

The Negative Environmental Effect of the Guinness Mount Cameroon Race: A Case study of Buea Subdivision

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Abstract

Tourism depends on the quality of the environment; indeed the quality of an environment or some particular feature of it is frequently the primary attraction for tourist. And today, tourists of all kinds are becoming more sensitive to polluted or environmental degraded conditions at their different travels destinations. An area of picturesque beauty attracts a good number of visitors so more and more of the landscape is lost to development of visitors infrastructures. The Guinness Mount Cameroon race is one of the most covered sporting events in the country and prior to the start of this race, sportive and cultural events vibrates the South West Region for a week. There is environmental pollution as the grass and shrubs along the footpath is cut off and burnt to give the athletes and visitors a clearer visibility and this will also help the organisers to be able to keep track of all the athletes. Careful planning and management of tourism in relation to the need to preserve the natural environment and to attract a repeat visit by tourists is therefore necessary.

Keywords: Tourism; Environmental impact; Negative environmental impact

Introduction

According to the United Nation Worlds Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) tourism can be define as “ the activities of travellers talking a trip to destination outside his or her environment for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident in the country or place visited. This industry is consumed where it is produced, thus the visitor has to move to the attraction site where he/she spend cash. It thus opens up opportunities for employment and other businesses for the local community.

Tourism is considered as an essential activity to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors and their relations with the international community.

Mill and Morrison [1] reveal that there are now many cases around the world where tourism has been a direct contributor to environmental degradation. This occur when the carrying capacity of the environment has been exceeded leading to the production of such negative impacts like change of land-use, congestion, air pollution, pollution of beaches, lakes etc.

Mason [2] conclude that though there is a relatively long history of the environment acting as a significant attraction for visitors, there is also a growing evidence of conflict between tourism activity and the need to conserve the natural habitat and landscape.

Environmental pollution is much aesthetic as physical, an area of picturesque beauty attracts a good number of visitors so more and more of the landscape is lost to development of visitors infrastructures.

Background of the study/company review

Buea, according to social scientists was founded by a hunter in search of game. Eye Njie Tama Lifanje came from the Bomboko clan behind the Buea Mountain (Mount Cameroon or Mount Fako). On that fateful day he founded Buea, he had set out in search of animals but there were no game to be hunted only a vast peace of hospitable land that could harbour his family. Eyé Njie named it “Mwea”, meaning hospitable land for farming.

The settlement soon grew into a clan but made tardy progress until the later part of the 19th century, when there was an influx of Europeans into Africa for exploration and colonialism purposes.

In 1884, the Germans colonized Cameroon (Kamerun) and made Buea their colonial Capital. They were marvelled by the Town’s picturesque landscape, iridescent vegetation, unique weather, and most especially its strategic position accentuated by the Majestic Mount Cameroon 4100m above sea level.

Buea later became the capital of the Southern Cameroon and West Cameroon between 1954 and 1972 respectively. Buea is presently the headquarters of the South West Region with an estimated population above 200.000 inhabitants. It is a highly complex community caught between a blend of urban, semi urban, rural and traditional settings and it covers 870 square kilometers surface area.

Mount Cameroon, also called “Mountain of the Gods”, is located in Buea in the South West Region of Cameroon, near the Atlantic coast. It is a volcano which is 4100m high above sea level. Mount Cameroon Race is an endurance race of about 40 km with 2500 m of difference in height which is particularly difficult and physically demanding.

Sportive and cultural events vibrate the South West Region for a week thus culminating to the day of the Guinness Mount Cameroon race. This is an opportunity for tourists to discover Mount Cameroon and the culture of the Region Launched in 1973 by the initiative of

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Guinness Cameroon, this race is one of the most covered sporting events in the country. It was originally a 27 km race with about a hundred mountaineers taking part, the starting point being the foot of the mountain [3].

Women participated for the first time in 1983 and the following year, the organizers allow for the first time foreign visitors to take part. Virtually the only one to organize this competition since the beginning, Guinness Cameroon Company withdrew as the lone organizer in 1990 and the Cameroon Athletics Federation took over for the organization of the 1992 edition.

In 1996, the Mount Cameroon race resume under the name 'Race of Hope'. The 2016 edition of the race of Hope will take place from the 20th to the 27th February 2016 in Buea, the race being held on Saturday the 02/27/2016.

Over 500 national and international athletes are expected for this edition in various categories namely seniors, juniors, ladies and gentlemen veterans. The starting point will be inside the Molyko stadium as usual. Locally, pre-selections have already begun in the ten regions of Cameroon. Only successful applicants will be competing that day [4].

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) - World Economic Highlight, travel and tourism contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) was likely to rise from US\$5.751 billion in 2010 to US\$11.151 billion by 2020, the contribution of travel and tourism to total employment was expected to rise from 8.1% in 2010 to 9.2% by 2020 and export earnings from international visitors are also likely to generate 6.1% of total export in 2010 to 5.2% in 2020 [5].

Literature Review

Mason [2] thinks that when visitors come to an attraction, they are likely to drop litter, footpath erosion may be noticed and that tourism can lead to the creation of unsightly human structures for example hotels that do not fit into the architecture of a community. Habitat of wildlife centres maybe damaged or disturbed as a result tourism, this usually may occur when the carrying capacity of an attraction or a habitat is exceeded.

As visitor's numbers continue to increase in an attraction site, both positive and negative impacts become evident, there is therefore the need for careful planning and management of tourism in relation to the need to preserve the natural environment and to attract a repeat visit by tourists.

Tourism depends on the quality of the environment; indeed the quality of an environment or some particular feature of it is frequently the primary attraction for tourist. And today, tourists of all kinds are becoming more sensitive to polluted or environmental degraded conditions at their different travels destinations.

Tourism does not produce only environmental impact; it also produces economic impact which could be positive and negative as well as social impact which could be positive and negative impacts.

Research Methodology

For this research work, the researchers used primary and secondary, primary data was based on observation the researcher carried out during the just ended Guinness Mount Cameroon Race. Secondary data that was information collected from the bulletins and council documents and websites.

Analysis and Finding

Mill and Morrison [1] reveal that there are now many cases around the world where tourism has been a direct contributor to environmental degradation. This occur when the carrying capacity of the environment has been exceeded leading to the production of such negative impacts like change of land-use, congestion, air pollution, pollution of beaches, lakes etc.

As visitor's numbers continue to increase in an attraction site (e.g., Mountain Cameroon), both positive and negative impacts become evident, there is therefore the need for careful planning and management of tourism in relation to the need to preserve the natural environment and to attract a repeat visit by tourists.

Tourism does not produce only environmental impact; it also produces economic impact which could be positive and negative as well as social impact which could be positive and negative impacts.

Mount Cameroon as a touristic attraction can have both positive and negative impact on the locality.

Negative environmental impacts

Visitors to Mount Cameroon are likely to drop litter, footpath erosion may be noticed and that tourism can lead to the creation of unsightly human structures for example hotels that do not fit into the architecture of a community.

Habitat of wildlife centres maybe damaged or disturbed as a result tourism, this usually may occur when the carrying capacity of an attraction or a habitat is exceeded.

There is environmental pollution as the grass and shrubs along the footpath is cut off and burnt to give the athletes and visitors a clearer visibility and this will also help the organisers to be able to keep track of all the athletes. Congestion during this period of the Mountain race is noticed as many people streamed into Buea to witness this yearly event and also air pollution is also noticed as a result of burning the shrubs and the grass to make the footpath clear and visible to all the athletes and visitors to the mountain.

Conclusion

As visitor's numbers continue to increase in an attraction site (e.g., Mount Cameroon), both positive and negative impacts become evident, there is therefore the need for careful planning and management of tourism in relation to the need to preserve the natural environment and to attract a repeat visit by tourists.

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