



ECOTOURISM AND NATURE PRESERVATION AT THE MOUNT CAMEROON NATIONAL PARK.

**AALBORG UNIVERSITY COPENHAGEN DENMARK/ TOURISM
MASTER THESIS**



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ABSTRACT

The Mount Cameroon National Park, located in southwestern Cameroon, is renowned for its rich biodiversity and landscapes. This thesis explores the relationship between ecotourism and nature preservation within the park, with the aim of developing a sustainable approach to conservation. The study begins by examining the unique ecological characteristics of Mount Cameroon National Park, highlighting its diverse range of flora and fauna, including endangered species. To gain insights into the current state of ecotourism at Mount Cameroon National Park, the research employs a qualitative research approach, conducting interviews with park management authorities, and local communities. Findings reveal that while ecotourism has the potential to generate revenue for conservation efforts and provide economic opportunities for local communities, there are significant challenges that must be addressed. These include the need for effective park management and community engagement. Drawing upon the research findings, the thesis proposes a comprehensive framework for the sustainable development of ecotourism at Mount Cameroon National Park. The framework incorporates principles of community-based tourism, environmental education, and stakeholder collaboration, aiming to balance conservation goals with socioeconomic benefits. Furthermore, the study recommends the establishment of clear guidelines and regulations for tourism activities within the park, along with ongoing monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure compliance and adaptive management. In conclusion, this thesis highlights the potential of ecotourism as a catalyst for nature preservation at Mount Cameroon National Park. By adopting a sustainable approach to tourism development, stakeholders can actively engage in conservation efforts while fostering economic growth and promoting the well-being of local communities. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the long-term protection and sustainable management of this ecologically significant area.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The tourism sector has become one of the most important industries in contemporary societies as it has performed remarkably well over the past few decades, promoting sustainable growth and economic development in many countries of the world (UNWTO, 2020). Tourism has also been identified as an important source for economic benefits and economic diversification for many (Sam and Molua, 2019). Hence, the sector is an important engine for economic growth and development.

All across the world, tourism is an essential component of economic development and employment creation. The tourism sector is directly or indirectly responsible for 8.8% of the World's jobs, 9.1% of the World's GDP, 5.8% of the world's export and 4.5% of the world's investment (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2011). Tourism take place when people travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for no more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes (UNWTO, 2020)

Over double the amount of visitors traveled abroad around January to December, as stated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2022), as were counted over the exact time frame in 2021. Based on the report, the high level of tourists in 2022 as compared to 2021 were boosted by strong pent-up demand, improve confidence level and the lifting of restrictions in an increasing number of destinations.

Cameroon and the rest of the world, experienced numerous changes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All tourism and travel-related events were banned because of the rampant spread of the disease and the never-ending demise of inhabitants. Due to this spread, there were shutdowns and limitations on travel round the world as well as between different geographical areas. To

uncover the virus, testing kits were developed. Once you have contracted this infection, you are quarantined. Even when moving is necessary, there are social distance requirements that must be met, often including use of hand sanitizers to keep our hands clean which will help in maintaining a good hygiene and moving at least one to two meters apart from one another.

However, because of the pandemic, travelers are unable to move. What can be gained by putting a stop to over tourism is evident from the tourists' absence from popular tourist locations. (Clifford, 2020). People had a special concern about local travel because of the numerous limitations due to the continued foreign travel bans (Lake & Rulli, 2019). Researchers, tourists, and the public must pause, reflect, work together, and then restore the tourism sector. About 217 nations placed COVID-19-related travel restrictions in April 2020, and 107 nations blocked their borders and canceled flights for several weeks (UNWTO, 2020). As a result, unexpected circumstances arose where attractions prevented people from entering and forced them to postpone their trip. (Gretzel 2020.; Zenker & Kock, et al 2020).

In Africa, international tourist arrivals have also more than double, and Africa has registered a growth of 51% in the early 2022 compared to 2021, although numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels of 2019 according to the United Nation World Tourism Organization. In Sub-Saharan Africa, receipt from tourism in 2012 amounted to over 36 billion US Dollar and contributed over 2.8% to the region's GDP (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2013)

The potential for tourism growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is highly remarkable. The area has advantages with its wide-open waterways, an abundance of animals, numerous cultural and environmental points of interest, and adventurous options. The area also offers a lot of potential for exporting goods such as raw materials and household products (World Bank, 2016).

1.2 Ecotourism in Cameroon

Cameroon, frequently known as "Africa in miniature" (Lambi et al., 2012; Tichaawa, 2017), is recognized as the second most diversified country in Africa and is home to a wide variety of flora, fauna, special ecological zones, and distinct geographical scenery. Cameroon has several protected areas with over 17 national parks occupying a total surface area of 3,148,937 Hectares and over six wildlife reserve occupying a total surface area of 702,996 Hectares (Tchinddjang et al., 2005).

The contribution of ecotourism in Cameroon is more in terms of the economic activities generated by the industry like hotel, travel agencies, airlines (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). In 2011, the sector generated over 100,500 jobs to the economy of Cameroon and let to a 2.6% contribution to the GDP of the country. This highly increased in 2016 as travel and tourism generated over 289,500 jobs to the county (World Travel and Tourism, 2017).

Cameroon present visitors and tourists with diversity in nature like mountains, forests, tropical rivers, lakes and cultural attractions like elaborated festivals, enduring kingdoms, etc made up of roughly two hundred cultural communities ranging from the Northern to the Southern regions. The availability of these resources illustrates Cameroon's ecotourism potential (Behrens, 2005).

Mount Cameroon National Park is in the Southwest Region of Cameroon and is a major national part in the country and consists of an array of biomes ranging from evergreen forests, through sub-mountainous forests, to grassland savanna, in addition to its rare species of primates, birds and elephants, among others (Tegha and Sendze, 2016). An overall area of 58 179 Hectometers makes up the Mount Cameroon National Park. It cut across the Fako and Meme Division of the Southwest Region of Cameroon. Furthermore, one of the largest active volcanoes on the African

Continent is found within the Mount Cameroon National Park which was developed because of growing concerns of environmental degradations within the region (Tata and Lambi, 2014).

The national park was created to pave the way for development activities in some of the concerned villages where there is no Cameroonian radio and television signals, no road network, and no access to electricity. The main objective of the park as stated by the Cameroon Government was to “ensure biodiversity conservation, environmental protection and the improvement of the livelihood of local communities”. Through this, the local populations through their chief were called upon to contribute for the preservation and sustainability of the park (Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, 2009).

Despite the country high potential for ecotourism, very little has been done by the Government to formalize and promote the ecotourism sector in Cameroon to be able to benefit more from the sector mainly due to the state incapacity, centralization, and lack of an effective national strategy for ecotourism (Sama and Molua, 2019). Therefore, despite the nation's huge tourism opportunity, ecotourism continues to contribute little and insufficiently to the nation's prosperity and the battle over impoverishment.

However, this study seeks to assess the local community perception of the improvement of their livelihood as result of the creation of the Mount Cameroon National Park, as the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park can contribute significantly for the preservation and sustainability of the park. The results of the study will enable us to frame policies that contribute to improve the livelihood of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park to be able to improve the preservation and the sustainability of the Mount Cameroon National Park. The result of this study will also enable us to frame good

policies on the management of the mount Cameroon National Park and will hence contribute to preservation and sustainability of the park.

1.3 Problem statement

Despite its extensive and diverse biodiversity, Cameroon currently falls short of the requirements to be classified as a developed tourism destination by the World Tourism Organization Standard (Sama and Molua, 2019). Cameroon is endowed with great potentials in the provision of ecotourism services however, the development of ecotourism still appears to be low and the expected results from the development of sector have not been fully achieved. This often results to consents from the various stakeholders especially the local communities on the role of ecotourism in the improvement of their livelihood as it can significantly influence their participation for the preservation of ecotourism.

However, most studies on ecotourism in Cameroon have mainly focused on ecotourism livelihood strategies (Harilal and Tembi, 2018) and on ecotourism trade in Cameroon (Sama and Molua, 2019). Very limited studies have assessed the role of ecotourism in improving the livelihood of local communities and on the preservation of ecotourism site in Cameroon. This study therefore seeks to analyze how the Mount Cameroon National Park has contributed to improve the livelihood of the local communities around the park and equal how these local communities contribute for the preservation of the national park.

1.4 Research Questions

- a) What roles do local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park play for the preservation of the park?
- b) What are some of the constraints faced by the local communities in their efforts to contribute to the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park?
- c) How has the Mount Cameroon National Park improved ecotourism and the livelihood of the local communities?

1.5 Research Objectives

- a) To assess the role of the local communities in the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park.
- b) To examine the constraints faced by the local communities in their efforts to contribute for the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park.
- c) To analyze the contribution of the Mount Cameroon National Park in improving ecotourism and the livelihood of the local communities.

1.6 Justification of the Study

The preservation of Mount Cameroon National Park can contribute significantly to improve the environment and the livelihood of the local communities around the park (Cameroon Ministry Forestry and Wildlife, 2009). For this objective to be achieved the local communities alongside the other stakeholders have an important role to play. However, very few studies have assessed the role of the local communities on the preservation and sustainability of the Mount Cameroon

National Park. This study will analyze the role of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park in preservation of the park for a more sustainable national park.

The study will also assess the role of the Mount Cameroon National Park in contributing to improve the livelihood of the local communities as it has a significant impact on their contributions to the conservation of the national park. The findings of this study will give policymakers with empirical knowledge about how to conserve Mount Cameroon National Park and alongside improving the livelihood of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Ecotourism

The concept of ecotourism evolved from the ecological growth as well as sustainable growth works of the late 1970s and early 1980s and has since attracted a lot of attention and debate. It has drawn a lot of attention because it offers an enticing contrast to the mass tourism framework, which has drastically changed the social and environmental landscape of travel sites all over the world. Many believe that it still falls short of living up to its reputation as an additional moral or decent mode of transportation, which is why it is controversial (Fennell, 2009). According to TIES (2015), ecotourism is defined as sustainable visitation to environments that protect the environment, contribute to the welfare and satisfaction of the local residents, and participate in teaching and informative events. Ecotourism is sometimes seen as a tool for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage (Santarem, 2020). Ecotourism has the capacity to serve as an environmental, sociocultural and an economically viable option for promoting sustainable development.

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as sustainable vacation to beautiful locations that protects the ecosystem and enhances the health and happiness of those who live there (Chatterjee, 2015). According to Venkatesh and Gouda (2016) poverty reduction, economic growth, community development and nature and cultural conservations are common themes related to the development of ecotourism especially with developing countries. Ecotourism has been found to be associated with positive impacts on the local community and the sector is the

fastest growing sector within the tourism industry (Eshun et al., 2016; Hugo and Nyaupane, 2016; Irizarry, 2017). However, positive outcomes are not the only impacts of ecotourism as communities and locals from the destination area can suffer the negative consequences of ecotourism through been denied access to the protected area reserved for ecotourism (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

Ecotourism is another form of tourism whereby wilderness areas are explored for the two goals of preserving the environment and the improvement of local communities. With the added benefit of developing a more profound awareness of the natural environment, its biodiversity, and the distinctive customs and traditions of the community at large (Anon., 2011).

The idea of ecotourism was developed in 1985 to stop the enormous increase in visitors when the economy began operating in the early 1950s, which was causing environmental deterioration (Zein, 2019). The nation works to restore ownership of the environment to local communities that live close to the country's rich natural resources (Zein, 2019) in addition to protecting the ecosystems. In line with its primary area of expertise, ecotourism concentrates on a variety of segments, like financial services, technology, development and construction, power, farming and food production, goods for consumers, producing goods, administration, logistics, and water.

Some principles of ecotourism outlined by the International Ecotourism Society are related to the issues of environmental impact, cultural aspects, and the good treatment of both the tourists and the host communities. Adherence to these principles ensures that the benefit from tourism reaches the local communities thereby contributing to strengthen the socioeconomic, political and the environmental aspects of the community (Das and Chatterjee, 2015). The definition and

principles of ecotourism indicates a form of tourism that is beneficial to the local peoples and communities, as well as to the physical environment.

Ecotourism is also recognized as the responsible travel to natural places that moderate the environment and supports the sustainability of neighboring communities (Cater.1994). Sustainably manage ecotourism also contribute to support sustainable development goals which emphasizes biodiversity conservation level of naturalness, maintaining a good proportion of forest areas and openness of nature Park (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020).

While ecotourism is regarded as a key driver of economic growth and a means of raising peoples' standards of living, Coria & Calfucura (2012) argue that ecotourism ought not to be seen as the only strategy for advancing the local economy, it needs to be accompanied by additional measures. By preserving the connection amongst tourism, the local population, and ecosystems, the international organization for development has urged underdeveloped nations to adopt ecotourism as a means of improving the financial condition of the local community (Coria & Calfucura, 2012).

Ecotourism plays an important role in regional and local community development. Many remote communities and destinations economic growth and sustainability depend on ecotourism development as it attracts tourist into those areas who demand for goods and services and hence contributes to the induction of money in those areas (Indrani and Gobinda, 2023).

Principles of ecotourism include the following: building environmental and cultural awareness for which education is the key aspects of ecotourism initiative for the local community as well as the visitors. The majority of activities are directed at raising consciousness, educating individuals about ecological problems, and motivating them to consider how their actions affect the locations

they travel to. The second principle involves the design and operation of low- impact eco-tour and facilities, the focus is all about sustainability, minimizing the negative carbon footprint travel often leaves on the environment. The provision of economic incentives for preservation, with a focus on utilizing a portion of touristic earnings to assist pay for the preservation and enhancement of the environment, is the third guiding concept. The fourth principle consist of providing financial benefits to the local people, this principle emphasis that ecotourism must provide financial benefits to local people either through direct or indirect. The final principle emphasizes that sustainable tourism ought to constantly seek to advance equality for all, economic growth, and participatory activity in a particular region (Green Global Travel, 2017).

2.1.2 Impacts of ecotourism

Individuals' choice of destinations to visit during vacation has been influenced by the sustainable tourism movement. The goals of ecotourism are to advance greater awareness of the environment, community sustainability, cultural encounters, and preservation and enhancement of the environment. Developments are a necessity for tourists and haven't always been good for the ecology. However, it's crucial to take eco-tourist factors into account while organizing a sustainable holiday (Folk, 2019).

Economic impacts

An article by Folk (2019) claims that a lot of visitors are broadening their scope of interests and destinations rather than going to well-known locations, which increases the employment chances for residents along with the local people in a community. Locals serve as recipients, handicraft vendors, hotel managers, and guides for tourists visiting their areas. The local community's quality of life has improved as an outcome.

National parks are major tourist attractions, drawing visitors from across the country and around the world. The presence of a national park can significantly boost tourism in the surrounding areas, leading to increased spending on accommodations, dining, transportation, and recreational activities. This influx of tourists can generate substantial revenue and support local businesses, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth (Folk, 2019).

Socio-cultural impacts

For the locals, ecotourism creates new job options. It aids with the growth of the region's infrastructure and medical facilities. Along with providing visual pleasure, ecotourism gives visitors an equal chance to learn about many traditional cultures, while simultaneously boosting the confidence of tribes. Contrarily, it can lead to social unrest within the host community when visitors from different faiths and cultural systems could develop unfavorable interpersonal links. Gibson (2010) observed that visitors invest large sums of money on their excursions without considering the possibility local communities in remote locations might not have the same chances. Envy is sparked by this, and envy can cause societal unrest.

Associations and people from the tourist destinations may experience the adverse impacts of ecotourism on a social level if they get restricted accessibility to the conservation areas designated for ecotourism (Das & Chatterjee, 2015), which prevents them from obtaining their source of income and livelihood.

The socio-cultural effects of tourism were defined by Wearing et al. (1996) as the various ways that tourism influences lifestyles, and culture. Local populations' contributions to the preservation, maintenance, and growth of the ecosystems and environment of the tourism destination have recently come to attention. Government is seen as a suitable sector that

generates employment and foreign revenue to promote regional growth (Hall, 1991). In addition, ecotourism promotes cultural awareness. Communities may improve their well-being and inform vast numbers of people about their true culture, customs, and values (Folk, 2019).

Environmental impacts

The word "ecotourism" first appeared towards the peak of the 1980s as an immediate consequence of rising environmental consciousness (Coria & Calfucura, 2012). The growth of this kind of tourism within the past few decades has been stimulated by a number of reasons, such as rising incomes and leisure hours in advanced economies, resulting to an increase in the need for experiences in flawless surroundings. Also, increased government knowledge about ways to meet the demand for such experiences, particularly in less developed nations (Clifton and Benson, 2006). According to Stem et al. (2003), ecotourism prevents forest destruction, lowers the rate at which people hunt.

As opposed to what Folk argued, the fast rise in ecotourists in a place puts severe pressure on developing areas (Folk, 2019). As a result, a significant amount of lodging, companies, and entertainment attractions associated to the travel industry are being built within places of interest, which damages ecosystems, local environments, and puts more stress on native species. Nevertheless, according to Parks et al. (2009), there is disagreement regarding the environmental benefits of ecotourism, and a variety of current critiques show that though ecotourism is beneficial in theory, in practice it may damage both the natural environment as well as cultural values.

2.1.3 Nature Preservation

The methods of protecting and conserving both work to conserve the ecosystem, although they take quite separate methods. Conservation protects the ecology by effectively employing its assets. At the same time, preservation safeguards against environmental damage caused by human practices such as forest destruction. For instance, conserving forests entails using environmentally friendly techniques to reduce destruction (National Geography, 2023). Collaboration in accountability amongst individuals, groups, and the state is frequently essential to the accomplishment of conservation projects (National Geography, 2023).

In terms of policy making this often means setting aside areas as nature reserves, parks, or other conservation areas. Contemporary issues in nature preservation include the protection of endangered species and the wild lands that are their native habitat (Fisher and Krutilla, 1985). There has been increasing emphasis by researchers and policy makers everywhere in the world on the need to protect endangered species that are under the threat of overexploitation. Another contemporary issue in nature preservation is the loss of natural populations that can significantly affect human welfare. For example, people derive pleasure from the contemplation of strikingly varied life forms such as the perhaps 15,000 different species of butterflies (Fisher and Krutilla, 1985) the pleasure will reduce much if all butterflies for example look alike. Another important issue of nature preservation is the protection of plant and animal species as they are useful components of living ecosystems that provide the basic physical and biological supports for human life. These include the maintenance of the quality of the atmosphere, control and amelioration of climate, regulations of freshwater supplies, generation and maintenance of soils, disposal of waste and recycling of nutrients (Myers, 1983). Hence, removal of any one species

can cause a system to breakdown because each has evolved a set of characteristics that makes it a unique functional part of the system.

2.1.4 Mount Cameroon National Park

The Mount Cameroon National Park is one of the most visited destinations in Cameroon, which is in the Meme and Fako Division, the Southwest Region of Cameroon. Its external limits, which measure 128.73 km in length, are shared by five Sub-divisions: Limbe 2, Buea, Muyuka, Mbonge, Idenau Sub-Divisions. Its total area is 58,178 ha. About 2 kilometers separate the southern edge from the ocean. The Sounthern Bakundu, Mokoko, Bomboko and the Meme River Forest Reserve are the four protected areas that are nearest to the park. Additionally, three community forests, Bakingili, Etinde, and Woteva Cameroon Development Cooperation have direct borders with the park. The park is impacted directly or indirectly by the activity of the forty-one villages that surround it. The MCNP also borders a vast oil palm and rubber farms controlled by the Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC), as well as plantations that are owned by individuals, which are up to 50 ha. These plantations that border the park significantly contribute to the area's deforestation (The Ministry of Forestry and wildlife CMR, 2014). In order to help the preservation of ecosystems, prevent cutting down trees and degradation of the environment, and enhance the standard of living of local people, Mount Cameroon National Park was established in the month of December 2009 and officially opened in the month of February 2010 (Moki, 2010). The implementation partners include the German International Cooperation (GIC), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Ministry of Forestry and Fauna, the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development and finally the local communities. The Mount Cameroon National Park management involves 41 peripheral villages, which are divided into four geographical clusters

based on natural boundaries, cultures, and livelihood difference to facilitate collaborative management activities (Nvenakeng and Rob, 2016). Hence, a cluster platform was then established to coordinate all the activities and to ensure a constant flow of information between the park managers and the local communities. The Mt. Cameroon region's primary source of revenue is farming. Approximately 80% of people's income is generated from agriculture. The most significant agriculture products are cassava, plantains, and cocoyam. However, cocoa continues to be the most significant income crop (Tanjong 2014).

The Government of Cameroon, in cooperation with conservation and development, set three primary goals to direct the administration of this park in response to the risks to the preservation of this distinctive and rich ecosystem:

To protect biodiversity, to advance ecotourism, and to help local communities grow.

Cameroon land mass is approximately 475,650 km², and it shares borders with Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Gabon, and Nigeria. With an average population approximated at 20 million, there are 39 inhabitants per square kilometer and a 2.7% per year increase rate. There are roughly 250 different ethnic groups in Cameroon, and the country has 24 primary languages. Most people rely on agricultural activity, wildlife, natural resources like lumber and wood for a living (The Ministry of Forestry and wildlife CMR, 2014).

Furthermore, there was heavy rains in Buea town in the South-West region on the 18th of March, 2023 which caused mudslides and floods that spread from Mount Cameroon to certain towns at the top of the mountain, resulting in multiple fatalities between Buea people. Some NGO's, humanitarians, individuals and the government authorities carried out a collaborative trip to areas impacted in order to identify the most pressing needs to provide for them and get a general

picture of the scenario. The regional administrator dispatched their employees to examine the needs of impacted communities and register them (OCHA, 2023). They further explained that, two people are deceased, four people have been hospitalized and one person is missing, according to investigations. There are 150 impacted households equal to 900 people, and residents are leaving their houses along the waterway out of worry that there would be much more destruction if rainfall occurs. Several houses lost their source of income, which involves their animals, and plants in their farmland and yards. The local government has also started demolishing several homes in flood-affected regions that were built on waterways. Documents, clothes, and furniture were among the destroyed private property. Impacted towns water supply pipelines and water catchment systems were damaged (OCHA, 2023).

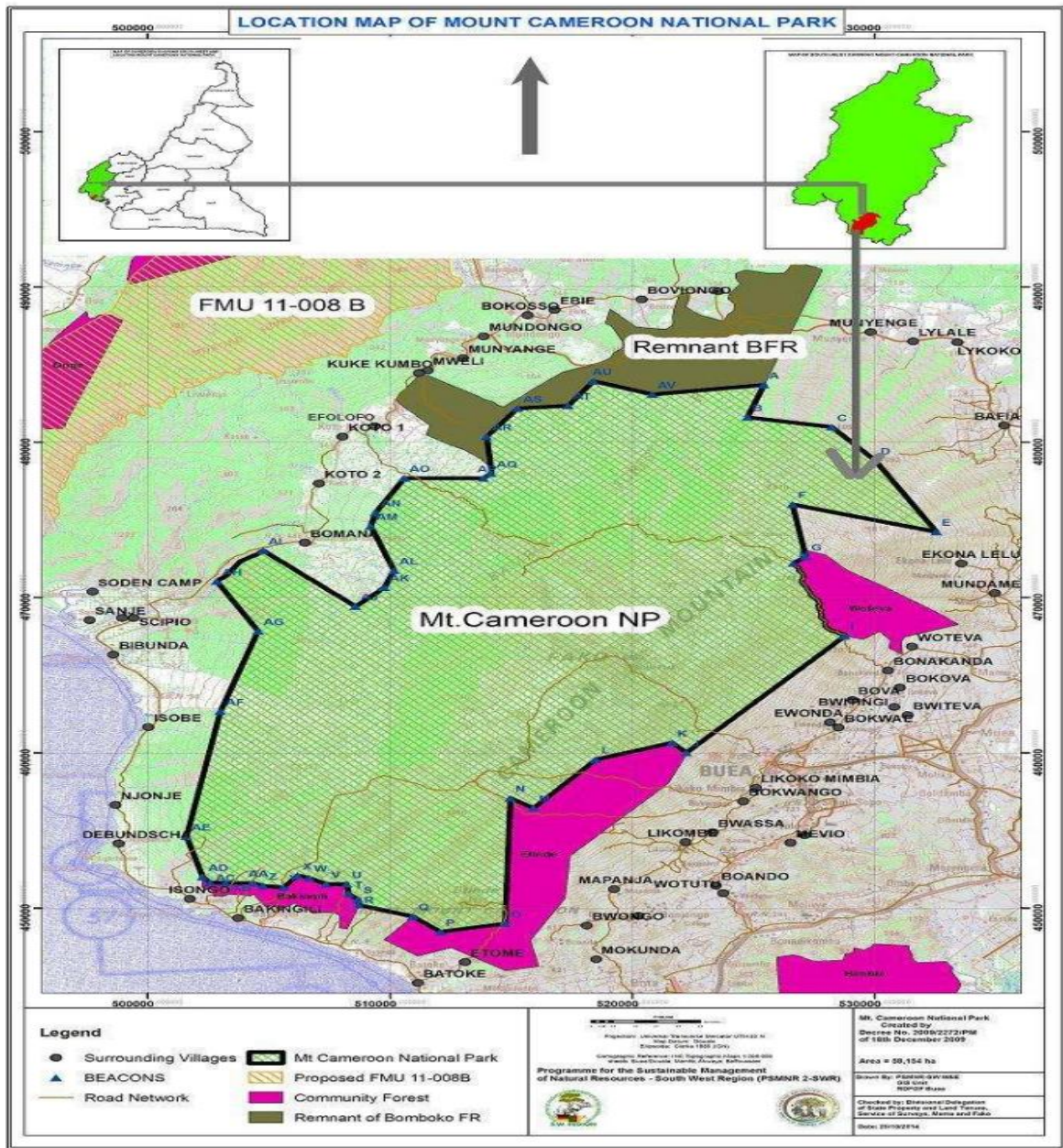


Figure 1: Location Map of Mount Cameroon National Park (The Ministry of Forestry and wildlife CMR, 2014).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory of Ecotourism, this theory emphasizes on the importance of collaboration and partnership between organizations as social institutions for the achievement of common goals (Bricker and Donohoe, 2015). The concept of stakeholder theory is employed in the field of tourism to investigate the principles, views, and actions of individuals in order to give an extensive knowledge of their ideas, and potential to impact the travel industry (Donohoe and Reyes, 2015).

This theory helps to understand the dynamics of strength within stakeholders and enables us to identify and map the various roles of stakeholders in tourism planning and development. Also, the theory contributes to improving our mechanism of conflict mechanism and resolution in ecotourism industry. Interdependent attributes such as power, legitimacy and urgency are the defining dimensions of stakeholder theory (Mitchell et al., 1997). Power refers to the capacity of a party to obtain coercive utilitarian or normative power to enforce its intent in the relationship hence power is a function of physical, material and/or financial resource control. Legitimacy indicates the extent to which stakeholder claims gain popular support meanwhile, urgency, on the other hand is a function of time sensitivity and relevance issues that are understood to the extent to which stakeholder claims required immediate attention (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Community Based Tourism, community participation approach has been identified as an integral part of sustainable tourism development. This is due to the approach's potential to raise the carrying ability of the local population by minimizing the adverse impacts of tourism while maximizing its beneficial impact (Haywood, 1988; Jamal and Getz, 1994; Murphy, 1985). The basis of the community-based theory of tourism includes the following: ladder of citizen

participation, power redistribution, collaboration processes and social capital creation. Getz and Jamal (1994) promote the collaboration theory in community-based tourism planning where collaboration is defined as a process of joint decision making among autonomous key stakeholders of an inter-organizational community-based tourism domain to resolve problems of the domain and to manage issues related to the domain. Based on the concept of partnership, Araujo and Bramwell (2002) presented a developmental model of tourist partnership centered around the idea of partnership and explained collaborative procedures within the framework of the growth of tourism. They came up with five processes such as antecedent, problem setting, direction setting, structuring by formalizing relationships and finally outcomes represented by programs. Collaboration, however, can be blocked by unequal power redistribution. Thus, power relations must be incorporated into Community Based Theory Planning as an explanatory variable.

Participation and power redistribution, Arnstein (1969) stated that citizen participation must be accompanied by power redistribution and introduced a ladder of citizen participations to explain the necessary steps, made up of three levels of gradual evolution, degree of tokenism and degree of citizen power. Arnstein's participation is not only useful for identifying the current level of community participation, but as to define the steps required to promote greater involvement. The ladder of citizen engagement, according to Haywood (1988) and Reid (2003), aids in comprehending the circumstances of destinations for tourists areas and the existing level of community engagement in tourism growth. Thus, to realize sustainable tourism, the empowerment affected by the tourism development is attached to the importance of political and socioeconomic justice (Sofield, 2003). As a means of realizing public participation and empowerment, Reid (2003) highlights the necessity of community awareness raising and

transformative learning process in understanding their situation and the need to confront problems themselves.

Partnership and Collaboration, tourism depends on a variety of outside influences, therefore partnerships should include a range of participants (Jamal and Getz, 1998), including governmental and individual collaborations (Vallas, 2002). Lack of coordination has been identified as a well-known phenomenon in the tourism industry (Jamal and Getz, 1995). In order to achieve advantages and address issues among stakeholders, cooperation is essential (Gray, 1985). All stakeholders are interdependent and an attempt to solve problems alone merely frustrates others pursuing their own goals. Collaboration, however, can be blocked by an unequal power relationship (Gray, 1985; Hardy and Phillips, 1998). Thus, power relations must be incorporated into the community-based tourism planning as an explanatory variable (Reed, 1999). A community conventional power structure may act as a constraint against collaboration, meaning that the identification of stakeholders and their subsequent assessments are crucial at the time of planning (Araujo and Bramwell, 1999).

Conflict and Facilitation in Collaboration, conflict is often seen only as a reason for the breakup of stakeholder relationships. Conflict, according to Hardy and Phillips (1998), facilitates an open discussion of needs and interests between the stakeholders. When people work in cooperation or competition, conflict is expressed in various forms, such as frustration, debate, and discussion. Facilitators play a key role in a conflict setting (Ashley and Jones, 2001; Jamal and Getz, 1995). They transform destructive conflict into constructive dialogue.

Social Capital derived from sociology, has gained an important position in the rhetoric of development assistance since the 1990s, especially after its adoption by the World Bank.

Although its definition has not yet been standardized, social capital is generally understood as the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively (Sato, 2001; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

Some studies conducted in the United State reported that those states with abundant social capital enjoy greater wealth, improved safety and medical conditions, and greater quality of learning (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, market mechanisms in developing countries that usually possess limited social capital remain underdeveloped illustrating that trust and network play crucial roles in economic development (Knack and Keefer, 1997).

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) categorized social capital into four ways: Communitarian networks, institutional and synergy. Network view looked at both the benefits and costs of social capital borne by the horizontal connection between and informal institutions. It emphasizes the importance of both internal association and external associations. The institutional view explains that political, legal, and institutional conditions from community networks and civil society and determine their validity; furthermore, it refers to the vertical relations beyond the community by linking social capital from formal institutions. Lastly, the synergy view is a hybrid of the network and institutional view. Development outcomes are seen to be dependent on the type and combination of a community capacity of a community capacity and states functions. The synergy view integrates the ideas of bonding and bridging social capital and state society relations.

Some of the advantages of the community base theory of tourism are as follows; local issues have a direct influence on the tourist experience: a backlash by the locals results in hostile behavior toward tourists (Pearce, 1994). In order to ensure that locals profit from tourism rather than suffer as a result, the visiting environment must be developed in accordance with the social

setting (Wahab and Pigram, 1997). Also, the image of tourism is based on the assets of the local community, including not only the local people but also the natural environment, infrastructure, facilities and special events or festival; therefore, the cooperation of the host community is essential to access and develop these appropriately (Murphy, 1985). Public participation also serves as a motivating factor for the local population to maintain its natural surroundings and cultural heritage as commodities for tourism, while likewise promoting more revenue from tourism (Felstead, 2000). A lot of tourism growth strategies are frequently just a portion or never realized since the tourism business is subject to pressure from within as well as outside. Furthermore, not all of them remain sustainable, even when properly implemented. Therefore, every strategy should be connected with the broader socioeconomic growth of the local area in order to maximize the viability and lifespan of proposals.

The theory of tourism was formulated in 1975 and it argues that individual's approaches to tourism may undergo several stages such as euphoria, indifference, frustration, and resentment as apparent cost surpass the anticipate benefits (Dredge and Jenkins, 2007). The traveler is at ease and doesn't have any plans during the introduction stage, frequently referred to as euphoria. As engagement turns formal during the apathy phase, the guest feels neglected. At the frustration level, tourism planner attempts to regulate by improving infrastructures instead of constraining growth. Finally, the last phase is where resentment emerges since a manifestation of irritation renders the entire planning process remedial; yet marking is increased counterbalance the destination's diminishing status.

2.3 Review of Previous Studies

Sama and Molua (2019) analyzed of ecotourism trade in Cameroon using an annual panel data of both primary and secondary data to analyze the economic, social, psychological, and political impacts of ecotourism on local communities. The findings showed that the need for ecotourism activities in Cameroon is substantially influenced by the revenue of its neighboring nations, the cost, and the availability of facilities in that country. The paper concluded that ecotourism has a double Darrel potential to promote trade growth and enhance the welfare of local communities.

Vyasha and Tembi (2020) investigate why current practices in the ecotourism sector in Cameroon are not resulting into sustainable outcome for the local communities. The study used a qualitative research approach, conducting interviews with different Cameroonian tourism sector stakeholders. The results of the findings revealed that the current ecotourism practices in the protected areas of Cameroon does not bring in sustainable outcome in terms of including the local communities and that there is a strong sense of discontent and lack of cohesion between the community and the authorities involved in the ecotourism sector in Cameroon. The study also revealed that the lack of policy application and targeted research to inform policy formation and planning.

Harilal and Tichaawa (2018) assessed the community awareness and understanding of ecotourism in Cameroon. The study adopted a mixed research method where 383 questionnaires were administered to the head of households or an adult representative of households in two protected areas in Cameroon: Mount Cameroon National Park and Douala Edea Wildlife Reserve and face- to – face, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informant. Key findings from the research revealed a low community involvement and understanding of ecotourism.

Ecotourism and other sources of revenue in Cameroon's preserved areas have been assessed by Vyasha (2018). Combining two case studies from Cameroon's Mount Cameroon 383 homes across both study areas received semi-structured questionnaires, and key informants participated in in-depth interview sessions. The study's main findings indicated that many residents rely heavily on different agriculture-related activities as a means of subsistence. Despite the fact that ecotourism events offer a chance for people to participate, it is vital to establish different ways of producing revenue because of the sector's seasonality and resulting unpredictability.

Vyasha and Tembi (2020) examined community perception of the economic impacts of ecotourism in Cameroon. The Mount Cameroon National Park and the Douala Edea Wildlife Reserve were used as the basis for the project's locations. Along with conducting interviews with significant participants, a neighborhood questionnaire was given to 442 houses. The main result showed that while the majority of participants agreed that ecotourism has numerous beneficial economic effects, these effects were frequently focused at the federal sector or contained among independently operated firms. The research also showed that the low degree of local participation in the industry is due to inappropriate management techniques that do not encourage the locals or beneficiary to them either economically, socially or environmentally. The study revealed that the geographic location of communities, coupled with instituted conservation and preservation measures and the level of ecotourism activity has a direct bearing activity, direct impact on how severely local residents may be affected. The study also showed that protected areas increase the conservation and preservation of the environment. However, ecotourism practices in the protected areas of Cameroon are not bringing in sustainable outcomes in terms of including local community members in the activities and decision- making processes or evenly distributing the benefits accrued from ecotourism activities to local communities. The findings also revealed that

there is a strong sense of discontent and lack of cohesion between the community and the authorities involved in the ecotourism sector.

Azwindini (2022) examined the nature and impact of tourism development facilities and activities on the livelihoods of communities in Msina Municipality, Limpopo, South Africa. Data was gathered using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, document reviews and physical observation. The research demonstrated the abundance of tourism capacity, representing both current and future tourism projects. The study also revealed that tourism benefits to the local community were not forthcoming.

Gadinga and Martin (2022) assessed ecotourism governance and protected areas sustainability in Cameroon with the Case of the Campo Ma'an National Park. Primary as well as secondary sources of information were used to gather the data. Primary data were obtained from household survey and key informant interviews. The results of the study showed that there is no explicit national strategy for the growth of ecotourism in and near designated regions. Also, the findings revealed that benefit sharing, and participation were ranked as the most crucial ecotourism governance indicators contributing to the sustainable management of the resources in and around Mount Campo Ma'an National Park.

Atchombou et al (2022). Analyze various stakeholder perspectives on the ecotourism operations in the Benue National Park which is situated in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. The study employed a purposive sampling-based research methodology, administering semi-structured surveys to more than 100 members of the household and conducting interviews with about 11 partners. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square was used to

compare the mean. The findings revealed that 87.2% of the local communities selected stated that ecotourism activities in the area do not have a significant impact on their living standard.

Kimngsi et al (2019). Examine household assets dynamics and ecotourism choices in the Western Highland of Cameroon. In order to create rankings for ecotourism choices and to evaluate the effects of different elements on those choices, the PCA (Principal Component Analysis) was applied. High preference was observed for the production and sales of arts and crafts items and the promotion of cultural heritage sites as key ecotourism choices. The research also showed that women preferred to engage in culturally related events like craft projects rather than environmental education.

Fonge et al (2022). Assessed ecotourism potential in the Northwest Region of Cameroon and data for the study were obtained through field survey with the use of questionnaires and focus group discussions. The results of this research indicated that the Northern Area of Cameroon had physical ecotourism opportunities, the biggest concentration being in the Mezam District and the second-highest concentration being in the Bui District. The findings also revealed that there are 10 active cultural festivals that occur in the region each year.

Suriaya et al (2022). Analyzed the intersection between stakeholder collaboration and governance practice for sustainable ecotourism. The study used a qualitative research approach and data were collected through interviews with the various stakeholders involved. The findings from the analysis revealed that stakeholder collaboration play an important role to the development and sustainability of ecotourism.

2.4 Contributions of the Study

This study will contribute to improve the role of the local community on the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park and will hence ensure the sustainability of the Mount Cameroon National Park which is an important source of livelihood to the local communities.

The study will investigate the role of the Mount Cameroon National Park in improving the livelihood of the population and will contribute to policy formulation toward improving the livelihood of the local population around the Cameroon National Park. Hence the study will contribute to the development of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park.

The study will contribute to improve the literature on the preservation and conservation of ecotourism in general and the Mount Cameroon National Park and will contribute significantly for scholar research. Also, the study will provide data for policy formulation on the conservation and preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary component of a research and a systematic approach to problem solving is research methodology. The methodology and methodological concerns that were used for the research will be the main topics of this chapter of the research. Data was gathered via in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, and secondary sources with the primary goal of examining the effects of ecotourism on local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park.

3.1 Research Design

According to Inaam (2016), a research design is the foundation for the proposed study and may be thought of as the framework for research. It is the "Glue" that binds all the components of a research project together. Different social researchers describe research design differently; they have different ideas as to what a research design is. Some of these definitions include, a research design is the setup of ideas for gathering and interpreting data in a way that attempts to combine the significance of the research (Ram, 2010).

Design types for research include descriptive, explanatory, and casual research design. According to Inaam (2016), a descriptive research design describes occurrences as they are and is also referred to as statistical research. It is used to identify and gather data on a specific topic, such as a community, organization, or individual. In a nutshell, a descriptive research design describes social conditions, social frameworks, interactions between people. It has to do with what the observer see and how would he/she characterize it what he observed? This type of research answers questions such as, who, how, what, when, where. However, Inaam (2016)

defines an explanatory research design as a type of research design which is used when the goal of the study is to discover an entirely new understanding of something that has not yet been investigated. Explanatory research design is primarily focused on the "why" component or causes of an event. Comparison and modifying factors are not included. Gaining knowledge in places that are unknown is the goal of the research in this situation. Hence, an explanatory research design is one that focuses on figuring out the "why" behind something. The main goal of an exploratory research design is to get fresh understanding of a problem. The goal of this research is to formulate an issue for a more thorough investigation. This is used if there are some, if any, previous studies, or work for which citations may be taken. Exploratory research design is typically more suitable in cases of problems where there is little or no information available about a specific case.

The case study research design will be adopted in this study since the focus is on the Mount Cameroon National Park. An exploratory concurrent mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) design will also be employed. This method enables the researcher to collect data from a larger population (quantitative) which increases the possibility to generalize the findings of the research to a larger population while the qualitative side provides a deeper understanding of the issue under investigation (Dawadi et al. 2021). This method will enable us to do an in-depth analysis of the research problem and hence, will present a better understanding and examination of the research problem and answers to the research questions and objectives. Data will be collected on the role of the local communities on the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park and on the major constraints faced by the local communities on their participation for the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park. The data will be analyzed concurrently

while discussion will complement each other, that is, qualitative and quantitative for better understanding of results (Ventakesh et al., 2013).

3.2 Study Population

The population of this study consists of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park, the management board of the park and the local administration of the Cameroon National Park Area. The Local Communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park will provide data on their role on the preservation of the park and equally on their perception of the role of the mount Cameroon National Park in improving their livelihood. The management board of the mount Cameroon National Park will provide data on portions of the park net revenue that goes to the local community, or which has been used to develop the areas around the Mount Cameroon National Park for the local community. The local administration around the Mount Cameroon National Park will provide data on the interaction of the local communities with the management of the park.

3.3 Sampling Technique

It is unlikely that a researcher will be able to gather information from every example to address the study problems. Thus, choosing a sample is necessary. The group of individuals is the whole set of instances from which the investigator's sample is taken. Researchers use sampling techniques to cut down on the number of instances since they lack the time and resources to analyze the complete population. Before analyzing the various sampling techniques, it is important to define sampling and consider the rationales behind sample selection in research. Sampling involves choosing a portion of a bigger population. Using sampling, one can draw conclusions concerning a population or draw conclusions considering theories that are already

available or existing theories. However, this is dependent on the method of sampling used. There are two types of sampling techniques. Probability sampling technique and non-probability sampling technique.

Probability sampling technique deals with the fact that, component of the total population gets a comparable opportunity of being taken into account in the sample. Creating a sampling frame first, then selecting samples from it using a computer program that generates random numbers is one method of conducting random or probability sampling technique (Zikmund, 2002). Although probability or random sampling technique is the least biased, it can also be energy and time consuming for a given degree of error in the sampling (Brown, 1947).

Non-probability sampling is frequently connected to qualitative studies and case study research designs. case studies usually focus on relatively small numbers and are meant to explore a real-world occurrence rather than draw statistical conclusions about the whole population. (Yin, 2003). Types of non-probability sampling method includes snowball sampling, quota sampling, convenience sampling, and purposive or judgmental sampling. The snowball sampling makes use of a small number of instances to help persuade more cases to participate in the study, hence boosting the sample size. This strategy works well with small, closed communities that are challenging to reach out (Breweton & Millward, 2001). Quota sampling deals with the fact that, individuals are selected based on specified qualities, ensuring that the overall sample has the same range of features as the rest of the population (Davis, 2005). Convenience sampling involves choosing individuals who are frequently and easily accessible. Convenience sampling is usually a preferred sampling strategy for learners since it is affordable and a simple alternative to other sample techniques. (Ackoff, 1953). Convenience sampling can help researchers overcome many challenges. It is simpler to target known people like acquaintances or family than unknown

people when they are included in the sample. Purposive or judgmental sampling is a technique in which specific contexts, people, or events are chosen consciously in order to reveal crucial information that cannot be learned from other options. (Maxwell, 1996). In this scenario, the investigator involves instances or individuals in their sample as they consider it important enough to be included.

A nonprobability sampling technique will be used to select the sample for the study. Specifically, a purposive sampling technique will be used to select the management committee of the Mount Cameroon National Park which will consist of the manager, and the assistance of the manager for data on the park's contribution toward improving the livelihood of the local population. The same sampling technique will be used to select households along the Mount Cameroon National Park representing the local communities for the data on their role in the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park. The individuals participating in the research will be chosen from among the intended respondents based on their availability and willingness to participate in the interview. Thus, convenience sampling will also apply to the study.

3.4 Research Approach

There are two types of research approach which are, inductive and deductive research approach. The inductive and deductive techniques are two general types of reasoning, according to Trochim (2006). Inductive justifications are those centered around observation and experience, whereas deductive claims are those centered on rules, regulations, and other generally recognized principles. He identifies inductive reasoning as proceeding from the unique to the whole, whereas deductive arguments start with the overall finish with the unique. The deductive scholar, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), starts with a theory, moves on to hypotheses, and

then gathers data to support or refute the theory. Furthermore, they explain the inductive scholar as an individual who starts from the bottom to the top, employing the perspectives of the participants to develop deeper ideas and provide a theory that connects the topics. The two primary methods of analysis that are frequently utilized in research are quantitative (deductive) and qualitative (inductive). Although there appears to be a few differences among academics as to which approach is the most effective for obtaining data and doing research, these two approaches are not incompatible and frequently deal with the same topic in various ways. Due to the nature of this research, an inductive approach will be used for this study. Interviews will be used to get the data and information.

3.5 Data collection method and source of data

Regardless of the subject matter, data collecting is the core of any research strategy. Every research project starts with a set of questions that must be addressed. Gathering data is the act of carefully acquiring the desired information with the lowest level of modification to ensure the analysis can produce conclusions that are reliable and make meaning. (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). There are two types of data collection method. The qualitative and quantitative data collection method. Data that cannot be stated as a number is referred to as qualitative data. Words are the most effective format for communicating qualitative data. Quantitative data is information that is measurable and may be represented as a statistic. Here, data can be portrayed via numeric and percentage scales and are statistically tested (Nayeem, 2017).

This study will make use of the qualitative data collection method which will be collected from the local population and the management committee of the Mount Cameroon National Park. The qualitative data will be collected through in-depth interviews with the respondents. With this

type of data collection method, respondents will better express their opinions and viewpoints on the topic matter.

In addition, there are two sources of data collection methods. The primary and secondary data. Primary data is information that the researcher has personally collected. The researcher deliberately gathers this data because there are no prior recordings of the data that the public may access. A variety of techniques, including questionnaires, group of people, and interviews, can be used to gather primary data. Such information is regarded as being very trustworthy. Secondary data is information that has been gathered and prepared by someone and is available to the public. It is the information that the researcher gathered through earlier research and other sources. When primary information is subsequently used in another research project, it is referred to as secondary information. Comparatively speaking, using this type of data is cheaper as well as quicker than using original data (Nayeem, 2017).

However, since both interviews and previously published works will be used in this study, primary as well as secondary data will be used in the implementation of this work in order to achieve the study's objectives. The data will be collected on the socioeconomic characteristics of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park and on their contribution toward the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park. Data will also be collected on Mount Cameroon National Park contributions toward the improvement of the livelihood of the local population around the park and on the interactions between the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park and the management committee of the park. Table 1 below provides a summary of my respondents.

Table 1 Overview of data collection

Numbers	Names of interviewees	Type of stakeholder	Duration of interviews
1	Efome Desire	Tour Operator of the MCNP	29 minutes
2	Tangih Fabrice	Laboratory technologist at the University of Buea	21 minutes
3	Ategha Mvo	Graduate of the University of Buea	30 minutes
4	Ngu Winston	Tour guide of the MCNP	16 minutes
5	Nfor Blaise	An inhabitant of Limbe, a locality in the Southwest Region of Cameroon	13 minutes
6	Agendia Ken	Nurse at Solidarity Hospital, Buea	19 minutes
7	Agbor Brian	Assistant Manager of the MCNP	10 minutes
8	Forji Derick	Receptionist of the MCNP	17 minutes

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The qualitative data will be analyzed using sample quotations and sub-themes as it enables me to have in-depth information of the issue under investigation. Both method of analysis will enable us to clearly identify and explain the roles of the local Communities in the preservation of the mount Cameroon National Park. It will also enable us to determine how the Mount Cameroon National Park has contributed to improve the livelihood of the local communities.

3.7 Research Instruments

This study will make use of one main research instrument: an interview guide. The interview guide will be used to conduct personal interviews with the management committee of the Mount Cameroon National Park. Again, personal interviews will be conducted with the local government around the Mount Cameroon National Park on their perception of the interaction between the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park and the management committee of the park. Emails will be used to contact them most frequently, then WhatsApp will be used for the interviews depending on their availability. A maximum time of 30 minutes will be allotted for each interview with approximately 8 respondents who will be chosen for this study. Despite the anticipated interview duration, if participants have additional things to say, the interview may last longer and vice versa. However, some open-ended questions will be allowed for the respondent to give in-depth analysis of the situation and provide information on same variables that the research might have left out. This strategy will have the benefit of enabling participants to speak freely and honestly about the study's topics.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Participants' consent will first be approved before participation in the study. Each participant will clearly read the consent form and will then decide on whether to participate in the study or not. All participants were reached via text messages or calls (WhatsApp) and emails. Participants will not be pressurized to participate against their will. Participants will be given at least a week and at most two weeks to respond if they will participate in the interview or not. The anonymity of participants will be ensured. Before getting their approval in participating in the interview, I began by introducing myself and the purpose of the interviews to be conducted. The meeting

date and time were then assigned based on their preferences. Everyone who participated in this study were made aware that they might ask questions at any point while taking part. I also requested permission to record the discussion. Additionally, I made it clear to all respondents that I would be using the data I had gathered for educational purposes. Personal information about participants has not been utilized without their consent. However, their consent will be needed to decide if they would like to stay anonymous or not and if their names and personal characteristics should be included in the presentation of the results or not. After collecting the data, I later transcribed the results to ease my work when doing the analysis.

3.9 Limitations of the study

This study assesses the role of the local community in contributing to the conservation and preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park. The study also examined how The Mount Cameroon National Park contributes to improve the livelihoods of the local population. However, the study is limited only to the Mount Cameroon National Park and the results obtained from this analysis will not be generalize to the other parks in the country as there may have different characteristics. The study is also limited only to the role of the local communities in the conservation of the park. However, all the different stakeholders have a role to play in the conservation of the park. Additionally, due to internet challenges in Cameroon, it was relatively difficult to connect with everybody as planned via video calls. Reasons why I chose to do WhatsApp audio calls and most of the calls were tripping. Despite the fact that the conversation didn't go as effectively as it should have, I still managed to learn some crucial facts. In addition, the fact that not enough data about the park can be obtained online is another restriction on the study. There aren't many articles on MCNP, thus it was difficult to carry out research on this case.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the data gathered is presented in this chapter. The purpose of this section is to analyze the collected with regard to the previously discussed concerns from the literature review and theory section. This chapter will analyze if ecotourism is a realistic means of promoting sustainable growth for the local community in Cameroon. The data for this study was analyzed using sample quotations to clearly describe the role of the local communities in the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park which will be explained subsequently. This same method of data analysis was also used to examine how the Mount Cameroon National Park has contributed to improve the livelihoods of the local communities around the park. This technique of data analysis was used because the data is mainly qualitative in nature and consists of mainly interviews with the local communities and the management of the Mount Cameroon National Park. The analysis for this study is based on the objective of the study as shown in the previous chapters and the impacts of having the Mount Cameroon National Park.

4.1 Local Communities Contribution to the Preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park

This section addresses ecotourism in Cameroon in addition to the role played by the local population in the preservation of the park and the challenges they faced. In addition, the Mount Cameroon National Park has made improvements to the standard of living in the nearby communities which will be discussed subsequently. These analyses are based on information gathered from responses of the semi-structured interviews with 8 (all men) Cameroonian

individuals. Farmers, tour guides, managers, receptionists, and park secretaries were all natives who took part in the study.

All interviewees were first asked if they were familiar with or had heard of the Mount Cameroon National Park. Everybody has heard of and is familiar with the park. Two of the respondents (local communities around the mount Cameroon National Park) agreed that they contribute to the preservation of the park and the other two of the respondents had mixed feeling about their contribution to the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park. Since tourists help the park, all informants sound pleased to see them in Cameroon. They have also identified some drawbacks, which will be covered in the sections that follows.

Each of the responses provided by the participants will be examined in the part that follows in relation to ecotourism in Cameroon, as well as the role that the locals played in preserving the park and the difficulties they encountered. In addition, their names will be included in the analysis since their consent about this was asked and it was approved as indicated in the previous chapter.

4.1.1 Preservation of the park by the local community

Some of the interviewees affirmed by stating that, the locals have an informative role which they play in the preservation of the park. For example,

“They are always there, this local community is the eye of the government, they are the ones who can easily see that this or that is going on and then notify especially those who are responsible or the officials who are responsible”

Fabrice Tangih, laboratory technologist at the University of Buea

“I think the people surrounding the park participate in protecting it by looking out defaulters that is people who carry out unsustainable practices in the park”

Ategha Mvo, graduate of the University of Buea

Moreso, he added that,

“preserve by not allowing people to enter the park and do certain things that does not contribute to the preservation of the park and when they see such persons they actually report them, they actually go, rush out and meet the proper authority, Hey we have people who come here every day and do such things in the park”

Ategha Mvo, graduate of the University of Buea

With reference to Getz and Jamal (1994) collaboration theory of community – based tourism, the above comments by the locals can be analysed. It can be said that, the local community contribute to the sustainable management of the park by denouncing any unstable practice within and around the national park which is an important application of the Getz and Jamal(1994) collaboration theory of the community-based tourism planning where they emphasized on the joint decision making and collaboration among the various stakeholders to resolve problems of the domain and to manage issues related to the domain.

Furthermore, the above results could be matched with that of Suriaya et al (2022) who found that collaboration play an important role to the development and sustainability of ecotourism. Also, stakeholder theory of ecotourism which emphasizes on the importance of collaboration and partnership between organizations as social institutions for the achievement of common goals (Bricker and Donohoe, 2015).

In addition, Fabrice reflects that the locals are one of the main factors in the preservation of the park as he explains that the local community are always there for the authorities. His claim is similar to that of Felstead (2000), who claims that increased public participation serves as a catalyst for the preservation of the area's ecological and cultural assets as attractions for tourists while also fostering higher tourism-related revenue.

From the above responses, it is clearly seen that the local communities around the park contribute to the preservation of the park in an informative way, that is they inform the local authorities on unsustainable practices such as deforestation, uncontrolled hunting in the park and around its surrounding.

Apart from preserving the park, the locals respect rules, and regulations of the park. They also help in promoting afforestation.

“Planting of trees for the preservation of the park and then in primary school they told us that planting of trees is actually a good thing.

Ategha Mvo, graduate of the University of Buea

The above statement is consistent with Stem et al.'s (2003) idea that ecotourism reduces hunting pressure and boosts biodiversity by discouraging deforestation and encouraging afforestation. However, most schools in Cameroon educate pupil/students on the importance of having and planting trees in our environment. Whereby, most of these trees serve as herbs and food.

“Many NGOs go alongside with the local communities and even with the chief to plant trees”

Fabrice Tangih, laboratory technologist at the University of Buea

He further explains that,

“It has been prohibited the use of plastics and non-Biodegradable plastics which helps to protect the park”

Fabrice Tangih, laboratory technologist at the University of Buea

These statements are in line with the definition of ecotourism provided by Zein and TIES who noted that the concept of ecotourism has begun to lessen environmental deterioration (Zein, 2019). According to TIES (2015), ecotourism is "sustainable travel to areas of nature that preserve the ecosystem, maintain the health and well-being of the inhabitants of the area, and involved in educational and interpretive activities." The results revealed that some local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park contribute to the preservation of the park through planting of trees for the sustainability of the park for the future generation as seen in Fabrice's claim, "*We can summarize the role of the local community in preserving the park into, which is afforestation they help to plant trees in the park so then you know, the park is mainly made up of trees, plants and animal species*". This study's finding is similar to that of the National Geography which explains that the conservation of forest typically involves sustainable logging practices to minimize deforestation, but preservation would involve setting aside part of even all the forest from human development (National Geography, 2023). Shared accountability between local governments, associations, and communities is frequently essential to the achievement of conservation projects.

4.2 Measures to Increase the Role of the Local Communities in the Preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park

Most of the interviewees stressed on the sensitization of the locals on the importance of the park as one of the measures that can be taken to increase the role of the local community in the preservation of the park.

“Sensitization of the population, if the population is properly sensitized from childhood on the importance of the park, I think that will actually help to preserve the park”

Ategha Mvo, graduate of the University of Buea

The above statement of Ategha expresses the need for the sensitization of the community. Similarly, Blaise agrees with Ategha’s statement by also emphasizing on the fact that sensitization is the proper tool for community awareness which will lead to increase the role of the locals in the park. Being sensitized will help the community know the importance of having a national park and methods to use in preserving the park. The above statement coincides with Folk’s (2019) notion where he explains that environmental education is another benefit of ecotourism.

“More and more sensitization can be done to increase the role of the local communities because the more information gets to the publics, it sticks into the public’s head and they will be more conscious and aware of the role they have to play in preserving the Cameroon National Park.”

Blaise Nfor, an inhabitant of Limbe a locality in the Southwest Region of Cameroon

Ken added;

“The first thing I think that can be done is sensitization, proper education on forest management, forest reservation, wildlife management and in general preservation.”

Ken Agendia, Nurse at Solidarity Hospital, Buea

As mentioned by Green Global Travel (2017), the Principles of ecotourism include the following: building environmental and cultural awareness for which education is the key aspects of ecotourism initiative for the local community as well as the visitors. The majority of initiatives are concentrated on raising awareness, educating individuals about sustainability issues, and motivating them to consider how their actions affect the destinations they journey to (Green

Global Travel, 2017). As an outcome of the interviews, it can be seen that the continuous sensitization of the local population on the importance of the park in the preservation of the environment can contribute to improve the local's role in the preservation of the park as some of the local population didn't know the role of the park in preserving the environment in which they live and that education of the masses on the importance of the park can also contribute significantly to improve the role of the local communities on the protection of the Mount Cameroon National Park as some of the local communities interviewed stated that they have inadequate knowledge on the preservation of the park. Hence, the need for sensitization.

4.3 Constraints faced by the Local Communities in their Efforts to Contribute to the Preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park

Some of the difficulties faced by the community in the preservation of the park as stated by the interviewee are lack of consideration and uneven distribution of power.

“Even when you have a good idea on how to preserve the park, no one may listen or take your idea since you are not a big authority of the park”

Ategha Mvo, graduate of the University of Buea

He further explains that;

“You have to make them know that the park belong to them and everything about the park is of their own advantage, make them feel important give them power and also give them more duties to undertake.”

Ategha Mvo, graduate of the University of Buea

As stated by Arstein (1969), citizen participation must be accompanied by power redistribution. The above mentioned by the correspondent can be explained by Araujo and Bramwell (2002) collaboration of the community-based theory of ecotourism who clearly stated that collaboration of the local community can be blocked by unequal power redistribution with the local communities. This is clear from the results obtained where some local communities around the park stated that their ideas on the conservation and preservation of the park are sometimes not considered and they lack the power to apply it.

4.4 Contribution of the Mount Cameroon National Park in Improving the Livelihood of the Local Population

Some of the interviewees also stated that due to the existence of the park, it has helped the locals in generating income. According to Coria & Calfucura (2012), the word "ecotourism" first appeared as an immediate consequence of rising environmental consciousness (Coria & Calfucura, 2012). The growth of this kind of tourism within the past few decades has been stimulated by a number of reasons, such as rising incomes and leisure hours in advanced economies, resulting to an increase in the need for experiences in flawless surroundings. Also, increased government knowledge about ways to meet the demand for such experiences, particularly in less developed nations (Clifton and Benson, 2006). The above matches up with Winston Ngu, Tour guide of the MCNP assertion *"The Mount Cameroon National Park has given me the opportunity to make my own small business and hence it has strengthened my finances and improve my living condition"*

“It will be worth knowing that around this park there are numerous hotels that are important sources of income to the local communities”

Desire Efome, Tour Operator of the MCNP

“So, the park gives the opportunity for the local population to open eateries and restaurants and its serves as a source of employment to the population”

Brian Lyonga, Assistant Manager of the MCNP

According to the above responses, the locals gain more money from the park by opening small businesses where they sell their goods to the visitors. The above statements match up with Folk's (2019) assertion where he states that a greater number of individuals visiting the area equals better quality of life as well as additional revenue flowing back to the neighborhood. Individuals from across the globe can visit a struggling neighborhood and help it recover by offering resources and spending money thanks to volunteerism and hospitality. A vacation could involve helping out, establishing, or supporting a community that is in need. Environmental education is another benefit of ecotourism (Folk, 2019). Ecotourism plays an important role in regional and local community development. Many remote communities and destinations economic growth and sustainability depend on ecotourism development as it attracts tourist into those areas who demand for goods and services and hence contributes to the induction of money in those areas (Indrani and Gobinda, 2023).

The local community of the Mount Cameroon National Park has created business activities such as crafts and arts which are important sources income to the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park. Also, some local people who have lands in the park carry out sustainable food practices which is an important source of food and income to the owners of those lands.

Moreover, the majority of participants appear to be primarily interested in the favorable economic effects of the Mount Cameroon National Park. These include an overall increase in economic conditions and possibilities for employment which most of the respondents pointed out. For instance,

“The park itself serve as a source of livelihood to the community because it provides employment to the inhabitants”

Derick Forji, Receptionist of the MCNP

“The park has created job opportunities for both the local community and the population at large”

Brian Lyonga, Assistant Manager of the MCNP

He added,

“The Mount Cameroon National Park employs the local communities and when they are employed they have the job and hence revenue that comes from the job”

Brian Lyonga, Assistant Manager of the MCNP

The responses provided by participants can be studied considering Folk's (2019) contention that locals might improve their standard of living through tourism. With the assertion, it follows that the park has created employment opportunities for the local community. According to Folk (2019), ecotourism allowed inhabitants of host locations to work as managers, tour guides, hotel and guesthouse proprietors, and storekeepers. This can be aligned with Desire's statement, *“It should be noted that the park employs people as guard and others who are paid for the services rendered to the park.”* The national park appeared to have reached a certain stage of economic development, as suggested by the idea that the park directly employed individuals as tour operators, secretaries, and managers. Also, the results indicates that the presence of the Mount

Cameroon National Park has made the local communities around the park to develop small business like provisional stores, drinking spots, etc which contribute to improve the livelihoods of the local communities through income generation activities “*The Mount Cameroon National has given me the opportunities to make my own small business and hence it has strength my finances and hence contributed to improve my livelihood*”. Similar to that, it has given rise to indirect employment opportunities like craft businesses “*Visitors who buy craft and other locally made material create the markets and hence employment opportunities for the local population*”. As a result, the neighborhood has benefited economically and experienced an improvement in livelihoods because of these jobs. Also, there are some local people around the Mount Cameroon National Park who have land in the park where they carry out sustainable food practices which is an important source of food and income to the owners of those lands.

On the other hand, the participants mentioned that the Mount Cameroon National Park contributes to the infrastructural development of the community through the construction of roads and has led to the construction of many hotels and guest houses around the park to receive the tourists.

“Accessibility to the park has led to the creation of roads, I don’t think it is leading only to the park, there are houses around who also uses those roads”

Winston Ngu, Tour guide of the MCNP

Derick has said the following as well:

“The park itself has led to development projects like the supply of pipe borne water”

Derick Forji, Receptionist of the MCNP

Desire claims that numerous infrastructure improvements have been made in the community,

“The park protect water and water catchment in the area to ensure that the community have clean and continuous water supply”

Desire Efome, Tour Operator of the MCNP

Desire added,

“The park has led the construction of many hotels and guest houses to receive the tourists that come to visit the park.”

Desire Efome, Tour Operator of the MCNP

The remarks made above by Desire, Derick and Winston are at contradiction with those made by Coria and Calfucura (2012), who claimed that sustainable travel should not be viewed as a source for community growth but rather that *"it must be completed with other actions"*. The above mentioned is also similar to Murphy's notion about tourism. He explains that the image of tourism is based on the assets of the local community, including not only the local people but also the natural environment, infrastructure, facilities and special events or festival; therefore, the cooperation of the host community is essential to access and develop these appropriately (Murphy, 1985). The study reveals that the Mount Cameroon National Park has led to the construction of many roads round linking the park who also serve as a source of development to the local communities as they farmers in the villages around the park can easily transport their produce to the various sale points *“This park has brought the opportunity for the authority to create or build good roads since a lot of visitors come to this natural occurring park”*.

In general, highways are being built in the region to link to the national park in order to encourage ecotourism. The development of public amenities like roads and waterlines has made

the locals happy, and they are extremely proud of these advancements. As a result, ecotourism could be considered an instrument for progress. Due to the introduction of job possibilities for the locals, the park's economy has improved. These assist in giving households additional money, and as a result, they are now able to afford a good education, food, and better medical services, which has considerably raised their standard of living. In addition to these favorable effects, there have also been certain adverse ones.

Through the interviews that were done for this study, several detrimental effects were also found.

As an illustration;

According to Brian, the assistant manager of the park,

“The animals sometimes eat and destroy the crops of the natives”

Brian Lyonga, Assistant Manager of the MCNP

“It's punishable by law for you to build your house in a certain location even if it primarily was your land or was your property, it now belongs to the government or to the public. You can't build your houses in certain areas because those areas are now protected”

Desire Efome, Tour Operator of the MCNP

In contrast to this assertion, it has been discovered through previous studies that ecotourism improved the economic well-being of residents (Coria & Calfucura, 2012). However, rather than reaping the financial rewards of ecotourism in this instance, locals appear to be losing their lands and houses. Desire further stated that those properties will therefore belong to the government. The above statements go in line with Das & Chatterjee (2015) assertion which stated that associations and people from the tourist destinations may experience the adverse impacts of ecotourism on a social level if they get restricted accessibility to the conservation areas

designated for ecotourism which prevents them from obtaining their source of income and livelihood (Das & Chatterjee, 2015). The Mt. Cameroon region's primary source of revenue is farming. Approximately 80% of people's income is generated from agriculture (Tanjong 2014). Hence, denying them access to the park and the destruction of their crops by the animals in the park is a great negative impact to the local community. The realization brought about by these assertions is that individuals may not always reap economic advantages from physical improvement, such as facilities built by the authorities to boost tourism.

Another impact of the Mount Cameroon National Park is the eruption and flooding of the mountain as stated by the interviewees.

“The mountain lastly erupted in 1999. And I think that living in an area that involves constant threat to life, you don't know when the mountain will erupt again. So, I think that it can affect the mental health of the people living around the Mount Cameroon National Park”

Winston Ngu, Tour guide of the MCNP

“The National Park itself has an active volcano which at, at times have led to eruptions which caused the death of many inhabitants and also injured many people around the mountain”

“Still as a result of the eruption, it led to the damage of farmlands and made many people homeless”

Derick Forji, Receptionist of the MCNP

As mentioned by OCHA (2023), there was heavy rains in Buea town on the 18th of March, 2023 which caused mudslides and floods that spread from Mount Cameroon to certain towns at the top of the mountain, resulting in multiple fatalities between Buea people. They further explained that, two people are deceased, four people have been hospitalized and one person is missing,

according to investigations. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, *“I know also recently, uh, there was, uh, flooding around, uh, the Mount Cameroon National Park where, there was, after heavy rains, there was the mudslide, that impacted the communities around the foot of the park, I think some people were killed”*. People are leaving their houses along the waterway out of worry that there would be much more destruction if rainfall occurs. Several houses lost their source of income, which involves their animals, and plants in their farmland and yards. The local government has also started demolishing several homes in flood-affected regions that were built on waterways. Documents, clothes, and furniture were among the destroyed private property. Impacted towns water supply pipelines and water catchment systems were damaged (OCHA, 2023).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The findings showed that the majority of the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park contribute to the preservation of the national park through various ways like informing the park authorities in case of any unsustainable practice around or with the park. This finding is similar to that of Adrea (2012) who assessed the attitudes and perception of local residents and tourists toward the protected areas of Retezat National Park, Romania. This result is also in line with the stakeholder theory of ecotourism which emphasizes on the importance of collaboration and partnership between organizations and social institution for the achievement of common goals. From this theory one can deduce that they are a straight collaboration between the park and the local communities around the park as the local communities receive some social benefits from the park and the park also receive some income from tourists visit. Hence, both parties collaborate to achieve certain objectives. The stakeholder theory identifies the role of each party that is what the local community has to do for the park and what the park has to do for the local communities. Ecotourism has brought socio-economic benefits to local communities, including employment opportunities, increased income, and improved access to basic services meanwhile, the park contributes to the development of the local communities toward construction of some local roads, provision of pipe borne water to the local communities, all this which contributes to improve the livelihoods of the local communities around the park.

The results also show that the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park also face several difficulties or constraints in their efforts toward their contribution to the preservation

of the national park such as limited access to the park, inadequate training on park preservation and conservation, lack of finances, etc. This result is in line with the community base theory of tourism which emphasizes that citizen participation has to be accompanied by power redistribution between the park authorities and the local communities. Based on the results of the study little power is redistributed to the local communities as some local communities stated that their ideas are sometimes not considered, and they don't have the power to apply their ideas for the preservation of the park. The result of this study clearly shows that more power should be given to the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park to improve their role in the preservation of the park as many of the respondents stated that they are not often considered in the planning process of the park activities.

Overall, this study demonstrated that ecotourism has the potential to contribute significantly to nature preservation at Mount Cameroon National Park. By involving local communities, conserving biodiversity, and generating socio-economic benefits, ecotourism can serve as a sustainable approach to promote both environmental conservation and the well-being of local communities. However, careful planning, effective management, and ongoing monitoring are essential to ensure the long-term success of ecotourism initiatives in preserving the natural heritage of the park.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made;

- a) Create a well-defined and comprehensive ecotourism management plan that outlines clear objectives, strategies, and actions to ensure sustainable tourism practices. This plan

should address issues such as visitor management, infrastructure development, biodiversity conservation, and community involvement.

- b) Foster collaboration among key stakeholders including park management authorities, local communities, tourism operators, NGOs, and government agencies. Encourage open dialogue, shared decision-making, and cooperative efforts to address conservation challenges, promote responsible tourism practices, and maximize socio-economic benefits for local communities.
- c) Involve local communities in decision-making processes, ensuring their participation in ecotourism activities. Provide training and capacity-building programs to empower local communities to actively participate in tourism-related enterprises, including guiding services, handicraft production, and hospitality services. This will not only generate income opportunities but also foster a sense of ownership and stewardship towards the natural resources.
- d) Develop educational programs for tourists, local communities, and park staff to increase awareness about the importance of nature conservation and responsible tourism practices. Emphasize the significance of protecting the park's biodiversity, ecosystems, and cultural heritage. Encourage visitors to respect wildlife and follow designated trails and guidelines.
- e) Improve infrastructure within the park to support sustainable tourism. This includes constructing eco-friendly lodges, visitor centers, and restroom facilities using environmentally friendly materials. Implement waste management systems, including recycling initiatives, and promote the use of renewable energy sources. By implementing these recommendations, Mount Cameroon National Park can enhance its ecotourism

practices, promote nature preservation, and contribute to the sustainable development of local communities. These measures will help protect the park's unique biodiversity, conserve natural resources, and create long-term benefits for both the environment and local stakeholders.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has examined the significance of ecotourism in the context of nature preservation at the Mount Cameroon National Park. The study has shed light on the various positive impacts that ecotourism can have on both the local communities and the natural environment, while also recognizing the challenges and potential negative consequences associated with this form of tourism. The findings of this research highlight that ecotourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park's rich biodiversity and ecosystem. Through responsible and sustainable tourism practices, such as promoting environmental education, enforcing visitor guidelines, and supporting local community involvement, ecotourism can foster conservation efforts while providing economic opportunities for the local population. By generating revenue through tourism activities, the Mount Cameroon National Park can invest in critical conservation initiatives, including habitat restoration, wildlife monitoring, and anti-poaching measures. Moreover, the engagement of local communities in ecotourism initiatives creates a sense of ownership and pride in their natural heritage, leading to enhanced conservation efforts and long-term sustainability. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential challenges and negative impacts that can arise from ecotourism activities. Issues such as overcrowding, habitat disturbance, pollution, and cultural erosion must be carefully managed to prevent any harm to the fragile ecosystems and local communities. Effective monitoring, regulations, and community engagement are vital to address

these challenges and ensure the long-term success of ecotourism in preserving the Mount Cameroon National Park. In conclusion, ecotourism presents a valuable opportunity for the Mount Cameroon National Park to achieve a harmonious balance between conservation and socio-economic development. Through responsible ecotourism practices and effective collaboration between stakeholders, the park can serve as a model for sustainable nature preservation, benefiting the environment, local communities, and visitors alike. As we move forward, it is crucial to continue conducting research, monitoring impacts, and adapting strategies to ensure that ecotourism at Mount Cameroon National Park remains aligned with the principles of sustainability and nature conservation. By doing so, we can strive towards achieving a balance that allows future generations to appreciate and benefit from the park's natural wonders while preserving its ecological integrity.

Appendix

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Suzan Mbongei Itoe, an MA (Master's) student in the tourism department at Aalborg University Denmark (Copenhagen campus). I am working on my thesis, which focuses on ecotourism and nature preservation at the Mount Cameroon National Park. There are a series of questions in this paper which will require your response and point of view about the subject matter.

You have the option to stay unidentifiable and the data gathered from this interview will be utilized specifically for this thesis.

Interview Guide for the Local Population

Section A: Role of the Local Communities in the Preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park

1. Are you aware of the Mount Cameroon National Park in this locality?
2. What role does the Mount Cameroon National Park play in the protection of the environment such as climate change and other adverse effects?
3. What measure can be taken to preserve the park from human activities such as deforestation and uncontrolled hunting?
4. Do the local communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park contribute to the preservation of the park and what role do they play in the preservation of the park?
5. What do you think can be done to increase the role of the local communities in the preservation of the Mount Cameroon National Park?

Section B: Ecotourism Contributions to the Livelihood of the Local Population

6. In your own opinion is the Mount Cameroon National Park an opportunity or a threat to the development of the local communities around the park?
7. What are some of the development opportunities the Mount Cameroon National Park has brought to its local communities?
8. Has the Mount Cameroon National Park contributed in any way to improve your living conditions or livelihood? Yes/No and how?

Interview Guide for the Management of the Mount Cameroon National Park

Section C: Management Perception of how the Mount Cameroon National Park Contribute to Improve the Livelihood of the Local Population

9. Is there a good interaction between the Mount Cameroon National Park Management and the Local Community?
10. Do the local community benefit from the Mount Cameroon National Park? Yes/ No and how?
11. In what ways has the Mount Cameroon National Park contributed to improve the living conditions or livelihoods of the local communities?
12. What are the positive and negative impacts of having the Mount Cameroon National Park?
13. How does the park generate its revenue?

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