AN APPRAISAL OF CURRENT ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT APPROACHES AND ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT PARADIGM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN FAKO DIVISION, SOUTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

Clarkson Mvo WANIE

Abstract: Cameroon which is managed in various dimensions: legislative and institutional framework, international organizations, protected area management, tour operators, NGOs and CIGs, local councils, community members and conservation strategies. But an appraisal of the problems plaguing the ecotourism sector in the region shows that much still needs to be done. Firstly, there is no integrated ecotourism management body in the entire Division and an ecotourism network that coordinates the activity. Secondly, inadequate finance still prevails and the problem of benefit sharing is still hanging. In certain Sub-Divisions like Buea and Limbe, urbanisation is taking place rapidly at the cost of ecotourism. All these problems point to the fact that sectorial management has been put in place instead of a holistic management body. It is in this regard that this paper recommends the Ecotourism Management Triangle (EMT) as an alternative, integrated sustainable management system to be put in place which will solve all the problems highlighted above. The EMT paradigm will form a nexus between conservation and development for sustainable development to occur in the area.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Management, sustainable development, Cameroon

I. INTRODUCTION

Khan (2003) and Eagles (1995) in Okech and Urmilla (2009) stated that within the tourism industry worldwide, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors and has received considerable attention both in literature and the international market place. A succinct definition of ecotourism is offered by the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) as “ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local
people” (Ecotourism Society, 2000). Ecotourism demonstrates the potential for direct economic gain inherent in the non-extractive use of the natural environment based on its aesthetic and educational value. It requires for the natural environment to be intact and relatively pristine in state. Properly managed, ecotourism and nature conservation will complement and reinforce each other. But there are challenges in translating the ideal of ecotourism into an economically and ecologically viable venture for operators and owners of local sites and resources (Sesega, 2001). Both definitions however depict an activity that is environmentally friendly and sustainable.

The management of ecotourism is important because effective management contributes towards the development of sustainable ecotourism. Effective ecotourism management should be able to develop, plan and operate an ecotourism enterprise incorporating the principles of sustainable use, traditional knowledge and livelihoods whilst balancing these with sound environmental and business practices. Therefore, ecotourism management incorporates sustainable ecotourism management and administrative specialists by integrating ecotourism management and leadership knowledge with those of customer services and the operational specifics of a given ecotourism type. In Fako Division of Cameroon, three different ecotourism sub-types exist which are managed using different approaches. These ecotourism sub-types include nature-based, coastal recreational and cultural heritage attractions (Wanie, 2011). Only if properly planned, developed and managed therefore can ecotourism act to achieve the balance between conservation and development? But because ecotourism is being advocated in the absence of thorough recognition of management, there is growing evidence that ecotourism is not achieving that balance (Lee Youn-Taek, 2003). The plethora of definitions in the literature on the term ‘ecotourism’ is indicative of the wide diversity of perspectives and interests in the ecotourism phenomenon. There has also been a notable evolution in how it has been conceptualised from being a form of outdoor tourism to a holistic view that embraces concepts of social responsibility for the well-being of local communities and their cultures. Recent views are also advocating the elevation of culture alongside nature as the two cornerstones of ecotourism’s foundation. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is broad agreement that the essence of sustainable development is to keep choices open for future generations. This implies that current economic growth and development must not be at the expense of future prospects. This requires marked changes in lifestyles for some people and in the ways of doing things for almost everyone (Commonwealth Secretariate, 1991). In Fako Division of Cameroon (Fig. 1) just like in the case of the Pacific Islands, this is a growing sentiment (Helu-Thaman, 1992).
Fig. 1: Location of Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon
II. THE PROBLEM

The major problem associated with the current management of ecotourism in Fako Division of Cameroon is the existence of a sectorial management instead of an integrated or a holistic management approach as is the case in other areas of the world such as in China and Korea. Because of the absence of an integrated or holistic ecotourism management approach, there are numerous lapses in the current sectorial management approach of ecotourism. This current poor management approach devastates all the ecotourism sub-types in the region. Some of these lapses include the complete absence of ecotourism management organisations in Tiko and Muyuka Sub-Divisions, poaching or illegal killing of wildlife, over-fishing, destruction of beach species and geological features, loss of habitats, erosion, commercialisation and bastardisation of cultures, loss of marine life, extinction of flora and fauna species and other environmental and ecological problems earlier suggested by Boo (1990) in Van Dijk (2006). Furthermore, the existing institutions charged with the management of ecotourism in the region lack the commitment or capability to manage the ecotourism sites effectively. The ineffective management of the ecotourism sites results from the fact that the regulations governing environmental protection are vaguely defined, costly to implement, hard to enforce and uncertain in effectiveness. All these problems result to inefficient management of the existing ecotourism potentials in the region which do not yield adequate revenue to both the government of Cameroon and the local communities concerned. It is for this reason that this paper makes an appraisal of the current ecotourism management approaches in the region and recommends alternative management paradigm for sustainable development in the region.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research combined field surveys with an appraisal of library source materials on the subject. Two hundred and fifteen survey questionnaires with the key stakeholder groups (government ministries/delegations, tour operators, NGOs and CIGs, park and protected area managers and local communities) were conducted as shown in Table 1. The random sampling technique was employed in the administration of the questionnaires in five Sub-Divisions within Fako Division, namely, Buea, Limbe, Tiko, Muyuka and the West Coast. Formal discussions with ecotourism officials and scholars were also ensured. Finally, literature review from an appraisal of library sources discussed the current management approaches and deficiencies of nature-based tourism in parks and protected areas, coastal recreational tourism in beaches and open green spaces and
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cultural heritage tourism in monuments, cultural artefacts and museums. Collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Table no. 1. Actors and number of questionnaires administered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>No. of questionnaires administered</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Government ministries/delegations</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tour operators</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NGOs and CIGs</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parks and protected area managers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Local communities</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>68.8</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
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IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The results pertain to current ecotourism management and alternative management paradigm for sustainable development as ascertained from the following stakeholders: government ministries/delegations, international organisations, tour operators, NGOs and CIGs, park and protected area managers, local councils and community members within Fako Division. These stakeholders who manage the site, destinations, communities and resources will constitute the basis in the examination of the current ecotourism management of the nature-based, coastal recreational and cultural heritage ecotourism sub-types in the region.

IV.1. Results related to nature-based tourism management

Nature-based tourism is a rapidly expanding portion of the world’s travel market. Many of the destinations are national parks, game reserves and other types of protected areas. The size of the industry causes impacts that require sophisticated management approaches. Australia is an important area for the study of nature-tourism and parks. It is the first country in the world to develop and approve a national ecotourism strategy (Allcock et al., 1994). The implementation of the strategy is well under way, with $10,000,000 of federal funding approved in priority areas such as accreditation, market research, energy and waste minimization, infrastructure, education, monitoring, regional planning, business development and conferences (Lee, 1994). Nature tourism is also a very important export industry throughout much of Sub-Saharan Africa. Sournia (1996) compares the management of park tourism in western Africa to that of eastern Africa. He
pointed out that even with significant natural resources in western Africa, the tourism development levels are well below those of eastern Africa. The reasons for the lower levels of capitalization include: less visible wildlife concentrations, weak national transportation networks, inefficient hotel facilities, poorly trained tourism staff, weak marketing and a lack of tourism infrastructure in the parks.

The management of nature-based tourism in Fako Division is managed in various dimensions; legislature and institutional framework, international organisations, park and protected area managers, tour operators, NGOs, CIGs, local councils/other local institutions, and community members.

**IV.1.1. Legislature**

The legislature governing natural resource management in Cameroon in general and nature-based tourism in particular is enshrined in Cameroon’s land law. This relates to nature-based tourism in Fako Division in that the potentials for nature-based tourism deals with ownership of the land and its resources. In relation to nature-based tourism, the land law of Cameroon is two fold; community rights in the existing biodiversity regulatory framework which incorporates the current forestry and environmental laws on the one hand, and laws governing community forest management schemes on the other.

The laws governing community rights in the existing biodiversity regulatory framework or the current forestry and environmental laws seeks to involve the local community in nature-based tourism and to achieve social justice in the community. Through this, rural communities can play key role in conservation if their rights are properly protected by law. However, customary land rights should be enshrined in workable regulatory measures. There should also be the loosening of conditions pertaining to acquisition of land titles and the empowering of communities to file court proceedings against those who trespass their piece of forest. Finally, there should also be the involvement of communities in decision making pertaining to authorisation for access to their land and collection of the resources therein.

Some of the current forestry and environmental laws include: Law No. 81/13 of November 1981 (hereinafter the 1994 Forestry Law), The Cameroon Forest Policy Document produced by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF) in 1995, Law No. 96/12 of 5th August 1996 (hereinafter the 1996 Environmental Framework Law), Degree No. 95-531 of 23rd August 1995 (hereinafter the 1995 Forestry Decree), Decree No. 96-237 PM of 10th April 1996, Section 6, 9 and 12 of the 1994 Forestry Law, Article 26 (1) through (3) of the 1995 Forestry Decree and Article 1 of the 1974 Land Ordinance. These laws lay down forestry, wildlife and fisheries regulations; stresses the state’s ownership of all genetic resources and emphasises that no person shall use them for scientific,
commercial or cultural purposes without prior authorisation; makes a distinction between ordinary products and special products; stipulates that local populations rights over forestry resources are limited to usufruct rights, defined as the rights that consist in carrying out within these forests their traditional activities such as collecting secondary forest products such as raffia, palms, bamboo, cane or food stuff and fire wood and clarifies the state’s ownership of all the land, such ownership being strengthened under Section 6 of the 1994 Forestry Law which links ownership of forest resources to ownership of land.

Further more, community forestry has become a popular movement, challenging foresters to change their thinking. Despite some obstacles, community forestry still offers opportunity for nature-based tourism in Fako Division. The local people, who are often blamed for the destruction of the forest, have the opportunity to establish a long term source of income, foresters have the opportunity to rediscover the grassroots of their profession and nations have the opportunity to develop a forest-based industry which has widespread community support. The political dimension of community forestry makes it a venue for people's struggle against domination and exploitation of the community's resources by outsiders. Ecology, equity and social justice are part of this struggle, which are the goals of ecotourism. Therefore, nature-based tourism should be the new approach which necessitates the creation of community forests in Fako Division like is the case with the creation of the Bimbia Bonadikonbo Community Forest (BBCF) in the village of Bimbia in Limbe.

Some of the laws governing community forest management in Cameroon and Fako Division in particular include the following: Section 37 and 38 of Law 94/01 of January 20th 1994, Article 3 (11) of the 1995 Forestry Decree and Article 28 (3) of the 1995 Forestry Decree. These laws introduced the community forest scheme, meaning gradual inclusion of rural populations in forest activities, defined the community forest as forest forming part of non-permanent forest, which is covered by a management agreement between a village community and the forestry administration. Management of such forests is the responsibility of the village community concerned with the help or technical assistance of the forestry administration and defined the communities to which a portion of forest can be entrusted for management, as the group or community which must be legally registered as association, a Co-operative, Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) or an Economic Interest Group (EIG).

Some of the problems associated with the implementation of these laws with regard to nature-based tourism in Fako Division include the low level of educational attainment of communities, the imposition of simple management plans on them (meaning they are not involved in the decision-making process), non-empowerment of communities to develop forests, inability to enforce rights if
someone trespasses their forests and the fact that the communities are not legal owners of the land upon which the community forest entrusted to them is based. These imply that the state is able to use such land for other purposes when ever the need arises.

IV.1.2. Institutional Framework

The institutional framework in charge with the management nature-based tourism in Fako Division involves various government ministries which is similar to what Ghimmire (2001) postulated for the management of ecotourism in El Salvador. These ministries include: Ministry of Tourism and Leisure, Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Industry, Mines and Technological Development.

The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure (MINTOUR) for example is a competent partner in the sense of guides training. MINTOUR establishes the rules and regulating (laws) governing nature-based tourism and follow up right down to the Division through the Regional Delegation of Tourism for the South West Region situated in Buea. It also controls the actors or operators (businessmen) who want to invest in the sector. Similarly, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) collaborates in the fight against wild fire. It is a sister ministry to MINTOUR as far as nature-based tourism is concerned and caters for the environment and protection of nature. MINFOF’s contribution to nature-based tourism management is through tree planting and protection of the environment for sustainable development. It enacts the laws of creation and effectively creates national parks, makes laws governing parks as well as provides ecoguards. MINTOUR and MINFOF relate in the marketing of parks and tour flyers or pamphlets containing modalities of visit like the conditions, location, period and amount payable.

This institutional dispensation in nature-based tourism management in Fako Division calls for more coordination, dialogue and collaboration in the initiatives taken by each ministry. However, it would be advisable to develop, as a matter of urgency, a platform of collaboration between the various ministries and even involve other parties interested in the sustainable management of nature-based tourism, particularly NGOs and research institutions so as to avoid possible conflicts of competence and duplication of efforts and resources.
IV.2. Other nature-based tourism management institutions

Besides the government ministries, other international organisations, protected area managers, tour operators, NGOs, CIGs, local councils/other local institutions and community members assist in the management and promotion of ecotourism in the region as discussed below.

IV.2.1. International institutions

International organisations like the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) also assist the management of ecotourism in the region. The UNWTO is a specialised agency of the United Nations, and is in charge to establish a global forum where tourism policy issues can be discussed; it is also a useful guide in different areas such as the development of sustainable tourism. It also includes the "Sustainable Development of Ecotourism" as one of its programme activities (UNWTO, 2004). The UNWTO has participated in the management of ecotourism in Fako Division. In 2006, it was the main partner in the project that the Mount Cameroon Inter communal Ecotourism Board (Mount CEO) in Buea trained thirteen NGOs of the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon in Bird watching Guide skills. Also, the German Technical Corporation (GTZ) initiated the creation of a permanent ecotourism management structure, named Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation in 1999 in Buea. GTZs role from the beginning was to assist especially in the organisational development of the young organisation and the strengthening of its capacities.

IV.2.2. Parks and protected area management

Parks and protected area management represent one of the ways that nature-based tourism is managed in the region. For example, the Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest is managed by the Bimbia Bonadokombo Natural Resource Management Council (BBNRMC). The management approach put up by the BBNRMC is the integral ban of any unsustainable activity within the forest repressive practices if prescriptions are not respected (chain saws, rifles and animal traps seized from illegal exploiters and poachers in close collaboration with MINFOF, release of animal species into the forest (more than 10 dwarf crocodiles and other reptiles released in the forest in partnership with the Limbe Wildlife Centre-LWC), training, sensitization and education of communities on agro-forestry for fuel wood production, ecotourism tours and biodiversity management. Identified threats are slash and burn agriculture, charcoal and fuel wood production, timber exploitation, unsustainable harvesting techniques of NTFPs, unsustainable hunting and fishing techniques and fish smoking.
IV.2.3. NGOs, CIGs, local councils/other local institutions and community members

Other organisation such as tour operators, NGOs and CIGs, local councils/other local institutions and community members are also involved in ecotourism management in the region. Tour Operators guides, hosts, or escort by groups (TARC, 2004). They also include owners of tourism travel agencies like Lifafe Travel Agency in Buea Town and T an N Travel Agency in Molyko, hotels and night club owners. The Travel agencies for example assist in linking tourists to Fako Division through international flights and hotels provide a form of accommodation to visitors on a paying basis.

NGOs and CIGs like Fako Tourism Board (FTB) situated in Limbe (a CIG) was created in 1967 to enliven and valorise tourism activities both at the local and national levels. It is in charge of the coordination, promotion and development of quality tourism in Fako Division o in the South West Region of Cameroon (FTB, 2010). Other CIGs (institution without profit purposes) also conduct environmental or social development like the Bakingili Forest Management Council (BACOFMAC). These institutions have offered training regarding tourism as an economic activity in areas where they operate.

Local councils like The Buea Rural Council (BRC) accommodate the Mount CEO office and provides some staff. When an ecotourism development project is discussed like the provision of access roads to link tourism sites, it is the BRC that executes it and not MINTOUR as a result of decentralisation. The BRC is also charged with building structures in tourism sites, collecting revenue and paying a small percentage (3%) to the state (Regional Delegate of Tourism for the South West Region, 2011). Also, the Limbe City Councils (that is the three councils of Limbe-Limbe I, II and III) are working closely together with their neighbouring councils especially that of Buea and with the Fako Tourism Board to sustainable mange ecotourism within Fako Division through sensitization and training. Finally, the University of Buea (UB) accommodated the guides training of 2003 and also provided lecturers for sustainable ecotourism development in the region.

Finally, the local community members are also actively involved in ecotourism management. One good example is in Buea where villages around Mount Cameroon clear bush paths for tourists and has created Village Ecotourism Committees (VECs). Mount CEO works here with fifteen partner villages with one hundred and fifty porters and thirty five guides in the fifteen villages (Mount CEO, 2011). They include Bokwango, Likoko Membia, Bova I and II, Bonakanda, amongst others. At the end of each tourism season, the money is shared to the villages, council, the government and the NGO (Mount CEO) for its smooth
running. The guides and porters have direct salary from each tour. Mount CEO organises sensitisation campaigns in these villages through refresher (acquaintance or reminder of forgotten knowledge or skills) courses and workshops on hunting, bush fire and the importance of biodiversity (animals and plant species). In all the villages, capacity building, participative land use planning as well as HIV/AIDS mainstreaming is also being promoted in a bid to balance conservation with development. In the BBCF, the informal management practices used by local communities are: integral ban of any unsustainable activity within the forest, repressive practices if prescriptions are not respected (chainsaws, rifles, and animal traps seized from illegal exploiters and poachers) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife), release of animal species in the forest (more than 10 dwarf crocodiles and other reptiles released in the forest in partnership with the Limbe Wildlife Center), training, sensitisation and education of communities on agro-forestry for fuel wood production, nature tourism tours/behaviour and biodiversity management. Identified threats are slash and burn agriculture, poaching, charcoal production, fuel wood production, timber exploitation, NTFPs unsustainable harvesting techniques, unsustainable hunting and fishing techniques and fish smoking.

From the above institutional arrangement, it could be observed that combinations of international (UNWTO DED, GTZ, WWF), national (MINTOUR, MININFO, MINPMEESA, Tour operators), regional (Regional Delegations of the various Ministries for the South West Region, Mount CEO, FTB, LWC, LBG) and local institutions (BBNRMC, BACOFMAC, Municipal councils and Local communities) are involved in the management of ecotourism in Fako Division of Cameroon. This implies that some of the decisions affecting ecotourism in this region are not necessarily locally made.

IV.3. Current management approaches of coastal recreational and cultural heritage tourism

Coastal recreational and cultural heritage tourism in Fako Division is currently managed using conservation strategies. The coastal recreational and cultural heritage ecotourism potentials in the area are for entertainment, enjoyment and curiosity. As far as coastal recreational tourism is concerned, conservation is based on management of three issues, namely, management of coastal hazards, beach restoration programmes and managing coastal recreational activities. In siting coastal resorts and other facilities, there is undoubtedly a predilection for locating in beautiful but high risk zones that are as close as physically possible to the edge of the sea, or otherwise take advantage of scenic views and proximity to beaches extending from Limbe to the West Coast. It is precisely these areas that are
more vulnerable to both long term and episodic coastal hazards such as erosion, storms and floods. Also, information is provided where necessary to permit informed decisions to be made with regard to the kinds and degree of risk associated with living in various parts of the coastal zone. Warnings of impending storms or other hazardous conditions, and to develop plans for coping with such emergencies are made available to the tourists and the local population. These coastal areas build in their own regulatory approaches such as construction setback lines, storm resistant building codes, properly marked channels, rescue services, boating safety requirements, monitoring and enforcement of operations, ensuring the safety of boats and associated equipments and the safe operation of boaters. Some of these conservation strategies could be seen in Seme Beach, Limbe.

IV.3.1. Conservation strategy

Cultural heritage tourism is a significant sector of the ecotourism industry in Fako Division. Cultural heritage ecotourism site management is important in order to preserve the structural and aesthetic features of the heritage potentials. Conservation is the first stage in cultural heritage management. Since heritage is related to things of value that are passed from one generation to another, conservation is a key tool in ensuring that this happens. It is very important, particularly when referring to built heritage attractions, since the heritage industry also includes other aspects, such as memories or folklore (which do not require conservation). As with any other tourist destination, a cultural heritage destination has to be managed and heritage managers have the long-term conservation of cultural values in mind. Cultural heritage management in this area is the practice of controlling the heritage and this is quite important since the worth of heritage in most of the cases depends on how it is presented to customers (tourists). Heritage places have to be presented as tourist products and to reach this, high standards of management via conservation is needed. It is the vocation and practice of managing cultural resources, such as the arts and heritage which is concerned with traditional and historic culture. The cultural heritage resource managers in Fako Division are typically in charge of museums, galleries and theatres especially those that emphasize culture specific to the local area or ethnic groups like the National Archive in Buea Town.
IV.3.2. Trained guides

Conservation via trained guides in cultural heritage and coastal recreational management emphasises on authenticity, hardening the site through designated walkways (which enhance the tourist’s valuation of the site through interpretation and presentation), and discreet lighting. Other strategies include: periodic furnishings, visitor flow management, souvenir relevant to sites, extensive retailing and catering facilities, cultural exhibition events, development of other attractions and activities, and development of sites to maximise commercial opportunities. This is made possible by the Ministry of Culture through its Regional Delegation for the South West Region situated in Buea. The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure (MINTOUR) comes in only during manifestation with tourists. In the Bismark Fountain in Buea for example, conservation is ensured by Mr. John Ngomba through painting, water pump, chairs for relaxation, scrubbing of walls, fence and the planting of flowers and grass, financed personally by the German Ambassador to Cameroon.

The main problem that was identified in the management of the cultural heritage attractions via conservation is the fact that tourism development and conservation in cultural heritage have different, even opposite, objectives. While the former looks for an increase in the numbers of visitors, the latter tries to control this increase in order to protect the heritage. Nevertheless, bigger difficulties in managing conservation at heritage attractions were found when looking at other built attractions such as monuments. Conservators have to spend a lot of money on conservation and sometimes they cannot afford the cost, necessitating the need for funding. One good example is the Bismark Fountain in Buea which is being funded by the German Ambassador to Cameroon. However, this conflict can be overcome at any heritage site when a welcoming capacity (number of people that can be welcomed satisfactorily and without risk for the conservation of the heritage site) is established. Despite the above however, it should be noted that most ecotourism sites use a combination of approaches for effective management. Okech and Urmilla (2009) earmarked that it is imperative to manage ecotourism from the perspectives of all the stakeholders concerned which includes not only government ministries/delegations, but also tour operators, NGOs and CIGs, Park and Protected area Management and community members because ecotourism impacts on the environment. Therefore, ecotourism management in Fako Division should also include the visitors and other accommodation facility managers just like is the case in the Amboseli National Park and the Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya, which all have implications for conservation management from the ecotourism point of view as well as an enhanced sustainable community development.
V. RECOMMENDATION: ALTERNATIVE ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT PARADIGM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN FAKO DIVISION

In order to conserve the global ecosystem, it is important to integrate ecotourism with ecosystem conservation. This will lead to a balance between conservation and local development. It will also improve local residents' awareness and facilitate community participation in conservation and ecotourism. Also, individual efforts of a country to put sustainable ecotourism into practice should be supported by international cooperation. It is in the light of the above that the Ecotourism Management Triangle (EMT) of Lee Youn-Taek (2003) is recommended as an alternative ecotourism management paradigm in Fako Division. The EMT will assure the integrated or holistic planning and management system of sustainable ecotourism (as a practical means for ecotourism action) and as a future direction for international cooperation for sustainability. The EMT consists of three components: ‘World Ecotourism Sites (WESS)’, ‘Standardized Indicators for Sustainable Ecotourism (SISE)’, and an ‘Ecotourism Experts Support System (EESS).’

V.1. World ecotourism sites (wess)

Firstly, it is necessary to register and manage the “World Ecotourism Sites (WESS)” in order to both conserve natural heritages and promote ecotourism. ‘WESS’ is a model system that efficiently and realistically manages natural heritage through ecotourism. The first step is to develop the necessary conditions for registering World Ecotourism Sites (WESS), followed by the determination and inventorying the WESS list; and monitoring their level of conservation and management. In order to be registered in the WESS list, a management system for not only the conservation of resources but also the enhancement of tourists’ and the community’s values will be required as shown in Figure 2. It is the responsibility of each country concerned (Cameroon) to take appropriate actions for management of the sites. When a site has deteriorated to the extent that it has lost those values which determined its inclusion in the WESS list, it should be removed from the list. ‘WESS’ will be a valuable model for ecotourism in Fako Division. It will make great contributions to the conservation of natural heritages which our generation has to turn over to the next sustainable.
V.2. Standardized Indicators for Sustainable Ecotourism (SISE)

Secondly, it is necessary to develop ‘Standardized Indicators for Sustainable Ecotourism (SISE)’. The term ecotourism is used loosely to describe various ecotourism destinations and products all over the world, and thus, being promoted in the absence of widespread recognition of prerequisites for harmonized conservation and development. There is a growing number of case study reports of “greenwashing” in ecotourism. Greenwashing is a concept used to describe ecotourism products labeled as "green" but which do not live up to their claims because ecotourism has multiple definitions and different interpretations of what it means to be green, as well as involves many certification bodies that certify ecolodges, with each having its own standards and practices. Judkis (2008) relates it to ecoresorts that are “wolves in sheep's clothing” because “greenwashers” (hoteliers, travel agents and destination tour operators) largely seek economic gains while taking baby steps towards actual environmental protection as a result. This is a sin which undermines the legitimacy of ecotourism as products provided do not implement the most basic principles of ecotourism. Greenwashers are dishonest tourism operators who embrace ecotourism as a new selling angle (Self et al., 2010). To greenwash is to promote ecotourism while effectively doing the opposite (Fosbery, 2006). According to Constantineau (2007), many ecotours are just ordinary operations that “greenwash” themselves by embracing the tourism label while doing little to act in an environmentally responsible manner. Weaver (2002) argues that greenwashers give the appearance of ecotourism (nature-based, learning-focused, environmentally and socio-culturally responsible) without the substance of sustainability. For example, the environmental marketing firm TerraChoice (2007) randomly surveyed 1,018 common consumer products and realised that more than 99% of them were guilty of greenwashing (http://www.examiner.com/article/eco-tourism-101-what-is-greenwashing) because they provided very little employment opportunities for the local population, practiced poor waste disposal methods, etc and so ecotourism does not contribute to either ecosystem conservation or local development. SISE will be able to contribute to the enhancement of transparency and reliability of ecotourism destinations and products all over the world, including Cameroon. It will also help solve the problem of “green washing.” Furthermore, it will be the basis for establishing an international certification and accreditation system of ecotourism in Fako Division.
Finally, it is necessary to establish ‘Ecotourism Experts Supporting System (EESS).’ This is a network that facilitates regional and global exchange of human resources and information to achieve sustainable ecotourism. Its aims are to contribute to strengthening a nation’s capacity to prepare and implement ecotourism strategy and action plan, and by this, to promote the development and management of sustainable ecotourism.

The application of the EMT in Fako Division of Cameroon will see WES making an inventory of, and registration of all the ecotourism potentials in the area as world ecotourism sites. This will be followed by monitoring of their management in order to ensure that it is sustainable. Sustainable ecotourism management will enhance tourist and community values. All the ecotourism stakeholders must partake in the management of the ecotourism sites here. Further more, deteriorated sites or amenities should not be registered in the WES list so as to enhance the visitor’s experience (competitiveness). This is important because the best way to advertise is via word of mouth as a result of increased visitor satisfaction. Through this way, WES is going to contribute to the conservation of the numerous natural heritage in the area (which are currently been poorly managed) for prosterity.

More so, SISE will ensure the balance between conservation and development through zoning regulations. Zoning regulations will clearly
distinguish between areas under conservation and those that provide need-oriented development, enabling community members to extract their basic needs like fuel wood, wild honey and medicine to enhance their livelihoods such as is the case in the BBCF in Limbe and Mount Cameroon National Park in Buea. Zoning will also prevent urbanization from encroaching into ecotourism sites as is currently the case in Limbe and Buea. SISE will also lead to the establishment of an international certification and accreditation system for ecotourism in order that the area serves a large market segment. SISE will also work out schemes (in percentages) for proper benefit sharing mechanisms between the different stakeholders from the ecotourism revenue generated for each tourism season or year.

Finally, EESS will ensure a global and regional exchange of ideas and resources through networking. One good example will be the establishment of a holistic management system that sells packaged or inclusive tours to visitors. Package or inclusive tours combine transportation (from the airport to the destination and within), accommodation and entertainment as one. Also, ecotourism management organisations would be created in Tiko and Muyuka Sub-Divisions which are currently absent despite the fact that these Sub-Divisions host ecotourism attractions like mangroves, giant agro-industrial plantations and forest. EESS will also educate and train stakeholders in the area through workshops and training programmes at all levels. Knowledge, experience and information from ecotourism experts will also be shared freely. This will ensure international cooperation between Fako Division and the rest of the world in a globalised system, thanks to the application of EMT. Through networking, foreign donors like the World Bank, Rich countries like the United States and Canada as well as conservation organisations like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) would provide funds for the sustainable development of ecotourism in the area.

In accordance with the application of EMT as shown above, it is also necessary to develop indicators of sustainable ecotourism and to monitor the impacts of ecotourism in the region. This will highlight some immediate, short-term and long-term planning and management actions which need to be taken in order to stop the current inefficient use and localized overuse of the ecotourism potentials in the area. Also, it is necessary to develop human resources for ecotourism through the creation of ecotourism training institutions like the ACHAS Higher Institute of of Sustainable Tourism, Hospitality and Business Management (AHIM) in Buea created in 2011. In the beginning stage of ecotourism development, local residents have little knowledge of ecotourism. In order to provide a desirable direction for the development and management of ecotourism, it is necessary to develop and implement sound education and training programs.
VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The link between environmental protection, international tourism and economic development became widely recognised in eastern Africa in the early 1970s (Thresher, 1981). Filani (1975) proposed the development of national tourism policy, closely linked to national development strategies. Kenya and South Africa have been successful leaders in the development of ecotourism industries based upon a comprehensive structure of national legislation, policy planning and site management. However, not all tourism development efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa and Fako Division (Cameroon) have been successful. Ankomah and Crompton (1990) identified the five factors inhibiting these development efforts as being: negative market image, lack of foreign exchange for capital development, lack of trained personnel for tourism, weak institutional frameworks for planning and management and political instability.

There should be stakeholder involvement in the planning and management of ecotourism, and an understanding of their perceptions is necessary. Gee and Fayos-Sola (1997) in Okech and Urmilla (2009) recognised this need, arguing that impacts can be perceived differently by different community members as well as interested and affected parties and that ecotourism can inevitably cause host-guest conflict as it is frequently noticed in Down Beach, Limbe. Without this context, effective and relevant management plans cannot be implemented, thus hindering the goal of meeting subjective beliefs or perceptions and ultimately achieving sustainable ecotourism. Grimble and Wellard (1997) argued that the advantage of stakeholder analysis is that it provides a methodology and a conceptual framework for a better understanding of environmental and developmental problems and interaction through comparative analysis of the different perspectives and stakeholder interests at different levels. Jones (1995) in Okech and Urmilla (2009) submitted that from a managerial perspective, the stakeholder theory posits that the various groups can and should have a direct influence on managerial decision-making. As such, effective management demands synchronous attention to the genuine interests of all appropriate stakeholders (Donaldson and Preston, 1995).

In Cameroon just like in Kenya, conservation is a key strategy in managing ecosystems. One way that this is achieved is via ecotourism. Gakahu (1992) in Okech and Urmilla (2009) highlighted that Kenya has a policy that emphasizes that habitats and wildlife populations are to be maintained in a reasonably ‘natural’ state while catering for economically important activities. This is important for the tourist industry because the naturalness of amenities is what attracts tourists and is what they pay for. Appropriate planning and management is necessary to redress past mistakes and ensure the future welfare of ecotourism. One cannot rule out the
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possibility that at some point, conservation and economic exploitation through ecotourism might become incompatible unless appropriate mechanisms of reconciling them are worked out.

Finally, Fako Division needs a comprehensive management plan akin to the Tiger Leaping Gorge in China (Van Dijk, 2006) to ensure the long-term sustainable development of ecotourism. One suggestion is to use the money collected for the entrance fee and redistribute it to the locals to pay for the upkeep of the site, including trash pick up. Money from the entrance fee could also be used to develop emergency services and educational signage, which are both currently lacking in the region.

This paper posits that the current management approaches of ecotourism in Fako Division (Cameroon) includes legislative and institutional framework, international organizations, protected area management, tour operators, NGOs and CIGs, local councils, community members and conservation strategies. Despite these, the ecotourism sector in the region still faces a litany of problems such as the lack of an integrated or holistic ecotourism management body in the entire Division, an ecotourism network that coordinates the activity, inadequate finance, the problem of benefit sharing to the various stakeholders, and rapid urbanization. All these problems point to the fact that sectorial management has been put in place instead of a holistic management body.

To ameliorate the situation, it is recommended that an integrated ecotourism management system needs to be established in the region. Ecotourism cannot be sustainable without effective management because ecotourism sites are ecologically sensitive and fragile. More so, the impacts of tourism can be devastating unless systematically managed. Therefore, ecotourism and a national conservation plan should be integrated with each other. In such areas of high value to both conservation and residents’ economic activity, it is necessary to designate that area not only as a protected area but also as an ecotourism site. This will allow for a system of checks and balances between conservation and development. It will also facilitate the local community’s understanding of, and participation in conservation which are the two most difficult problems to solve in designating protected areas (Lee Youn-Taek, 2003). Largely, ecotourism can be managed to be sustainable only if the views of all the stakeholders who participated in it are taken into consideration. Therefore, the development and management of sustainable ecotourism in Cameroon as a whole and Fako Division in particular should be promoted through not only the individual efforts of the country but also international cooperation. In this light, the ‘Ecotourism Management Triangle (EMT)’ as a practical means of ecotourism action and as a future direction for international cooperation is strongly recommended as an alternative management
paradigm in Fako Division in particular. It combines ‘WESS’, ‘SISE’ and ‘EESS’ as an operational set, hence a toll for sustainable development.

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