socio-economic benefits and broad influence on a diverse range of sectors, tourism is a valuable part of global solutions to these global challenges and can be even more so. With more than 1.2 billion international tourists today and 1.8 billion predicted by 2030, the sector keeps on providing opportunities for each traveller and everyone involved in tourism to contribute to a more responsible, sustainable and inclusive future for all (2016 annual report).

A country whose main attractions are a warm sunny climate with nice beaches will find itself vulnerable to events of violence as tourists can easily move to enjoy similar attractions in other countries which are politically stable (www.eprints.lse.ac.uk).

According to Bhatia (2002 & 2007), transport is the necessary precondition of travel, it cost as much as about 40% of the today holiday expenditure and the gradual spread of road networks has open up many areas and made many places which were not accessible to be easily reached.

Governments have therefore come to realise the importance of tourism to their economy and a great majority of them have entrusted the world tourism organisation with the task of ensuring the sustained development of tourism in cooperation with specialised agencies of the United Nations and other international Non-Governmental Organisations concerned with tourism and protection of the natural environment.

### **Background of the Limbe Wildlife Centre**

Limbe Wildlife Centre, a rescue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction/release project was founded in 1993 and this is a collaborative effort between the Government of Cameroon and Pandrillus Foundation in which they both provide a long-term solution for confiscated wildlife especially of the south west region (Abam, 2017).

The Government of Cameroon through its Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife work with the local and international community this in an effort to secure the survival of the endangered species of Cameroon (ici.cm).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Hall (2004) believes that the impact of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America (USA) has placed the tourist industry at an international level in turmoil; this shows how important travel and tourism are to the global economy.

Political instability is a situation where the government have a lack of control over events that happens within or part of a country which usually leads to an effect on the country's economy and public image (www.fama2.us.es). Political instability is not a value judgement as to the democratic nature of a state or country; indeed it may be case that certain authoritarian

states limit oppositions to government, thus producing a stable state for tourism to flourish. The roles that these governments have played in tourism development therefore highlight the importance of government, media and tourists perceptions of destination, thus leading to the creation of its tourist's image (Abam, 2017).The image of a country altogether covers the political, economic, historical and cultural aspects and tourist view of a destination varies, we have the cognitive view which is the belief or knowledge a person has of the attributes of a destination, affective relates to an individual's feeling towards the touristic destination, while conative is a combination of both.

Image plays an important role for destination marketers so as to differentiate their destinations in a highly competitive market and also due to its impact on supply and demand aspect of marketing.Safety and security is one of the most important factors that tourists do take into consideration whenever they do decide to visit or travel to a country or region for touristic purposes, the slightest whispers of political discontent make them to cancel their journey or cut short their trip if they are already in that touristic region or country (www.eprints.lse.ac.uk).Fielding &Shortland (2008) while studying the effect of political instability on tourism concludes that international travel is very expensive, so tourists leaving their rich countries to poor countries may have more experience of being a potential criminal target and maybe less sensitive to the risk involved.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Veal (2006) believed that an empirical approach is the gathering and analysis of data which could be quantitative or qualitative, primary or secondary and no research is purely empirical as it is usually informed by some sort of theory or conceptual frame work. It should be noted that some researchers think that a single research method may use both quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures in combination as well as use primary and secondary data and they both have their own strength and weaknesses. Secondary data was used for this research work this being information gathered from there cords of theLimbeWildlife centre and the website.

### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**



From table 1 above the number of visitors (both international and domestic) in 2017 from January to September remains 28,126 when

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compared to 35,309 and 37,491 visitors in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The drastic drop in the number of inbound and outbound visitors to the

Limbe wildlife centre in 2017 is because this year remains the year the crisis when out of hand.

**Table1.** Showing the number of visitors to the Limbe wildlife centre (from January to September for the years 2015 - 2017)

Year 	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
Month 				
JANUARY	5131	4991	5432	15,554
FEBRUARY	6110	5103	1918	13,131
MARCH	3755	4625	2296	10,676
APRIL	4276	3461	3839	11,576
MAY	4911	3611	2280	10,802
JUNE	2166	2835	2651	7652
JULY	3447	5779	3887	13,113
AUGUST	4123	5319	4035	13,477
SEPTEMBER	1390	1767	1788	4945
TOTAL	35,309	37,491	28,126	

**Source:** Archives Limbe wildlife centre (2015-2017)

Also from January –August 2017, the number of visitors keeps reducing (5432 - 4035) as the crisis persist and a slight increase in September 2017 (1788 visitors) comparing it to the same period in 2016 (1767 visitors).

### CONCLUSION

The destination image of a country has been known to influence the movement of tourists, as they could embark on any meaningful travel for the purpose of leisure only to areas that can guarantee their safety and security. Areas which are politically instable, have war or terrorists attacks are known to have very few tourists who come visiting or for leisure.

Years with political instability, civil wars and terrorism, have been noted as years that produced a low gross domestic product (GDP) to the economy of the affected countries, reduction in employment rates and other societal ills etc. Negative media report about the political instability in any country have most of the time directed tourists to other countries that have similar attractions and a consequent loss of revenues in the tourism industry.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Government should embark on rigorous marketing of their touristic attractions using various media sources available, take advantage of the advancement of new technological instruments for example internet, face book, trip advisor, twitters to make known to the world the available touristic attractions it has.

This researcher is also suggesting that governments should look for other areas with

have touristic attractions and develop them so as to curb rural-urban migration, decongestion and the reduction of some social ills.

The government should not only depend on travel and tourism as a source of employment but should rather look for other opportunities that can provide employment, this can also boost the economy and hence increase the gross domestic product of the country. Also government should do everything to make sure that the country remains stable as well as have a good destination image so as to attract international travellers as well as domestic visitors to its touristic attractions. Collaboration between the public and the private sector as well as all the stakeholders involved in tourism development should be encourage so as to bring lasting peace as this will encourage visitors to come to the tourism destination areas.

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