

Extent of Recreational Services Exploitation for Sustainable Local Development in Limbe, Cameroon

Baba A. (Corresponding author)

Assistant Lecturer of Geography, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences

University of Buea, Buea, Cameroon.

E-mail: babaadamu17@gmail.com

Toumba O.

Lecturer of Geography and Head of Department of Geography

Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, University of Buea, Buea, Cameroon.

Humphrey N. N.

Professor of Geography, Department of Geography

University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Received: December 24, 2022 Accepted: February 2, 2023 Published: March 31, 2023

doi:10.5296/ijgs.v7i1.20855 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijgs.v7i1.20855>

Abstract

The general tertiary sector consumption pattern in Limbe indicates the drive towards recreational services delivery for staggering urban development. Despite the evolution and benefits of recreational services as boosters to local socio-economic development, they do not have the attention they fully deserve resulting in severe environmental and socio-economic repercussions. This study seeks to examine the extent of recreational services exploitation for sustainable local development and the municipal responses in Limbe. A sample of 250 respondents was used to represent the entire population of the study area. In addition to interviews and field observations, secondary data from literature search was used to substantiate the arguments. Stratified random sampling technique was used to map out the appropriate recreational sites and services in Limbe. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science Standard (SPSS version 23.0) and presented in the form of tables, figures, maps and plates. Results reveal that Limbe has witnessed profound growth in recreational services in the last few decades due to its rapid population growth, private and government priorities and economic growth of the coastal area among others. Besides its major role in local socio-economic development, high congestion and taxes, poor maintenance among others have bedeviled its sustainable operations resulting in environmental degradation, congestion of waterways and insufficient economic and socio-cultural effects on the local populations.

Therefore, there is the need for proactive management, optimization and transformation of recreational sites, proper sensitization, humanitarian advocacies, local participations in decision making process, increase investment, subsidies and employment to ensure sustained environmental quality, local socioeconomic growth and cultural responsibilities in the sector. Likewise, there should be adequate compliance to environment regulations and best practices for local socio-economic, environmental, and tourism management.

Keywords: Recreational potentials, tourism services, exploitation, livelihood enhancement, Limbe

1. Introduction

Recreational service constitutes an integral part of the tourism industry which enhances individual happiness and contributes to overall local development of communities. Tourism and recreational services are among the most actively developed sectors of the world's economy contributing to social wellbeing, economic growth, social inclusion, employment, poverty reduction, resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change (Nizamie, 1998; United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017). Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (2001) considers leisure as a basic fundamental human right. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (2012) noted that people who cannot find this right are obliged to find illness sooner or later. Indeed, this sector brings huge relief, comfort, amusement and beauty to people and the environment (Waugh, 2002). Recreation does not only make use of natural sites (Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation [TDEC], 2012) but also artificial set-ups with countless societal benefits and effects (communal/solidarity, active/passive, outdoor/indoor, healthy/harmful).

Based on the terms of reference on Sustainable Tourism Development (SDGs) Goal 8, Target 8.9, Goal 12, Target 12b and Goal 14, Target 14.7, there is a growing disparity in recreational activities between developed and developing countries (UNWTO, 2017). However, due to diverse patterns of sustainable urban development, recreational activities are rapidly growing in the future in terms of job and service provisions, job creation and opportunities for standard of living, environmental preservation, quality and stability (Akame, 1999; Louca, 2006). Irrefutably, the sustained growth of this sector in the Third World Countries is indisputable due to unsustainable urbanization, limited investment and government priorities. Its current and future development could lead to more economic diversifications, non-natural resource reliance and multiplier effects on the local and global economy notwithstanding. Waugh (2002) noted a trickle-down effect of recreational services expansion in many developing countries. In Africa, this development has for a very long time been among the top earnings for most countries bringing in collective revenue of \$168 billion and creating jobs for over 24.6 million people in 2019 alone. Of late, Africa also has the most youthful segment of population of any continent in the world and recreational services are the fastest growing industry especially in Morocco, South Africa, Namibia and Kenya due to affluence, awareness and government priorities. However, these sectors are unfolding at the risk of urban growth, low investment and socio-economic and environmental changes (UNWTO, 2019).

Recreational sector, although fairly recently developed and successful, has greatly contributed to development in Cameroon. Since the 1970s with the creation of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure (MINTOUR), this sector has witnessed rapid investments and transformations. The encyclopedia of the Republic of Cameroon (1981) describes Cameroon as "*Africa Miniature*" denoting every physical and human feature found anywhere in Africa are found in Cameroon's diverse relief, tradition and culture. According to the World Bank Data (2017) Cameroon has generated over \$682 million from recreation and 65% of all tourists received in the Central

Africa Sub Region. Conversely, the sector faced diverse challenges and opportunities for sustainable local development especially in urban areas around recreational site destinations of the South West Region characterized by rich coastline geography, culture and economy. In Limbe, limited investments, environmental quality protection, spatial planning, limited data and urban poverty could influence stakeholders' efforts for sustainable tourism development. For instance, the slave trade Centre identified as a UNESCO world heritage site could face significant wear and tear due to limited investment, mismanagement and insecurity. Moreover, the failure of the stakeholders to institute norms, awareness and inclusive participation could result in poor customer satisfaction which could affect recreational activities' sustainability to citizen wellbeing. This paper therefore examines the extent of recreational service exploitation for sustainable local development in Limbe.

2. Research Methodology

Purposive sampling was used in this research to identify recreational areas in Limbe. Considering the population of the study locations, a total of 250 questionnaires were administered to male and female residents between the ages of 15 and 65. The owners and users of recreational sites were the survey's intended demographic. Consumers based on the site received 125 surveys, and another 125 consumers received 125 questionnaires (those that live in Limbe however not patronizing the services). The purpose of this was to better comprehend how respondents felt about these services and the future of this industry. Respondents who completed the open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were chosen using a stratified random sampling method. This was used to collect the primary data used for this study. A series of interviews was conducted with the service providers, Divisional Delegate for MINTOUR, MINFEE, the Government Delegate to the Limbe City Council (LCC) on their roles, difficulties and options in recreation service delivery in Limbe. The recreational service managers were the main target because there are those chiefly involved in service provision, quality control and interaction with service users. They could better understand the nature, problems and changing trends in the sector. In addition, photographs and field surveys vital for the study somehow helped in the review of the background literature, the study area and the discussion of results. Ethical considerations were obtained from MINTOUR delegation and concerns of the service providers and users were sought before the administration of questionnaires. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 23.0) and presented using tables, figures, maps and plates.

3. Results

3.1 Limbe Coastal Geographical Influence

At the center of Africa, in the South West Region of Cameroon, is Limbe, the burgeoning coastal metropolis of the Fako Division. It is situated in the Gulf of Guinea along the Atlantic Ocean coast. It is located between Longitudes 9° 25' 13" East of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitudes 4° 10' 72" North of the Equator. It spans roughly 90.5 km along the Atlantic Ocean shoreline at an average height of 150masl from the Cape Limbo in the West to Down Beach in the East. It is located on the Southern Flanks of Mount Cameroon (major watershed), approximately 4100masl. In actuality, Limbe has one of Cameroon's longest coasts. Its surface size is approximately 549 km², and its population density is 149 people per km² (LCC, 2016). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2010), Limbe has 154,486 people living there, with a 4.7% yearly growth rate. Its northern, eastern, western, and southern borders are formed by the Mount Cameroon Volcanic Cones, the Tiko Coastal Plain, and the Atlantic Ocean. The municipalities of Limbe I (POH), Limbe II (Mukundange), and Limbe III (Bimbria) were created in response to the need for efficient administrative duties for sustainable development.

A dry season (December through May) and a rainy season define Limbe's equatorial environment (between June and November). The yearly average temperature is 26.5°C, and both the annual average relative humidity and related humidity are above 82.5%. The growth and development of leisure services are significantly influenced by the wet and dry seasons. Occasional severe storms and flooding brought on by these climatic changes cause damage to recreational infrastructure and affiliated socioeconomic activities. Limbe's geography is unbalanced, with a mountainous North and a low-lying South (Figure. 1). Significantly, Limbe's neighborhoods include Ngeme, Mokondange, Isokolo, Wovia, and Bota, just to name a few. Due to variations in physical sittings, these neighborhoods have a wealth of tourism amenities.

Even though mangroves only cover 5% of the coastal creeks in Limbe, they have helped to anchor the soil, which has had an effect on the growth of sand beaches and the management of recreational activities. The coastline is generally uniform, with sandy beaches in the eastern parts and pebble beaches in the western sections, both of which provide stunning scenery for swimmers and site visitors. Similar to Etome, Limbe has a distinctive drainage system of rivers, creeks, springs, and streams, including "Limbe water," "Cold Source," and "Ndiweh Spring." These streams meander in the direction of the coast, passing through Miles I, II, and the adjacent Limbe Camp neighborhoods.

Additionally, Limbe water travels through the Zoological Center, the Botanic Garden, and flows into the sea. The rivers have aided in supplying potable water supplies for various domestic and municipal tasks that are directly or tangentially connected to leisure. The Atlantic Ocean offers a suitable setting for swimming, fishing, and the building of beach resorts along its shores, all of which have a significant positive impact on local tourist growth. Agriculture, fishing, commerce, and other economic pursuits, in particular, have helped to draw traders and businesspeople.

The main activities (crafting, farming, hunting, and fishing) that are exploited for the growth of tourism now involve about 75% of Limbe's population.

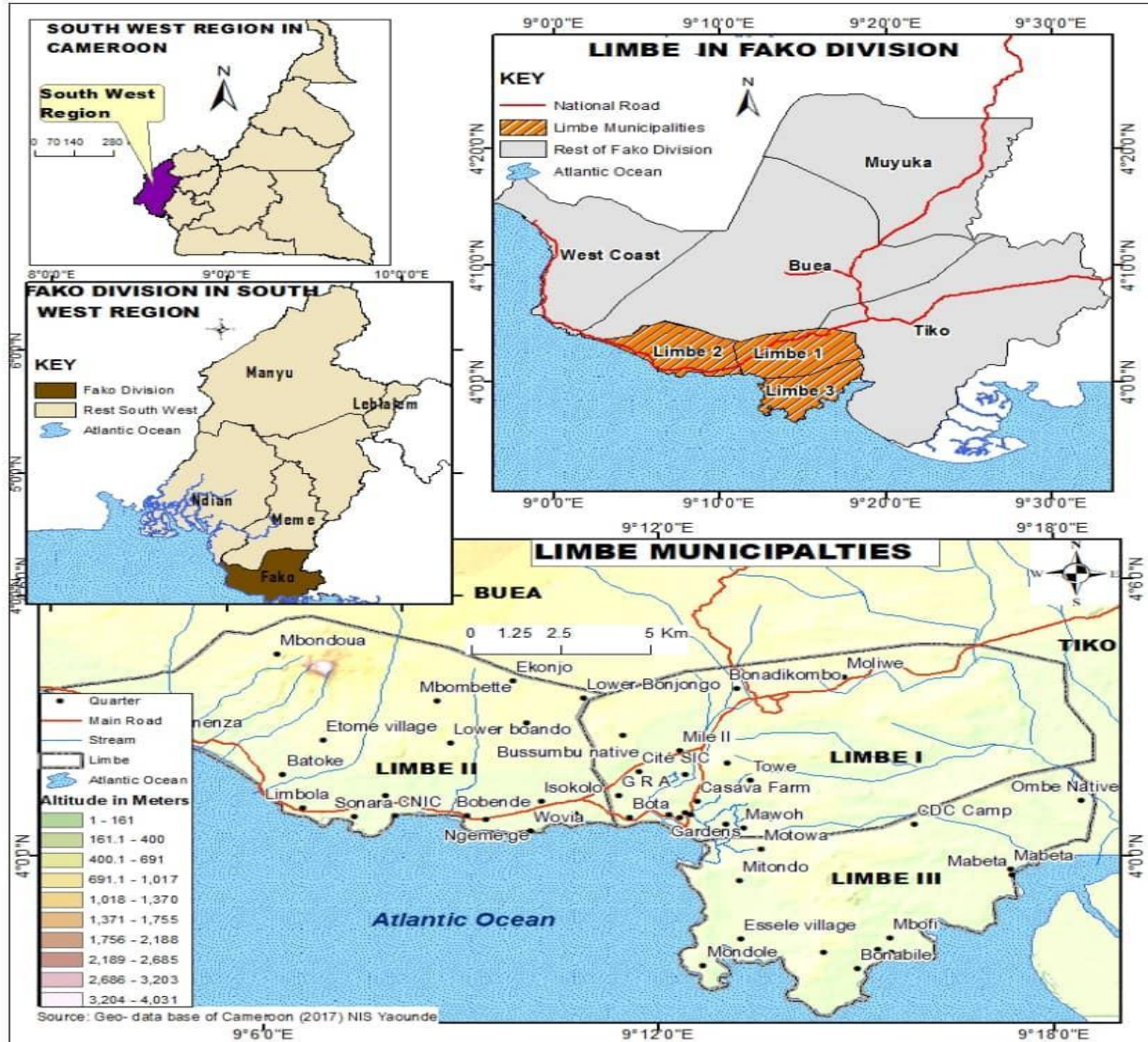


Figure 1. Coastal City of Limbe in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon

Source: Adapted from Administrative map of Cameroon (2022)

More specifically, financial institutions like banks (Atlantic, BESEC, UBA, NFC, and Eco Banks), credit unions, Western Union, and mobile communication agencies (MTN and Orange) have in recent decades made it easier for local and foreign tourists to conduct various financial transactions and transform their leisure activities. The need for recreational services among tourists, the general populace, and their families, including children and teenagers, has increased in recent years as a result of the growth of numerous agricultural, fishing, mining, forestry schools and research centers. Despite these, they have greatly increased population capacities, awareness levels, and prospects for recreational growth and the value chain in connected sectors like education, health, industry, and businesses in Limbe.

Culturally, Limbe also takes pleasure in tourism, which has earned the city the moniker "City of Friendship." Importantly, the city's natural, historical, man-made, and cultural sites are making a significant contribution to the influx of tourists and the generation of income for the local people. Regarding the growth of the infrastructure, Limbe has a large number of hotels as well as associated infrastructure like streets, roads, water, and electricity supplies that make up a portion of the recreational services. The Limbe FIESTAC cultural festival, which the LCC

has been hosting annually since 2014, is a living example of the stakeholders' initiatives for sustainable tourism and local development. It features a variety of events such as a lunch caravan, fashion parades, and the selection of Miss. Fako, FIESTAC exhibitions, a canoe race, traditional dances, food, and arts and crafts displays, all of which serve to highlight Cameroon's rich cultural diversity. The Central African Subregion and Cameroon's largest carnival, in fact.

The handicraft village, which is located in the Mile 4 neighborhood, also offers classes, different cultural events, cane chairs, brass work, wood carvings, and brass work to people of all ages and genders. Significantly, Limbe's cosmopolitan character has made it a melting pot of Cameroon's rich cultural variety, with residents hailing from all parts of the nation and French and English being spoken side by side on the city's streets. The arts and crafts neighborhood in Mile 4 Handicraft Village is shown in Plate 1A and B.

Notably, Limbe is home to the illustrious Football Club Opopo and the Njalla Quan Sport Academy, two of Cameroon's most well-liked football schools. With a 30,000 FIFA Standard International Stadium, it is understandable why it served as the host city for the male CHAN 2020 and AFCON 2021. It also serves as the venue for friendlies and qualifying games for the Indomitable Lions, the national football squad of Cameroon. These various programs and activities have improved visitors' ability to fend for themselves, mental health, socialization, local involvement, inclusion, and general wellbeing.



Plate 1A and B: Arts and craft displayed at the Handicaps Village at Mile 4 Neighbourhood in Limbe

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

3.2 Socio-economic determinants of recreational services in Limbe

A large majority (64.8%) of service users had visited a recreational site during the dry season, according to the socioeconomic determinants of recreational services in Limbe, as a result of an increase in leisure time, an early retirement age, and affordable lodging (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondent views on the seasonality of recreational uses

Seasonality	Respondent	Percent %
Dry season	81	64.8
Rainy season	44	35.2
Total	125	100

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Table 1 shows that the festive celebrations of the year (Christmas and New Year), the Mount

Cameroon Race of Hope, and the FESTAC festivals, an annual event organized by the LCC, are what characterize the dry season months of October to December, including January and February, high visits by recreational users. Tourists and recreational users should not worry, however, despite the generally warm weather, as the breathtaking coastline, which extends for several kilometers, offers tourists breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean, treating them to an endless sea breeze. Due to the lowering of the sea level, these weather circumstances are also favorable for swimming, walking, dancing, training, playing, and exercising.

Results show that 35% of respondents said they visited recreational sites during the rainy season, particularly in July, August, and early September because of incidents of extremely heavy rain and flooding. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the role that weather played in the spread of the pandemic in late 2019 and early 2020, recreational users were not allowed to travel to certain areas. The severe cold, rising water levels, and floods that accompany the wet seasons impact swimming activities and exacerbate the spread of diseases among recreational users. Depending on the daily period with the most visitors, the afternoon was the busiest (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondent views on periods of the day for recreational users

Periods of the day	Respondents	Percent %
Morning	33	26.4
Afternoon	45	36
Evening	27	21.6
Late Evening/Night	20	16
Total	125	100

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Because of working or schooling obligations of residents and youths, a sizable majority (44%) of users favored afternoon recreational use (Table 2). About 32% of users visit in the evening when they must leave for work or school, 20% visit in the late hours of the night for the same reasons, and 4% visit in the morning or during other ideal times, particularly on holidays. Weekends are frequently packed with a variety of leisure events for service users.

Accessibility and users' availability vary significantly depending on the types of occupations and the socio-economic and livelihoods standing of the household. This was more noticeable in Limbe among the jobless and low-income earners than it was among the wealthy (Table 3).

Table 3. Perceived income levels of recreational site users

Monthly Income Level/FCFA	Respondents	Percent %
<50.000	55	44
51.000-100.000	30	24
100.001-150.000	25	20
150.001-200.000	15	12
Total	125	100

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

According to Table 3, a sizable number of respondents (55%) make less than 50,000 FCFA, with 30% making between 51,000 and 100,000 FCFA, 25% making between 100,001 and 150,000 FCFA, and the least 15% making between 150,001 and 200,000 FCFA. These indicate a negative correlation between Limbe residents' income levels and use of leisure facilities. As a result of the high expense of living for the local population, the results show that 80% of hotels in Limbe charge a minimum of 20,000 FCFA per night. Between 800 and 1,000 people arrived at Hotel Seme Beach alone, and 200 to 250 people stayed the night. Regardless of the country of origin of the leisure travelers, domestic travelers outnumbered foreign travelers,

with between 500 and 600 of the latter's entries coming from Europe and the USA.

3.3 Recreational Potentials, Services and Uses

Limbe, a bustling tourist destination in Cameroon, offers a variety of recreational opportunities and attractions that are unevenly dispersed throughout its neighborhoods. (Figure. 2). These sites are designed for people of all ages, races, classes, and skill levels with the common objectives of fostering diversity, inclusivity, and overall local growth in Limbe. The study's findings show that 19.2% of respondents were mostly drawn to beaches, while 23.2% of service users said they were most significantly attracted to the Botanic Garden because of its proximity, accessibility, attractiveness, and beautiful environment. It also has animals like gorillas, crocodiles, and snakes. (Semme, Mussango and Down Beaches just to name but these). This was brought on by the nearby location and the soothing air. Hotels/snacks (16%), cabarets (13.6%), gyms (12%), and bars/restaurants (9.6%) were connected to these leisure areas. The Slave Trade Centre received the least amount of traffic (6.6%). This was brought on by the service users' inability to access it, their lack of literacy, their lack of knowledge of its existence and benefits, as well as the distance and high expense of transportation.

Despite its historical and academic reputations, respondents saw the exploitation and use of recreational sites by some locals and stakeholders as being reminiscent of colonial cruelty. In the Region and specifically in Cameroon, Limbe is renowned for setting the standard for environmental sustainability and offering its residents and guests a wide variety of recreational amenities.

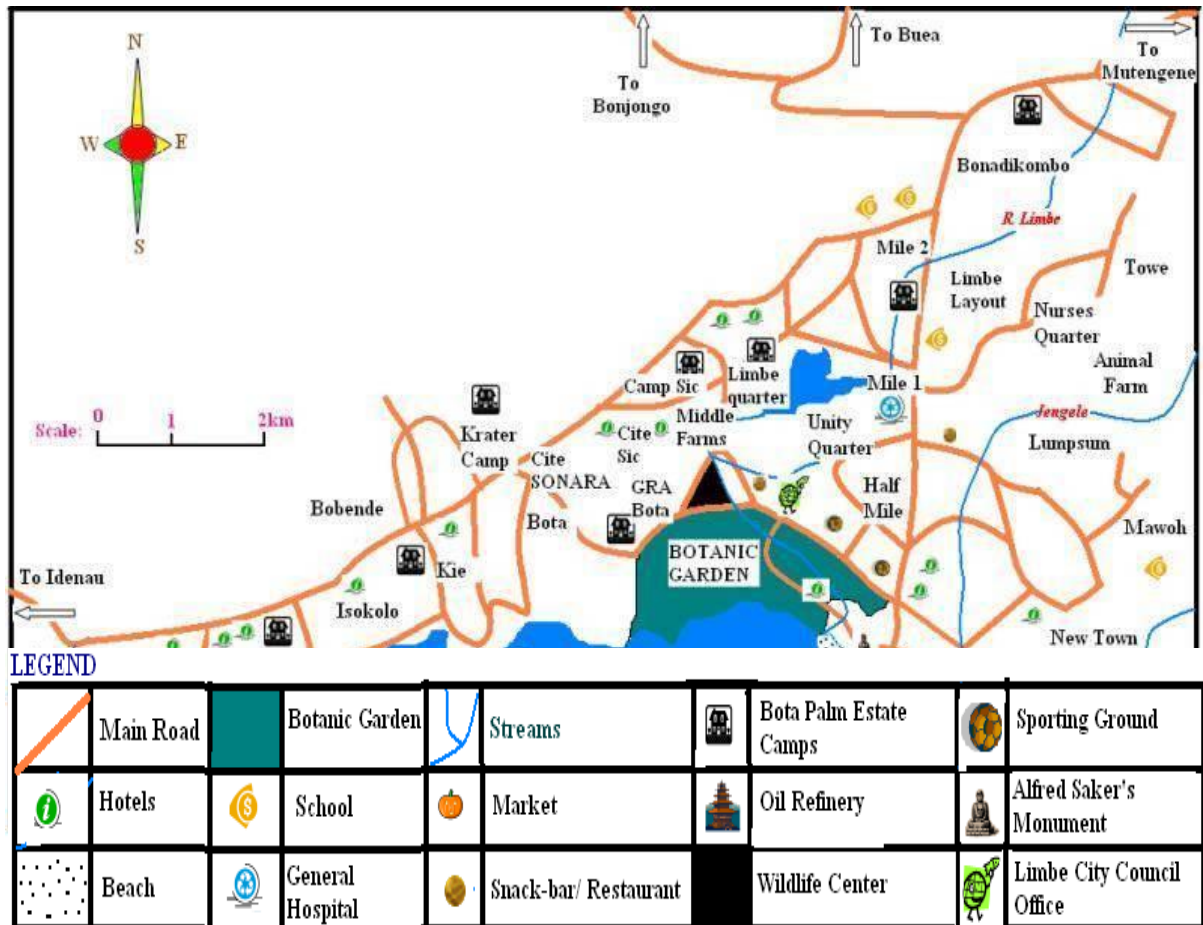


Figure 2. Spatial distribution of recreational sites and related infrastructure in Limbe
Source: Adapted from the Map of Limbe, L.U.C (1998)

3.3.1 Beaches

As seen in Figure 2, the extensive Atlantic Seaboard contains numerous virgin sand beaches that are used to create Limbe's recreational areas. It should be mentioned that although the majority of these beaches have been utilized and developed, they have not done so to their fullest extent. The coastline of Debunscha to Isongo Camps can be seen from the Mobange shoreline in its entirety. It has an area of tropical sand and advantageous sand mining locations. It is strategically located away from a town and prioritizes the security of visitors. The main point of departure for Nigeria, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea is the Bibunde shoreline, which is situated along the Atlantic Ocean coast. Above the Dibunscha beach, there is an old metal German bridge connecting the main town to other tourism destinations. Additionally, the major beaches created for relaxation are Same, Mile 6, and Down beaches, all of which are situated along the Atlantic Sea-Board in the New Town neighborhood. Despite its black sandy soil, the Down beach is the most popular destination for recreational users. It is well known for its mouthwatering roasted marine mammals like fish, crayfish, and crabs, which are accompanied by seasoned pepper, roasted plantain, and "miyondo" or cooked cassava. There are numerous recreational amenities and they are all covered in the dark tropical sand (bars, hotels and restaurants). The entrance to Limbe's Same and Mile 6 beaches are shown in Plates 2A and 2B, respectively.

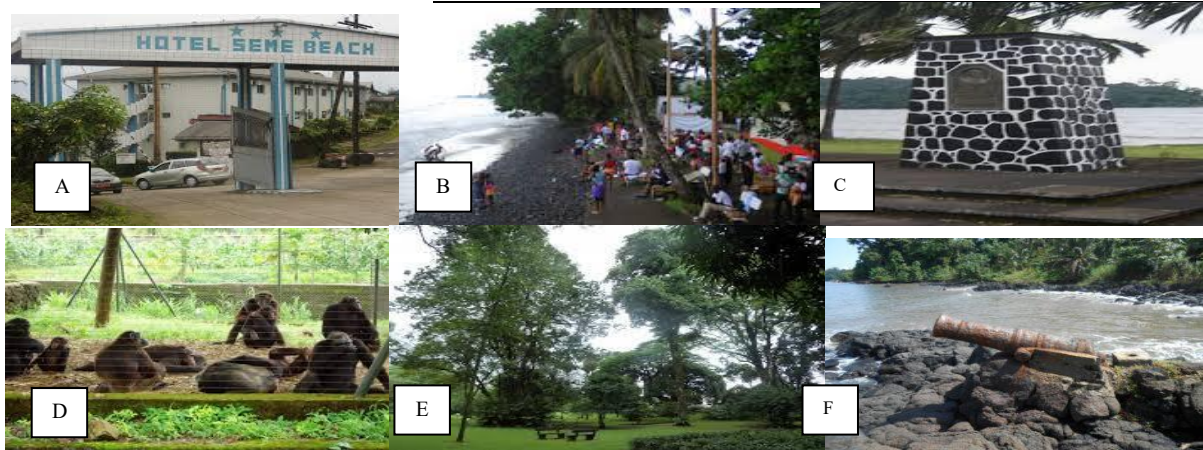


Plate 2: (A) Entrance to Seme Beach, (B) Mile 6 Beach, (C) Beautiful Scenery at the Botanic Garden, (D) Alfred Saker Monument, (E) Group of Chimpanzees at the Wild Life Centre and (F) Slave Port of Bimbia

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

3.3.2 Alfred Saker Monument

The construction of Victoria, now known as Limbe, and the arrival of the English Baptist missionary Reverend Alfred Saker (1814–1880) are commemorated by this memorial, which was built in 1958. The memorial is at Down Beach. (Plate2C). During the 1800s, the Reverend Alfred Saker battled against slavery and spread Christianity in the area. For consumers of recreational services and for Christians in general, this holds a lot of sentimental value. The monument is thus marked out as one of Limbe's recreational areas with historical significance.

3.3.3 Limbe WildLife (Zoo) Centre

The Botoland neighborhood of the Limbe II Municipality is where the Limbe Wildlife Centre is situated. By order of the Canadian Wildlife Management Officer, it was created in 1963. Currently, the region draws tourists, academics, and families with connections to Cameroon and beyond. More than 15 kinds of great apes, including gorillas, chimpanzees (Plate 2 D), baboons, snakes, crocodiles, drills, mandrils, mona monkeys, and baboon parrots, are currently found there. It has three Mangabey species and seven guenon types. These various species give Limbe residents the chance to connect, be inclusive, learn, and advance the country's socioeconomic standing.

3.3.4 Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG)

The Limbe Wildlife Center is located across the Limbe road from the Exotic Botanic and Zoological Garden (LBG), which is located in Limbe (Zoo). Additionally, it is situated between the foreboding Amba Bay Atlantic Coastline and the Mount Cameroon Forest. It is specifically a region of exceptional grandeur located within the Limbe I Municipality. Douala is just 70 km away, and Buea is 40 km away. In 1892, Dr. Paul Preuss invented it (a German Horticulturist). The former gardens have grown on a plot of ground that is roughly 48 hectares large. Its shape is roughly rectangular, with two hills ascending to a height of about 90masl at each end.

The vegetation on the hills is largely unaltered from its original condition. With its majestic trees and ideal havens for relaxation under the natural canopies as well as escape from the nearby busy city, gardens are perfect settings. The Limbe River flows through the garden near the Eastern edge, offering a peaceful web of attractions in its refreshing green spaces garden like jungle village, the British Commonwealth, Memorial War Graves, and splendid trees. The

water lily pond, amazing birds, skilled education facility, medical plants collection, green house, gift shop, and the hot spot restaurant for leisure after guided tours are some of the other areas of interest. It has been listed as one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites and is considered the second-best park in Africa. Its jungle hamlet is a major draw, as well as an open-air amphitheater with a seating capacity of 4,000, and it is encircled by a thick tertiary forest with a wide range of indigenous and exotic plants. It has a variety of characteristics, including streams, greenery, flowerbeds, and lawns with a wide range of tree trunk sizes (Plate2 E). The garden improves learning and research capabilities on soil erosion, conservation, and biodiversity to support theories with practice for visitors and service users. In fact, Limbe has more to offer in terms of tourist attractions than very few other towns in Cameroon.

3.3.5 Slave Trade Centre and German Light House

For those who enjoy history, Limbe also offers some interesting historic locations to its tourists. The Bimbia Slave Village, where slaves were gathered and transported overseas in the 19th Century, is located in the city. The Limbe III Municipality's Bimbia neighborhood is home to the Slave Trade Center. Despite being small, it sticks out as a famous vacation spot for historical tourists from Cameroon and elsewhere. Due to its importance, the center offers services for devotional recreation that are distinct. It houses remnants of the first church ever constructed on Cameroonian land, which was constructed there in the 1850s by the Alfred Saker Baptist Missionary Society. The region is home to stunning buildings, historical relics, and art. A reminder of the slave traffic in Cameroon is right at the port entrance of Bimbia (Plate2 F). The German lighthouse, located at Debuncha along the West Coast of Limbe, is another intriguing recreational location. The Germans constructed the 148-foot-tall lighthouse in 1903 as a watchtower to direct any incoming ships. Recreational users can experience a breathtaking mountain and sea view from the tower's 210-stair ascent to the summit.

3.3.6 Hotels, snacks, restaurants and gymnasiums services in Limbe

Limbe features a number of opulent hotels, family-friendly restaurants, and amusement parks. The growth of Limbe's recreational sites has resulted in the emergence of numerous hotels, motels, eateries, bars, guest houses, and inns. From within and outside of Limbe, tourists have been served by these facilities. They have long been used as a place to unwind after a day of exploring different recreational destinations. The only four-star and two government-hosted hotels in Limbe are the Atlantic Beach Hotel and the Government Suit Hotels. Especially during the under-21 Junior and Senior African Cup of Nations (CHAN, 2020 and CAN, 2021), both have shown a crucial part in the local socioeconomic development.

On the other hand, new boutique hotels have demonstrated distinctions in terms of service quality and ecology. For instance, the Fini Hotel in the Bobende and Down Beach areas of Limbe has provided excellent feelings for over 20 years. The Fini hotel in Bobende is a safe hotel that is a one-hour drive from the Douala International Airport, in the heart of the lovely Bobende neighborhood. It is a 3-minute journey to the Limbe Omnisport Stadium and provides a stunning view of Mount Cameroon (4100masl). The hotel is a three-star establishment with 58 standing deluxe rooms, apartments and suites, bungalows for solitude, a lovely relaxation area, free WiFi, an eatery called "The Panoramic," a private beach, and the well-known nightclub. The crater lake of the Debuncha, Bomsns, and Ekombe Lava Flows on the slopes of Mount Cameroon are also local attractions for recreational users. Here, a room can be had for as little as 20,000FCFA (about \$20 or \$40). The variety of hotel facilities in Limbe is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Nature of hotel infrastructure in Limbe

Categories	Proportion	Percent %
Unauthorized	43	59
1 Star	17	24
2 Star	7	9
3 Star	4	5
4 Star	2	3
Total	73	100
Rooms Capacities	Proportion	Percent %
<20	42	62
21-40	17	25
41-60	4	6
60 >	5	7
Total	68	100
Air Condition	Proportion	Percent %
<20	46	62
21-40	21	29
41-60	3	4
61 >	4	5
Total	74	100
Family Apartments	Proportion	Percent %
<10	8	80
11 >	2	20
Total	10	100
Standard suits	Proportion	Percent %
<10	11	85
11 >	2	15
Total	13	100
VIP Suits	Proportion	Percent %
<10	18	80
11 >	2	20
Total	18	100
Bed Capacities	Proportion	Percent %
<20	46	63
21-40	19	26
41-60	5	7
60 >	3	4
Total	73	100

Source: MINTOUR Delegation and Fieldwork (2022)

Similarly, Fini Down beach, the second location of Fini hotel Group in Limbe, is only two minutes from famous Down Beach and only an hour's journey from Douala, the nation's commercial hub. Here, guests can satisfy their taste senses with grilled fresh fish. On its secure property, there are 58 2-star standard rooms, a bar, a client shuttle, a meeting room with space for 60 people, an Olympic Game Casino, and a training facility. The Botanic Garden, the Zoo, the Limbe Fishing Beach - Down Beach, and the Slave Port of Bimbia are sights that are close by. One of the well-known hotels in Limbe is Hotel Seme Beach, which features a 3 Star rating, 308 rooms, 85 standard air-conditioned rooms, 14 family apartments, 17 high-standing suits, and 2 VIP suits, with rates varying from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per night. The LK hotel is located at 173masl, at a historic spot of sunset that encompasses the Atlantic Ocean and Malabo Island in Equatorial Guinea. The Hotel Seme Beach is a three-star establishment in Limbe with 308 rooms, 85 standard air-conditioned rooms, 14 family apartments, 17 high-standing suites, two VIP suites, and other amenities like saloons, nightclubs, three restaurants, six shops, and three conference rooms.

The growth of infrastructural investments (roads, electricity, water lines, and hospitals) as well as the integrated stakeholders' efforts to host the women CAN 2016, CHAN 2019, and men CAN 2021 are some of the causes for the variety of characteristics of hotels in Limbe. The recent changes in people's lifestyles and their knowledge of recreational services are additional indicators for the sprawling hotels in Limbe. Additionally, the expansion of the Oil Refinery Company (SONARA), the Limbe Deep Sea Port, and industrial growth led to the development of hotels, which resulted in numerous changes to the industry over the past few decades (Figure 3). Therefore, Limbe is suitable for the development of tourism infrastructure, including the Omnisport stadium, which draws visitors from outside Limbe in pursuit of better leisure opportunities. Table 4 presents the cumulative nature and characteristics of hotels in Limbe over the past few decades.

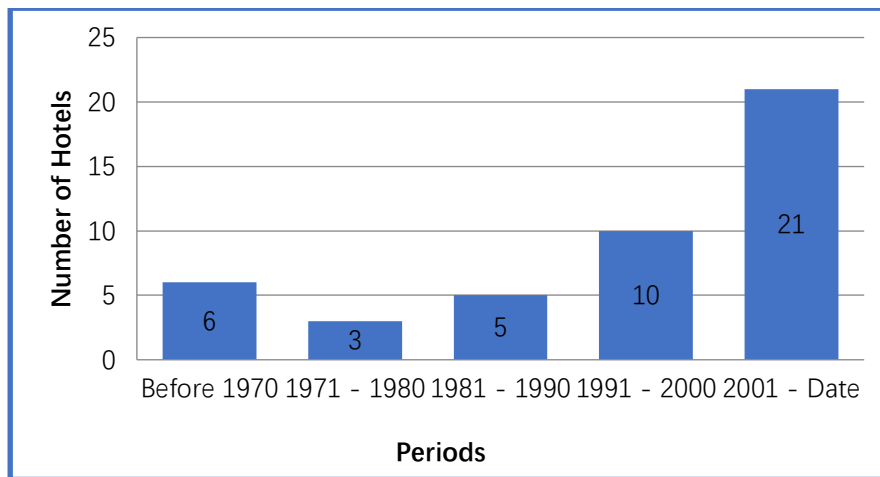


Figure 3. Evolution of hotels and related infrastructure in Limbe between 1970 and 2021

Source: Regional Delegation for Tourism, South West Region (2022)

According to data from the Regional Delegation MINTOUR (2022), Limbe has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of hotels and associated services over the past few decades (Figure 3). There were only 5 hotels (Bay Hotel, Atlantic Beach Hotel, Centenary Hotel, Konimbo National) in existence prior to the 1970s. However, as a result of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which had an impact on the tourism and leisure industries, the number of hotels greatly decreased between 1971 and 1980, falling to only about 3 (Youth Inn Garden, Animal Farms, and Park Hotel Miramare). Significantly, between 1981 and 1990, there were 5 hotels (Holiday Inn, Lumpson, Victoria Guest House, Spot Depute, and AirPort Annex Bota), 10 hotels (Fini Inn Bobende, Seme Beach, Hotel Bakingili, Dallas Inn Bota, Metropolitan Lodge, King Williams Square, Coastal Beach, and Costa Marina), and from 2000 to 2022, there were more than twice as many hotels (Rocky Motel, Golden City, Nadiva Hotel, Trinity, Savoy Palm, Alcona Inn, Palamainji, Titanic, Geena, Autograph, Mojoko and Tsaben Beach). The rapid growth of hotels and associated services in Limbe is clear evidence that the number of hotels has grown over time, up to the present state of insecurity, which has caused conflicting emotions among tourists because of the high rate of kidnapping, killings, and harassment. Visits by tourists to Limbe have also been impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic, the high rate of inflation, and climate change.

3.4 Environmental and Socio-Economic Implications of Recreational Services Exploitation

Recreational areas are less of a "free rider resource" in Limbe. Few funds are allocated for the administration of sustainable tourism or the optimal exploitation of many recreational services. Therefore, their standards may be justified by the limited infrastructure, availability,

accessibility, development and management. Contextually, environmental degradation brought on by traffic and poor management continues to be a major problem for recreational development, which, according to 53% of the respondents, allows sustainable local development. Significantly, 27% of respondents believed that the development of leisure sites in Limbe would negatively affect the local economy, while only 15% of respondents believed that such development would negatively affect the local population's sociocultural makeup (Table 5).

Table 5: Perceived environmental and socioeconomic effects of the misuse of leisure services

Implications	Respondents	Percent %
Environmental degradation	72	58
Economic effects on local population	34	27
Socio-cultural effects	19	15
Total	125	100

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

3.4.1 Environmental Degradation due to Congestion and Mismanagement

According to more than 58% of the respondents, environmental problems are the most important ones related to the use of recreational sites in Limbe. Due to improved management, awareness, and safety measures for swimmers, including at least three permanent lifeguards, First Aid treatment, emergency signs, rescue boats, and whistles for risk, accident, and deaths reductions, recreational locations like Hotel Seme Beach have established good environmental quality standards. Limbe was arguably the cleanest city in Cameroon in 2010 due to the joint efforts of the state ministry of urban development and housing and the LCC. The mayor of Marrakesh, Morocco, stated that he had "yet to visit any African city as clean as Limbe" during his visit, which reaffirmed the environmental quality standards for Limbe.

The municipal and city authorities, however, continued to suffer from high levels of pollution and degradation at the Mile 6 and Down Beach beaches in the absence of effective management and collaboration from the local population. Despite the efforts of Hygiene and Sanitation in Cameroon Company (HYSACAM), a company tasked with waste collection and disposal in Limbe, nonbiodegradable materials are frequently visible with the unaided eye. When swimmers come into contact with waters that have been heavily contaminated by microorganisms, bacteria, or parasites brought in by locals, agro-industrialists, or municipal activities, serious repercussions result in health risks. Municipal waste was identified as the main contributor to Limbe's unsustainable recreational location situation (Table 6).

Table 6. Perceived sources of pollutants into the Limbe Estuary

Main source	Pollutant	Respondents	Percent %
Municipal	Landfills, domestic waste and sewage and urban runoffs	61	49
Industrial	Large or recalcitrant waste chemical	33	26
Agro-industrial	Pesticides, biocides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, phosphates, nitrates and ammonium	20	16
Others	Silt, oil spills/leakages and oil from car wash and garages	11	9
Total		125	100

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Through a variety of transport methods, such as leaching, river and stream transportation as sediments eroded and dumped as domestic, shipboard, and industrial refuse, these persistent

pollutants immediately cause a high incidence of pollution on recreational beaches. Despite state attempts through Environmental Law No. 96/12 of the 5th of August 1996, these have persisted for decades. Headache, fever, cholera, gastroenteritis, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis A, sense infections, diarrhea, vomiting, conjunctivitis, and encephalitis are among the illnesses that beachgoers may contract. Due to improper waste management, urbanization, and plastic pollution in Limbe, floods and coastal erosion on the beaches have grown, changing the natural attractions (beauty) of the landscapes and scenes. This is a problem, particularly in September and October, when the river Limbe, which runs through the Limbe Wildlife Center, floods severely. A few hundred meters downstream, the river empties into the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Chimps, mangabeys, guenons, and African grey parrots' welfare and safety are at risk due to the protective wall that was constructed more than ten years ago to keep the island of the wildlife center from flooding and provide an animal enclosure (Plate 2). As a consequence of its deteriorating drainage system, Limbe now has more environmental problems, which has a negative impact on its recreational and social infrastructure.



Plate 2: Evidence of protective wall collapse at the Zoological Center due to mismanagement

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

3.4.2 Economic Effects on the Local Communities

Effectively run recreation centers have increased the attractiveness of the neighborhoods around them to accommodate the large inflow of recreational users despite the high land prices and competitions by offering Limbe a variety of socio-economic, cultural, and sporting activities. According to more than 27% of the selected respondents, this has been a significant problem with Limbe's recreational facilities. Additionally, the findings showed that in Limbe, property values have risen 10–20% in areas where homes are less than 2 km from recreational areas. In the Ngeme neighborhood, where landowners charge high taxes for land, guest houses, rooms, and associated social services for recreational users, this was evident with the building of the Limbe Stadium. Conversely, long distances, insecurity, and expensive transportation costs make areas with poor spatial planning for recreational services less desirable.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development named Limbe the cleanest metropolis in Cameroon (MINDHU). The Limbe City Council (LCC) has worked hard to develop and optimize recreational areas, particularly in and around the Mile 4 and Ngeme neighborhoods. Unfortunately, traditional privileges allowed some organizations, such as SONARA and the CDC, to own a disproportionately large share of productive land while a sizable fraction of the population has no ownership, leading to conflict between land uses. Therefore, due to distorted physical patterns, fragmented legal systems, cultural weakness, and kindred loyalties, rehabilitation of already inhabited recreational locations through extensive resettlement and land reforms is time-consuming and adversely affects Limbe's recreational growth.

Through employment, Limbe's recreational services have helped raise the standard of living for employees and their families. Like no other hotel in Limbe, Hotel Seme Beach employs

over 150 lifeguards, cleaners, chefs, hotel and bar attendants, guards, drivers, and carpenters. Contrarily, the majority of employees are not from Limbe, and those few Anglophones who are hired complain that the language barrier is a problem. They work primarily in unskilled occupations and receive pitiful wages of less than 40,000FCFA (\$78.8), making it impossible for them to maintain their well-being or living standards of their families.

Additionally, hotels impose taxes on guests before they use recreational areas and pay the Divisional Service of Taxation of MINFEE approximately 7 million FCFA per month (MINTOUL Report, 2020). This has increased the LCC's budget by providing aid in areas that the government has determined are important for regional growth and tourism development. This money comes from the monthly 55–80 million FCFA annual income that private recreational sites generate, though not all of it is reinvested in the community's economic well-being. As a result, a weak tax control system generates little money for investments and subsidies that support industry maintenance. For example, the service providers like Hotel Seme Beach charge 2,500FCFA (\$4.9) on Saturdays and feast days and 1,500FCFA (\$2.92) from Monday through Friday for admission. Unlike Down Beach and the Slave Trade Centre, which are free, the Animal Sanctuary and Botanic Garden costs about 500FCFA (\$0.98).

3.4.3 Socio-Cultural Effects on the Local Population

As disclosed by 15% of respondents, this is yet another important implication of Limbe's recreation areas. For the enjoyment of visitors, private recreation areas have created resort facilities. For instance, Hotel Seme Beach, a 3-star hotel in Limbe, serves as a flourishing center for children and families, elderly citizens, and government officials by offering useful assets and tour amenities like a lawn tennis court, beach volleyball court, basketball court, ping-pong table, and swimming pool. It also offers four buses, in order to cut costs and improve accessibility for its staff and service users. Also, a natural spring whose water is purified, bottled, consumed is sold by Semme Mineral Water to tourist and recreational users. Despite the crucial role that recreational facilities play in fostering neighborhood development in Limbe, many of these locations barely satisfy the requirements of the local populace, particularly in areas where there are none available. Additionally, because many parents forbid their children from leaving the house or from participating in organized leisure activities, organized crime in some neighborhoods threatens to overshadow the value of recreational benefits. Significantly, the establishment of entry fees at recreational locations like Seme Beach and the Limbe Stadium has prevented the underprivileged from taking advantage of these services, despite their desire to do so. Service users continue to lack the funds to pay the entrance fees. As of the 2005 prices, the vast majority of natives are living below the poverty level (\$1 in income/expenditure per day). Additionally, some people have unlawfully developed and carved out specific stretches of coast to serve as their private beaches. This has stripped the local people of their birth rights to their ancestral lands as common resources to be used for the good of the community. The initial settlers' birthright and that of their offspring, who are meant to be the guardians of culture and heritage, have been violated. Since service providers are unsustainable in their use of the properties, the government receives no yield from their actions. Beach visits are free of charge, with the exception of supplemental services like canoe rentals and the sale of handcrafted items that generate revenue and improve local livelihoods and development.

4. Discussions

The findings show that recreational sites are unevenly distributed throughout Limbe due to coastal geographical influences such as gentle relief, climate, closeness to the Atlantic Ocean, and Mount Cameroon. In fact, Limbe I and III have the most locations and services available.

These opinions are supported by Premchit and Pirate's (2010) study of cultural tourism in Bangkok, Thailand, and its neighboring province, which also shows a number of alluring resources, including areas with a natural setting and wildlife that are suitable for tourist attractions in the area. These authors identified appropriate transportation connections, comparable to what is present in Limbe with road connections to Buea, Kribi, Kumba, and Douala. 2011 research by Programme Institute of Forestry and Environmental Conservation on the effects of recreation in Africa reveals increased funding for local development, particularly in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. Here, the institute observed that foreign visitors who travel to see gorillas actually have a multiplier effect, generating income from lodging, food, drink, shopping, amusement, and logistics. Residents gain companionship, socialization, and proper care once they reach their locations thanks to hospitality (Emily 2011). However, despite the embraced societal benefits and the slogan "welcome to the town of friendship," hospitality is unrealistic in Limbe due to a lack of work ethics.

Henley Center (2005) found that the aging population, later childbearing, lower birth rates, families with fewer children, increased ethnic diversity as a result of migration, a flow of young people to cities from the countryside, rural depopulation, declining population, and population growth all have an impact on different racial groups. These demographic changes also affect the development of recreational sites in Europe. This is true in Limbe, where recreational services are gradually changing as a result of demographic changes brought on by the establishment of oil refineries, deep-sea ports, and agro-industrial plantations that draw large crowds and increase income levels.

Due to urban poverty, inequality, limited income levels, and investment, many privately owned hotels, in addition to public hotels, may function haphazardly. Contrarily, Hardly Center (2005) argues that as developed nations thrive and their citizens have higher average incomes, they are able to spend more on leisure to take advantage of high standards. They have more power to demand improved lifestyle options. Results show that Limbe has experienced wear and tear and conflicting land uses despite increasing trends toward private sector ownership of recreational sites. The continuous dumping of plastic waste and sediments carried ashore by wave action from the ocean with serious health consequences is what caused the shrinkage of beaches. As a result of the indigents' claims to have the authority to manage and control these sites, the conflict management of recreational areas in Limbe was also noticed in the results. Government administration of these sites has generally been left to private owners, resulting in unsustainable, illegal, and unethical land use development and management of some recreational sites. Contrarily, there are no admission fees for tourists to the beaches in Kribi, where they are all treated as Common Property Resources (CPRs) (Wanie, 2014).

Due to insufficient coordination, control, knowledge, involvement, and investment, Limbe's recreational sites are clearly not being utilized to their full potential. The Newcastle City Council Report (1998) in England claims that Newcastle is confronted with these issues and has come to the conclusion that they "cannot do it alone." They have looked for the right partnerships to make it easier to manage and coordinate recreational activities. To assist in the management and coordination of these services, financial assistance and subject-matter experts can be obtained. Walker and Krantz (2011) assert that participation restrictions apply to leisure pursuits. Poor management, high costs, and little knowledge in Limbe were a few of these. While Nenley Centre (2005) noted the unpleasant attitudes to be a significant mismanagement problem of recreational sites, Houston (2008) noted inadequate staffing and knowledge. As a result, Limbe's recreation managers must comprehend the variety of visitor objectives as well as the effects of visitor interaction to ensure sustainable local development and recreational management.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

This study shows some important recreation areas and facilities that are unevenly dispersed throughout Limbe neighborhoods but have been growing recently and are very beneficial to stakeholders and the local populace. A treasure and a center for leisure for the region as well as all of Cameroon, Limbe offers a diverse range of natural, socioeconomic, and cultural experiences. A journey to the city was like returning to the beaches of Miami, Mexico, Thailand, or the Philippines, only with even more distinctive and stunning scenery. But in order to guarantee sustainable local development, these recreational locations, particularly the beaches, really need urgent transformation and optimization.

In order to keep high levels of environmental integrity and quality, all stakeholders should ensure recreational sites are nourished while utilizing opportunities and future prospects to accomplish sustainable tourism and local development. Additionally, through education, sensitization programs, and humanitarian advocacy, sustainable tourism development in Limbe should establish and keep environmental carrying capacity and pollution reduction. Increased recreational investments, subsidies, and employment should result from the effective hosting of CHAN and CAN. These factors could promote local development and mitigate the effects of the economic crisis, COVID 19, and insecurity. The standard compliance of some recreational services and associated facilities should be taken into account when allocating subsidies. Annual competitions should be held by MINTOUR to promote standardization, fund leisure-related initiatives, and strengthen local communities by boosting local involvement.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to Limbe's recreational and non-recreational users from various educational, professional, and socioeconomic backgrounds who made the time to complete the questionnaire and provide the necessary data. We also want to express our appreciation to the employees of the Regional Delegation of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure in Buea, the LCC, as well as public and private hotels, restaurants, bars, guest houses, and inns who participated fully and gave pertinent information during the field working sessions.

References

- Akama, J. S. (1999). *The efficacy of tourism as a tool for economic development Kenya Washington D.C.*, Africa Development Foundation, 21-23.
- Awum, D. B., Kamanda, F., & Leopold, N. (2001). *Mainstreaming potential for sustainable development in the Limbe Urban Municipality, Yaoundé-Cameroon*, 87-89.
- Basset, H. (2007). The value of a recreational beach visit: An application to Mooloolaba beach. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 37(1), 77-98.
- Department of Sport and Recreation of Western Australia. (1998). A review of the accomplishments and plans of the NOAA Coastal Ocean Program, National Academy Press, 125.
- Emily, G. J. (2011). Tourism and recreation, 125-128. Retrieved from http://www.yoto98.noaa.gov/yoto/meeting/tour_rec_316.html
- Fombe, L. F., & Molombe, J. M. (2015). Hydro-geomorphological implications of uncontrolled settlements in Limbe, Cameroon. *International Review of Social Sciences*, 3(4), 169-183.
- Hardy Centre. (2005). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 126(3859), 1243-1248.
- Houston, J. R. (2008). The economic value of beaches—A 2008 update. *Shore and Beach*, 76(3), 22-26.

- Limbe City Council. (2016). Limbe City Council Official New Letter. 2016 Edition. Limbe South West Region of Cameroon, 12-13.
- Louca, C. (2006). Income and expenditure in tourism industry; time series from Cyprus Tour, 98-100.
- MINTOUR. (2021). Regional Delegation for South West Region. Data on the Number of Hotels from 1970-2021, 42-46.
- Nenley Centre. (2005). Land use tourism models in Spanish Coastal Areas: A Case Study of the Valencia Region. *Journal of Coastal Research, Special Issue 49*, 83-88.
- New Castle Resident Survey. (2004). *Leisure and recreation*, 3th Edition, The Ronald Press, Castle. Britain, 215-218.
- Nizamie, A. G. (1998). *Formation and development of recreational complex of Kyrgyzstan in market conditions*, Oshu; Kyrgyzstan, 10-15.
- Premchit, S., & Pirat, K. (2010). The potential development of cultural tourist attraction for international tourist in Bangkok and its surrounding province. *European Journals of Social Science*, 17(4), 22-26.
- Programme, U. (2011). *Impacts of tourism and recreation in Africa*, 29-31. Retrieved from <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/153782>
- Sud-West Guide Touristique. Information utiles. Ministere du Tourisme et Des Loisirs Yaoundé, 1-12.
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). (2012). Tennessee recreation survey services study.
- United Nation World Tourism Organization. (UWTA, 2009). *Tourism for Development*. Vol. I: Key areas for action. Retrieved from <http://unwto-org/dio/book/10.8111/9789288419722>
- Walker, M., & Krantz, D. (2011). *Global trends in tourism, Centre for ecotourism and sustainable development (CESD)*, Washington DC, 140.
- Wanie, C. M. (2014). Personalizing common property resources in Cameroon: Casting the lessons from a privately-owned Beach. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5(9), 65-66.
- Waugh, D. (2002). *Geography an Integrated Approach*, 3th Edition, Nelson Thomas, UK., 221-222.
- Wong, T. (2007). Comparing residents and tourist preference for public beach access and related amenities, ocean and coastal management (53), 245-251.
- World Bank Data. (2017). Primary world bank indicators collection of development indicators. data.worldbank.org-indicators, 18-22.
- World Tourism Organization. (WTA, 2009). What tourism managers and need to know: A practical guide to the development and use of indicators for sustainable tourism. Prepared for WTO by manning, T., Clifford, G. C., & Audit Canada: Ottawa, 121-122.

Copyright Disclaimer

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).