



The nature of diasporic tourism in Cameroon: An opportunity for tourism development

Professor Tembi M. Tichaawa
College of Business and Economics
School of Tourism and Hospitality
University of Johannesburg
South Africa
Email: tembit @uj.ac.za

Abstract

While a number of studies have focused on diaspora tourism and the effects on communities, the focus has generally been on developed nation's context with little focus on Africa, despite the high migration tendencies that have occurred to date. With specific reference to the Central African nation of Cameroon, this study examines the nature and the characteristics of diaspora tourism. It explores the contours of Cameroonian diasporas' by way of profiling. The article argues that understanding the profiles of such a segment is important to understanding their behaviours and spending patterns, as well as their preferences for tourism marketers. Through a survey method, 281 respondents revealed the identities of such diaspora tourists as well-educated individuals, with high spending power, whose main reasons for visits were linked to visiting relatives and friends, conducting business, or attending a family event. The study argues that the segment is important for 'turbocharging' tourism development in Cameroon.

Keywords: Tourism development, diaspora tourism, Cameroon, market segmentation.

Introduction

Diaspora tourism is increasingly being recognised as a growing research theme within academic tourism literature with the researchers focused on analysing it from various perspectives, including identities, memories, motivations, and associated impacts. The contemporary meaning of the term 'diaspora' describes the group of people who, either by force or voluntarily, reside outside their original homelands (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Corsale & Vuytsyke, 2016). Such people include immigrants, political refugees, overseas communities, and foreign workers (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Corsale & Vuytsyke, 2016; Huang, Haller & Ramshaw, 2013). A key characteristic of the population movement is their strong cultural and psychological ties to their homelands (Iorio & Corsale, 2013, Huang et al., 2013). In the available literature, diaspora tourism is typically used alongside 'roots tourism', 'personal heritage tourism', 'genealogy tourism', 'legacy tourism', 'homesick tourism', and, in some cases, 'visiting friends and family tourism (VRF)' (Marchall, 2015; Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Huang, Ramshaw & Norman, 2016). The underlying basis of such types of tourism, which regularly overlap, is people visiting their country of origin, which they, or previous generations, had to initially leave for various reasons involving social, economic and political constraints, thus being forced to seek better living conditions in their present country of residence (Huang et al., 2013; Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015; Graf, 2016; Arnone, 2011).

People tend to travel back to their country of origin either to visit friends and family, thus preserving cultural and emotional links between themselves and the place, or to rediscover places (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). Thus, people travel back to places where they believe they have roots, and where their family began, and to maintain a strong bond with their homeland (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Etemaddar, Tucker & Duncan, 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Graf, 2016). In addition, Mortley (2011) argues that, besides family obligations and events, events



and festivals constitute a large motivational factor for tourists to return home. Thus, diaspora travel is an increasingly growing tourism segment, largely due to increased mobility through advancements in communication and travel technology (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Sim & Leith, 2013). The aim of this research was to determine the nature and characteristics of diaspora tourism in Cameroon. The paper argues that Cameroonians living in the diaspora represent a significant component of Cameroon's tourism economy, but that their travel requires further harnessing for it to contribute more to local economic development, and be used for promoting international tourism.

Identity and memory as motivations for diaspora travel

One of the most prevalent themes in diaspora tourism research is the idea of 'identity and place', which stems from the diaspora members feeling an absence of belonging in their host country (Etemaddar et al., 2016; Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Graf, 2016; Kim & Stodalsky, 2013; Huang et al., 2013). According to Etemaddar et al. (2016), such feeling of alienation and lack of belonging can occur when diasporas' move to a country with vastly different cultural values. Kim and Stodalsky (2013) and Huang et al. (2013) explain that, although people may develop new identities when moving to a new society, most will still keep their ethnic identity intact rather than fully conforming to the new society's identity. Corsale and Vuytsyk (2016) and Bandyopadhyay (2008) mention that, because of the cultural differences, diaspora-dwelling community members experience a sense of limbo in their host country and resident country, which might lead to many facing identity crises, setting questions on who they are, and where they come from. Huang et al. (2013) state that the construction and maintenance of one's identity is attributed to diaspora tourism. Consequently, to preserve their social and cultural identities, and to maintain their cultural ties with home, diaspora members will take trips back home to remain connected to their roots (Etemaddar et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Graf, 2016). Roberts (2012) found the use of diaspora tourism as a vehicle by Caribbean diasporas' to maintain their identity. However, Corsale and Vuytsyk (2016), as well as Etemaddar et al. (2016), emphasise that place cannot be used as a point of reference for one's identity, as an identity is not static in nature, but, rather, it is influenced by global factors. Etemaddar et al. (2016) go on to state that, in the process of integrating with their new environment in their host country, the diaspora community still 'root' their identity in their home country.

Although technology and increased mobility have challenged the traditional idea of 'home', diaspora members are said to continue to seek to reconnect to their country of origin, even after displacement (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). Kim and Stodolska (2013) note that traveling to one's country of origin might cause an individual to become retrospective regarding their ethnic identity. Bandyopadhyay's (2008) study concludes that the Indian diasporas look to Bollywood movies as a means of connecting to the place (seeing what India actually looks like) and finding a sense of identity through the manners, the culture, the Indian way of life, and the values that are portrayed in the storyline.

As aforementioned, the diaspora communities travel back to their home country to reaffirm their cultural and social identity, however, the return travel for diaspora members might yield different results (Marschall, 2015). Diasporic tourists might find that their sense of identity, dignity and connectedness at home exacerbate their feeling of alienation (Huang et al., 2016). Kim and Stodolsky (2013) cited Day-Vines et al.'s (1998) study in the impacts of African American students on their diasporic trip to Ghana. The outcomes were a change in the perception of Africans, an enhanced sense of pride, connection to their past, re-evaluation of the American values by which they lived, and, lastly, forming an accurate picture of Africa (Kim & Stodolsky, 2013). The authors also noted the Israeli Exodus Program, a youth pilgrimage to Israel to strengthen their identity. In contrast, such factors existed as language barriers,



changes in the political landscape, in time, in socio-economic conditions (standards and quality of living, social norms) and to the physical appearance of buildings and infrastructure, and the response from the locals/citizens of the home country (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Marschall, 2015; Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015). The above is seen in Iorio and Corsale's (2013) study, where some of the respondents felt a sense of loss and exclusion when returning back to Saxon Transylvania, as the landscape had been drastically changed by poor-quality construction, and the settlers after them forming their own community, which replaced the previous one. Additionally, a study by Corsale and Vuytsyk (2016) showed that poor infrastructure, poor service, and a general lack of development in the rural areas had weakened the experience of the Ukrainian diaspora. The study conducted by Vong, Pinto and Silva (2017) also displayed the impact of the poor-quality tourism services and development on the diasporic tourist experience. A study by Mensah (2015) on African American visits to Ghana showed that they felt lost when returning to their place of origin, and the changes in the sociocultural contexts between the Ghana and the United States were far too different, leading to an exacerbated sense of identity loss. Diaspora members might either feel as though they do not belong to both their home and to their host country (Kim & Stodolsky, 2013; Hughes & Allen, 2010; Mensah, 2015), or the sense of belonging is transferred to the host country (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). The notion of transnationalism is then brought forth. Transnationalism is the ability of the diaspora tourist to have a sense of home in both their country of origin and their country of residence (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Mortley, 2011; Graf, 2016; Huang et al., 2013).

Another theme that reoccurs in diaspora tourism research is the motivation of memory in travel back to country of origin (Huang et al., 2013; Marschall, 2015; Bachorz & Horolets, 2017; Arnone, 2011). The above is particularly central to homesick tourism, which only relates to diaspora members who migrated from their country of origin, and not including the generations thereafter (Marschall, 2015). Memory has an influence on the organisation, the route, and the experience of the trip back home (Marschall, 2015). Personal memory might lead to repeat visits to a country, due to the emotional connection that diasporic tourists might have with the place (Bachorz & Horolets, 2017). Marschall (2015), along with Bachorz and Horolets (2017), state that first-generation immigrants might return home to relive and to reconnect with their home, using their memory of what used to be.

Difference in motives of diaspora travel by different generations of immigrants

A number of authors note that there is a difference not only in the interest of diaspora tourism, but, similarly, in the experience gained from such tourism between first- and second-generation, or subsequent, migrants. The above might be attributed to their experience of initially leaving their homelands, and the circumstances surrounding their decision to leave home (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Etemaddar et al., 2015; Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015; Hughes & Allen, 2010). To begin with, first-generation migrants might have a strong longing for their homelands, and see diaspora tourism as a means of reconnecting with their past and of reaffirming their sense of home (Marschall, 2015). In contrast, they might have little interest in returning home, in fear of not being able to recognise what was once home, or because the conditions for leaving the country were traumatic, and they prefer to distance themselves from home, and to discourage any interaction related to their country of origin (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Graf, 2016). The above is especially true in the case of the first-generation migrants who left their homeland owing to violent circumstances, like civil war (Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015; Graf, 2016; Arnone, 2011). In the case of the first scenario, to the first-generation migrants who still maintain a strong personal connection with their homeland, the diaspora might be a way of preserving the familial connections that they have in their homeland (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016).



For second- and subsequent generation migrants, diaspora tourism is a means of exploring their roots or ancestry (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Huang et al., 2013; Graf, 2016). Diaspora tourism allows them to engage in their personal heritage through locating their ancestral roots and attending festivals (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). The generation concerned might use diaspora tourism to re-establish their cultural connections. The above is seen in Graf's (2016) study that presented that second-generation migrants could attain their cultural identity, when immersed with the culture and the people. Additionally, Hughes and Allen (2010) contend that second-generation migrants might use diaspora trips as a means of finding their sense of belonging, as they might feel lost and face identity issues in their current residence, or feelings of discrimination from the host residents in their current country (Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015; Graf, 2016; Hughes & Allen, 2010). The above was seen by Afro-Caribbeans living in Manchester, who voiced a desire to travel to the Caribbean to experience the 'home' that they only knew about from the stories told by family members (Hughes & Allen, 2010).

Bandyopadhyay's (2008) study contends with the above discussion, that different generations have different motives for traveling back to their homelands. Iarmolenko and Kerstetter (2015) contend that the mass media have the ability to affect behaviour, with them often being used to modify behaviour. Bandyopadhyay's (2008) study analyses the impact of Bollywood movies on the Indian diaspora's motivation to return home. The results align with the above discussion, in terms of, for first-generation migrants, the Bollywood movies eliciting a nostalgic longing for the past, whereas, for the second-generation migrants, the movies brought them the desire to experience the modern cities in India, as portrayed therein by affluent characters (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). Whatever the reason for travel might be, the travel generated by diaspora tourists is important for developed economies, and specifically for developing economies, especially those in the sub-Saharan Africa context. Diaspora tourism, therefore, might be seen as a boost to emerging African economies that have been recognised as having the potential to develop and maximise tourism benefits.

Positive impacts of diaspora tourism on local and national development

Attention has been increasingly placed on diaspora tourism, and on the potential of diaspora tourism in respect of the economy and local development (Marschall, 2013; Nurse, 2011; Mortley, 2011; Roberts, 2012). Iorio and Corsale (2013) reveal that there is a significant importance of diasporic journeys back home by the diaspora tourist. If effectively utilised, the diaspora tourism segment is a potentially viable economic tool for countries, with Nurse (2011) stressing that the Government of Suriname should make an effort to target their diaspora specifically to stimulate further tourism growth in a segment that holds economic priority in the country. A number of authors have noted the ways in which diasporic tourists differ, and, in terms of that difference, make a more impactful contribution to their home country, compared to that which is made by international tourists (see Mortley, 2011; Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Nurse, 2011; Vong et al., 2017).

Firstly, diaspora tourists tend to stay longer than other tourists do in their homeland when visiting, and, consequently, yield more benefits for local development (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Huang et al., 2013; Roberts, 2012). Diaspora tourism spending is more likely to improve the local economy, as the diaspora tend to stay in smaller accommodations provided for the local providers, to use the tourism services of the local businesses, and to purchase their goods from the local suppliers (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Roberts, 2012). Secondly, inasmuch as diaspora tourists might take part in mainstream tourism activities, they are said to venture beyond popular tourism zones and into rural areas, where they might make a contribution to the local economy in those areas, which highlights potential entrepreneurial opportunities (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Roberts, 2012). Vong et al.'s (2017) study attests to the above by presenting that the Timor-Leste diaspora not only have the intention of making repeat visits to



Timor-Leste, but they intend to visit every district in the state. Roberts (2012) finds that the development of knowledge transfers and poverty reduction is a benefit of tourism spending.

Thirdly, in relation to the geographic spread of tourism, communities in the rural areas can capitalise on diaspora tourism and work towards rural development by means of using diaspora tourism as a livelihood option (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). An example is the village of Viscri, in Transylvania, where Saxon, Romanian and Roman families integrated their ethnicity and tourism by presenting the village as a tourism attraction especially relevant to diaspora tourists (Iorio & Corsale, 2013).

Fourthly, diaspora tourism yields repeat visits, and it is not as subject to seasonality compared to international tourism, owing to that fact that diaspora have a personal connection to the home country. They are attracted by family obligations, festivals and events, business opportunities, family vacations, and lastly public and religious holidays (Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015).

Moreover, diaspora tourists are said to have personal interests in their country of origin, and their involvement in tourism encourages the preservation of the country's cultural and natural heritage (Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015; Huang et al., 2013). Further, they are more open to, and interested in, making business investments in their homelands (Vong et al., 2017; Nurse, 2011; Arnone, 2011).

Lastly, diaspora travel spreads tourism benefits, as it augments such other forms of tourism as cultural tourism, nature-based tourism, rural tourism, and seaside tourism (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). Furthermore, this type of tourism forms linkages to such local industries as trade, telecommunications, media, and financial transfers (Nurse, 2011).

Tourism industry and governmental response to diaspora tourism

Due to the socio-economic importance of such a tourism segment to development and the economy, tourism bodies and national governments are working, both collectively and individually, to engage with their diaspora (Mortley, 2011; Sim & Leith, 2013; Vong et al., 2017; Gijanto, 2011; Etemaddar et al., 2016). Sim and Leith (2013) write that some governments are making use of events to acknowledge and welcome their diasporas home. Noticeable examples include the 2009 Year of the Homecoming, organised by the Scottish Government for their diaspora (Sim & Leith, 2013). The same concept was first orchestrated by Wales, in their Year of Homecoming event in 2000, organised by the Wales Tourism Board (Sim & Leith, 2013). Events targeting diasporas can, similarly, be held in the country of residence for such groups, with an example being the Wanaka Air Show in New Zealand (Etemaddar et al., 2016). The Wanaka Air Show targets the Iranian diaspora living in New Zealand to help them develop a sense of home in their current country of residence (Etemaddar et al., 2016). These types of event are particularly important to the groups of the diaspora who might want to travel back home (Etemddar et al., 2016).

Different methods are utilised by different countries in connecting with their diasporas. In Europe, the Scottish and Irish governments recognise the importance of tracing one's roots in their diaspora, and they have developed websites that allows diasporas to do so (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016). Ireland has the 'Discover Ireland' website, which is managed by the National Tourism Development Authority to assist the Irish diaspora with tracing their roots back home before leaving for their visit to Ireland (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016). The Scottish government has sought to reach their diaspora living in North America, and, thus, situated a Scottish Affairs Office in Washington DC in 2001, as a point of liaison between the diaspora and the Scottish government, which has led to the creation of such diasporic events as the National Tartan Day (Sim & Leith, 2013). Scotland seeks to give its diaspora a sense of self by means of connecting



them to their ancestral roots. The above can be seen at The Gathering, where tourists seek out tents housing their other clan members (Sim & Leith, 2013). Plans are underway to extend this type of activity, using events like the Year of Homecoming and The Gathering, in terms of the government's Diaspora Engagement Plan (Sim & Leith, 2013). The response by the two countries indicates that their national tourism bureaus acknowledge the lucrative nature of diaspora tourism for their communities, and, therefore, actively promote the target market through their websites and tour packages (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016).

However, in situations where tourism is a relatively young industry in a country, and the industry is set back by the negative images of the country, the governments concerned might not specifically target their diaspora, but, rather, international tourists, as a whole (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2015). The Ukraine is said to be such a country, with the tourism bodies mainly focusing on attracting the general international tourists to the region without particular emphasis on their diaspora (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016). However, it should be noted that the tourism industry is responding to the Ukrainian diaspora, which is evident by the 25 major travel agencies collaborating with their Ukrainian counterparts to cater for the diaspora tourists (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016).

In Asia, the government of India is working towards increasing the amount of tourism and philanthropy among their Indian diaspora, by means of a roots tracing project spearheaded by the Ministry of Indian Affairs (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016). In Vietnam, a tourism campaign is targeted at the Vietnamese diaspora in France to encourage trips to Vietnam. The campaign is organised by the Executive Committee of Overseas Vietnamese (situated in France), and by the Vietnamese National Tourism Authority (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016). Programmes are run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are intended to cultivate a sense of belonging and obligation to the homelands for young adults. The two NGOs that are involved are the Fund for Armenian Relief and Birthright Israel, which both aim to reinstall a sense of cultural identity among the Jewish youth, by using their experience in Israel (Corsale & Vuytsyk, 2016; Huang, Haller & Ramshaw, 2013; Kelner, 2013). Similar to Ukraine, Timor-Leste's tourism industry is in its early developmental stages, with the industry and national tourism entities having yet to target their diaspora (Vong et al., 2017; Arnone, 2011). Vong et al. (2017) recommend that the government stimulate diasporic investment in the country by promoting diaspora tourism.

In the Caribbean, Jamaica has made numerous efforts to welcome and engage their diaspora (Mortley, 2011). Initiatives taken by the Jamaican government, the Tourism Board and other tourism and development policy planners strengthen the connection of home and diaspora with the aim of improving the diaspora tourism's contribution to national development (Mortley 2011). Initiatives include the establishment of the Jamaican Diaspora Advisory Board in 2005, in cities such as London and New York, in order to facilitate relations between the Jamaican diaspora and the government, as well as to make recommendations to the Jamaican Government (Mortley, 2011). Additionally, the Jamaican Diaspora Foundation was launched in 2005, and the Jamaican Diaspora Future Leaders Forum in 2008, which operates independently in different countries (Mortley, 2011). Further, the government holds diaspora conferences twice a year, which are organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (Mortley, 2011). Also in the Caribbean, the Barbados Tourism Authority recognises the loyalty of their diaspora in making frequent visits to Barbados, and has created the 'Barbados Family and Friends' club to encourage the diaspora to use tourism services, and so as to promote Barbados tourism, by means of providing related discounts (Roberts, 2012).

In South America, the tourism industry of Suriname holds economic significance for the country (Nurse, 2011). Nurse (2011) states that the Suriname government should look to cater to the Suriname diaspora through the formulation and implementation of policies to make the destination attractive for the diaspora to reconnect with their past, as well as seek partnerships



with countries where the majority of their diaspora resides. Nurse (2011) further recommends that national tourism bodies should employ marketing strategies to target their diaspora.

The African diaspora is mostly centred on African Americans traveling to the continent, focusing on visiting slavery routes and experiencing a spiritual journey to locate their roots (Huang et al., 2013). Countries in Africa engage with their diaspora through heritage events, although Etemaddar et al. (2016) argue that such engagement is not specifically for diaspora tourists, but additionally attract heritage and culture tourists. Countries like Ghana, Senegal and Benin are popularly known for their historic slave trades, and a tourism industry has resulted from interest in the slave history of the countries concerned (Etemaddar et al., 2016). Some African counties use the African Diaspora Tourism website to market their heritage tours and festivals (Corsale & Vuysyk, 2016). Moreover, several authors accredit the movie 'Roots' with serving as a powerful push factor for African American visits to the African continent (Gijanto, 2011; Corsale & Vuysyk, 2016; Huang et al., 2013). In Gambia, the community members of the village of Juffure and Albreda Youth Society serve as tour guides, who utilise the narratives of the movie to provide their village as an attraction, in relation to which they offer heritage tours (Gijanto, 2011). Furthermore, Ghana holds two events, PANAFEST and Emancipation Day, which recall the slave days. Although they attract international tourists, the events have gained a negative perception from the Ghanaians (Mensah, 2015). The Eritrean government tries to foster transnational state among its diaspora by means of the Bologna Festival, held annually (Graf, 2016). Additionally, there is the Know Your Country Tour that is targeted to second-generation migrants who wish to learn about their history.

Methodology

The current study adopted a mixed method approach to examining the nature and characteristics of diaspora tourism with specific reference to the central African state of Cameroon. According to Fleischer (2007), many Cameroonians have migration tendencies to western economies that are often motivated by families who view such a move for a family member as a way of enhancing their socio-economic circumstances, as the West is often perceived as providing better economic opportunities in terms of job creation and income generation than their homeland does. Ojong and Otu (2015) state that such migrants often contribute 'back home' to their families through remittance. Earlier works by Schrieder and Kerr (2000) suggest that the country experienced a high rate of international migration, mainly to Europe and North America. Ollong (2013) provides the most recorded figure, estimating that over 200 000 Cameroonians live and work abroad, but the figure is not accurate, and could have risen significantly since it was first presented. Ollong (2013) and Eyete (2017) acknowledge the significant role that such migrants play in the development of the country. Thus, in the current study, such migrants made up the sample population.

Due to an unknown population size, a purposive convenience sampling was adopted. The respondents were conveniently targeted mainly at the Douala International Airport Precinct, upon departure. The focus on Douala was simply because it is the country's main gateway city, which is popular among visitors (Tichaawa, 2017), and with the major airlines providing services to Africa, Europe and America. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the respondents who accepted to take part in the study. The criteria that were used to select the respondents were that such respondents had not to be travelling for the first time, and that had to be permanently resident abroad, or else have long-term study opportunities or employment there. To the above end, a screening question was used to identify the potential targets. To ensure that a sizeable number of responses were received, a snowballing technique was used, whereby those surveyed were asked to recommend potential targets of whom they knew. Data were collected using a semi-structured survey that was designed in English, and which was later translated into French, considering that both languages are officially used in Cameroon. The data were collected between the months of December 2016



and March 2017. At the end of the fieldwork, 281 valid surveys were received, which formed the basis of the analysis presented below.

The questionnaire that was used comprised mainly of open and close-ended questions. The survey was done based on the extant literature, and studies by Mensah (2015), Hughes and Allen (2010) and Kim and Stodolska (2013), which were adapted to suit the study objectives and the local Cameroonian context. The survey was designed to capture the sociodemographic variables of the respondents, as well as details about the purpose and nature of their visit, their spending patterns, and their frequency of visit. The data were analysed by way of SPSS software, version 24, which generated the frequencies and the results that are presented below. The open-ended questions were content-analysed, and the results were presented thematically.

Results and discussion

Profiles of the respondents

The results, in terms of the sociodemographic characteristics of the Cameroon diasporic tourist, were of a primarily male (67%) tourist, relative to female tourists (33%), with a mean age of 38 years, mainly in the age group of between 26 and 47 years old. The respondents could be described as well-educated, since 70.6% of them reported having attained an undergraduate and postgraduate degree. Although living in the diaspora, most of the respondents indicated that they were born in Cameroon (91%), and had only immigrated later on. The earliest respondent indicated having left Cameroon in the year 1989, while the most recent had immigrated in 2015. A closer examination of the data also showed that close to half of the respondents (47.3%) had emigrated from Cameroon between the years 2000 and 2008.

Most of the cohorts of respondents were mainly based in Europe (78%), with countries such as France, Germany, Belgium, the UK, and Switzerland dominating the sample, while the USA and Canada attracted 15% of the respondents. Few of the respondents indicated living in other parts of Africa (7%). The findings are consistent with those of Fleischer (2007), who traced the cross-border immigration patterns of Cameroonians, and found that most of them largely travelled to Europe. In addition, France, the UK and Germany, from an historical perspective, have had an influence on Cameroon, as the country was under their rule during colonial times. Perhaps such a colonial presence might have played a significant role in terms of attracting such diasporic Cameroonians to their country. The link between the countries can also be traced in terms of them being Cameroon's main tourism international market, as Tichaawa (2017) observes that the countries are important contributors to Cameroon's business tourists.

Interestingly, most of the respondents indicated that they had previously visited Cameroon at least once (39%), or over two times (37%). Consequently, 24% of the respondents were first-time visitors. The findings, in terms of the frequency of visit of the respondents in the study, give credence to those of Nurse (2011), who found that diaspora tourists often retain an interest in their country of origin, and that they often return for a number of reasons, which, in the context of the current study, are examined later.

Reasons for immigrating

According to Fleischer (2007), family and obligations are two primary reasons why Cameroonians are pressurised to immigrate. While the above might be so, the evidence generated by the data in the current study indicates that the search for better economic opportunities (74%) ('bush falling' – see Tichaawa, 2017) was the main driver of migration, followed by employment (15%), and then by further studies (11%). The respondents felt that,



at the time of immigration, the opportunities provided to them by the Cameroonian economy were such that their survival was likely to be enhanced elsewhere. Traditionally, Western economies, and specifically those in Europe and America, have been considered as 'economic havens' for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, who escape from economic hardships and, to some extent, wars and political instability. Within the current research, the findings vindicate those of Ojong and Otu (2015), who posit that, in Cameroon, the upsurge of such immigration tendencies is due to the absence of such economic activities for citizens to support the increasing socio-economic demands of Cameroonian families and households.

Purpose of visiting Cameroon

The main motivations that are linked to travelling back 'home' were mainly linked to three main pull factors: visiting friends and relatives (VFR), business, and attending some family-related event, or festival. Not surprisingly, VFR was mentioned by a significant cohort of respondents (66%) as being the main reason for their return. This finding supports those of several researchers (Nurse, 2011; Hughes & Allen, 2010; Huang et al., 2013) who suggest that, because diaspora tourists might have family and friends living at their original place of birth, they often tend to make visits to reaffirm and strengthen their roots and identities there (Marschall, 2015; Bachorz & Horolets, 2017). Nurse (2011) suggests that such ties, in one way or another, are strong reasons to initiate travel. The author further suggests that the category of diaspora tourists concerned is a very important segment for tourism, as they are known to be high spenders, following on leisure and business tourists. The findings further reinforce those that have been previously found out by scholars (see, for example, Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Etemaddar et al., 2016; Graf, 2016).

With regards to the aforementioned, the current study found the Cameroonian VFR tourists to be the same, as their average spending (XAF¹ 1, 978,000) was found to be significantly higher than was the average spending of those whose main purpose was for business (CFA 819,000). The main denominator was that such a category of the Cameroonian diaspora tourists tended to stay longer (22 days) than did business and leisure tourists. Furthermore, there is evidence of those who travelled for the sole purpose of business (28%). Within the category were those who conducted formal businesses in the domain of retail. The result supports those of Tichaawa (2017), who found the category to be an emerging category of the Cameroonian business tourist. Investments are mainly made in terms of opening up businesses, as well as in terms of purchasing land for development. Vong et al. (2017) exemplify the extent of diasporic visits and their significant contributions to economies. They highlight that such tourists tend to bring in significant investments that boost the local economy.

Furthermore, the cohorts tend to stay at their destination for an average of 18 days. In addition, few of the respondents (6%) travelled for the purpose of attending a family meeting, funeral, or cultural event. Such respondents stayed for a shorter period, averaging 10 days. Overall, the VFR tourists mostly stayed 'at home', compared to the business tourists, who made use of various forms of commercial accommodation.

Activities in which the respondents engaged

Besides the main purpose of travel, the respondents indicated involving themselves in a number of leisure activities on which they spent money, including shopping (93%), sightseeing (70%), food and entertainment (98.8%), and others (54%) (night-clubbing and visiting the local countryside). As such, the spending that is done by such respondents is considered important in terms of creating jobs and promoting much-needed local economic development in Cameroon. Evidently, Cameroonian diasporic tourists display the same travel tendencies as do traditional tourists in terms of behaviours.



Conclusion

The aim of the current research was to determine the nature and characteristics of diaspora tourism in Cameroon. The study provides evidence of the existence of what could be an important segment of the generally sluggish Cameroonian tourism economy. As in the case with previous studies on diaspora tourism, returning to 'roots' based on links with friends and family is a main driver of diaspora tourism in Cameroon, but conducting business and attending family-related events and festival were also important considerations. The fact that the Cameroonian diaspora tourist tends to stay for a longer amount of time than usual, and to spend more, suggests their importance in the country's development going forward. The high number of those arriving for the purpose of VFR is reassuring, as their potential to return in the future is high. Consequently, diaspora tourism represents a significant tourism development opportunity for Cameroon. Such international tourists might not require a concerted marketing effort by the country's tourism authorities to return, but, with proper communication, they could, rather, be ambassadors, who promote the country as a business and investment destination, as well as its tourism agenda and product offerings, internationally to potential visitors. Often neglected because they might be mistakenly considered in the same category as domestic tourists, the identities revealed in the study of the Cameroonian diaspora tourists provide useful information that could be used by local destination marketers to package local tourism products in a way that appeals to the group as a whole. Besides the above, the evidence suggests the high spending power that such group of tourists possess.

The article argues that Cameroonians living in the diaspora represent a significant component of Cameroon's tourism economy that requires further harnessing for it to contribute more to local economic development (see Ollong, 2013), and for it to be used as a strategy for promoting international tourism. The Cameroonian government has recently taken initial steps in attracting the market segment to making investments through forums, in terms of which the Cameroonian diaspora and public authorities share a platform as to mutually beneficial opportunities (Anon, 2017). However, such platforms should be robustly broadened to include wider participation, with a strategy being adopted to implement and smoothen any investments. Perhaps, developing events (Sim & Leith, 2013) could attract such diaspora Cameroonians, as is the case with Ghana (see Mensah, 2015).

The article has provided a dialogue on the topic from a Cameroonian perspective, and it has recognized the need for further research into the topic to gain an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon, and to unpack related impacts. Future research is, thus, warranted in this regard. A major component of such research should be the examination of such tourists who arrive in the country by land, considering that the current study mainly collected data from those who arrived by air, with a focus only on the economic hub of the country (i.e. Douala). Cross-border tourism and regional tourism, as is the case with much of sub-Saharan Africa (see Rogerson, 2011, 2012; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; Rogerson & Letsie, 2013), is evident in Cameroon (Tichaawa, 2017), and it might include elements of diaspora visits.

The findings might be important, as they might yet provide a holistic understanding of this travel segment. Other research focus could analyse the cause and effects of Cameroonian diaspora tourists and business tourism and investments in the country, and the resultant contribution to the local economic development. To allow for a comparative study to be done with most extant literature (Kim & Stodolska, 2013; Graf, 2016), research foci examining the various generations of migrants might be of essence.

Acknowledgement

The University of Johannesburg is thanked for its funding of this project. Ms Refiloe Lekgau is also thanked for sourcing part of the secondary data.



References

- Anon. (2017). The government is wooing the Cameroonian diaspora and inviting them to invest in the country. Available from: <http://www.businessincameroon.com/public-management/0107-7235-the-government-is-wooing-the-cameroonian-diaspora-and-inviting-them-to-invest-in-the-country>
- Arnone, A. (2011). Tourism and the Eritrean Diaspora. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29(4): 441-454.
- Bachorz, A. & Horolets, A. (2017). Historical blueprints of tourists' path from Poland to the former USSR. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 15(2): 152-166.
- Bandyopadhyay, R. (2008). Nostalgia, Identity and Tourism: Bollywood in the Indian diaspora. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 6(2): 79-100.
- Corsale, A. & Vuuytsyk, O. (2016). Long distance attachments and implications for tourism development: the case of Western Ukrainian diaspora. *Tourism Planning and Development*, 13(1): 88-110.
- Etemaddar, M., Duncan, T. & Tucker, H. (2016). Experiencing 'moments of home' through diaspora tourism and travel. *Tourism Geographies*, 18(5): 503-519.
- Eyete, G. (2017). The Cameroonian Diaspora: An Assessment of its Role in Local Development. Available from: <https://gabrieleyeteblog.wordpress.com/2017/03/09/the-cameroonian-diaspora-an-assessment-of-its-role-in-local-development/>
- Fliescher, A. (2007). Family, obligations, and migration: The role of kinship in Cameroon. *Demographic Research*, 16(13): 411-440.
- Gijanto, L. A. (2011). Competing narratives; tensions between diaspora and tourism and the Atlantic past in the Gambia. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 6(3): 227-243.
- Graf, S. (2016). Diaspora Tourism and the negotiation of belonging: journey of young second-generation Eritreans to Eritrea. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Doi: 10.1080/01419870.2016.1262542.
- Huang, W., Haller, W. J. & Ramshaw, G. P. (2013). Diaspora tourism and homeland attachment: An exploratory analysis. *Tourism Analysis*, 18:285-296.
- Huang, W., Ramshaw, G. & Norman, W. C. (2016). Homecoming or tourism? Diaspora tourism experience of second generation immigrants. *Tourism Geographies*, 18(1): 59-79.
- Hughes, H. & Allen, D. (2010). Holidays in the Irish diaspora: the pull of the 'homeland'? *Current Issues in Tourism*, 13(1): 1-19.
- Iarmolenko, S. & Kerstetter, D. (2015). Potential predictors of diaspora tourism for Ukrainian immigrants in the USA. *World Leisure Journal*, 57(3): 221-234.
- Iorio, M. & Corsale, A. (2013). Diaspora and tourism: Transylvanian Saxons Visiting the Homeland. *Tourism Geographies*, 15(2): 198-232.



- Kelner, S. (2013). Historical Perspectives on Diaspora Homeland Tourism: "Israel Experience" Education in the 1950s and 1960s. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, 7(2): 99-113.
- Kim, J. & Stodolska, M. (2013). Impacts of diaspora travel on ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean American College students. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 11(3): 187-207.
- Marschall, S. (2015). 'Homesick tourism': memory, identity and (be)longing. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(9): 876-892.
- Mensah, I. (2015). The roots tourism experience of diaspora Africans: A focus on the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 10(3): 213-232.
- Mortley, N. K. (2011). Strategic opportunities from diaspora tourism: The Jamaican perspective. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 17(2): 171-185.
- Nurse, K. (2011). Diasporic tourism and investment in Suriname. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 17(2): 142-154.
- Ojong, V.B. & Otu, M. (2015). Migration (Bush-falling) as a form of insurance for Cameroonians. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 30(1): 49-67.
- Ollong, K.A. (2013). The Cameroonian diaspora: an assessment of its role in local development. *Journal of Globalization Studies*, 4(2): 96-106.
- Roberts, S. (2012). Assessing the Potential of Diaspora Tourism. *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*, 37(3 and 4): 115-131.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2011). Urban tourism and regional tourists: Shopping in Johannesburg, South Africa. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 102, 316-330.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2012). The tourism development nexus in sub-Saharan Africa: Progress and prospects. *Africa Insight*, 42(2), 28-45.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2014). Informal sector business tourism and pro-poor tourism: Africa's migrant entrepreneurs. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(16), 154-161.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2015a). Unpacking business tourism mobilities in sub-Saharan Africa. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(1), 44-56.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2015b). The uneven geography of business tourism in South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal*, 97(2), 183-202.
- Rogerson, C. M., & Letsie, T. (2013). Informal sector business tourism in the global south: Evidence from Maseru, Lesotho. *Urban Forum*, 24 (4), 485-502.
- Schrieder, G. & Knerr, B. (2000). Labor migration as a social security mechanism for smallholder households in sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Cameroon. *Oxford Development Studies*, 28 (2): 223-236.
- Sim, D. & Leith, M. (2013). Diaspora tourist and the Scottish Homecoming. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 8(4): 259-274.



Tichaawa, T. M. (2017). Business tourism in Africa: The case of Cameroon. *Tourism Review International*, 21(2), 181–192.

Vong, M., Pinto, P. & Silva, J. A. (2017). Diaspora tourism: The case of Timor- Leste. *Tourism*, 65(2): 218-233.