

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING LOCALS' PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON**

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**Abstract:** Tourism development is linked to community-based transformation and growth, impacting the residents' livelihoods. The study aimed to comprehensively understand locals' perspectives on tourism development. The study mainly focused on identifying the factors that influence these perspectives and assessing their implications for sustainable tourism planning and management, using Yaoundé in Cameroon as a case study. Employing a quantitative survey research design, the study collected data from 385 locals using non-probability convenience sampling. Key findings revealed that positive perceptions of tourism development are linked to benefits. As residents benefit economically and socially from tourism, they desire increased tourist arrivals and see tourism as having positive impacts. A gap between training and participation in conservancy was identified, suggesting a major implication of the need to incorporate local voices in tourism planning and policies for more sustainable and inclusive growth of the tourism industry. By exposing factors that influence locals' perspectives and assessing the implications for sustainable tourism management and planning, the study contributes to the literature and provides valuable insights to inform decision-making in the tourism industry.

**Key words:** Cameroon, community participation, impacts, local community, local perspectives, tourism development, sustainable tourism

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism, as a multifaceted industry, has the potential to influence economies, societies, and environments on local, national, and international scales (Pekerşen & Kaplan, 2023). The benefits of tourism are undeniable as it contributes to the economy, job creation, culture, and biodiversity preservation and promotes socialization (Ramkissoon, 2020). Moreover, technology has made travel more accessible through social media, websites, and applications (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021), with affordable services like Airbnb, budget airlines, Uber, and Google Translate enabling tourists to travel extensively. The popularity of domestic tourism has increased, with more recent literature showing a spike in studies related to domestic tourism (Adinolfi et al., 2021; Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023; Mzobe et al., 2022). Many African countries have developed local economic development strategies to promote different forms of tourism and have earmarked the tourism sector as a critical industry to enable strategic growth (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020).

Globally, policymakers are increasingly promoting tourism development strategies that prioritize the involvement of local communities (Gohori & vander Merwe, 2022). This approach aims to ensure that the needs and perspectives of people living in a specific area are considered when making decisions about economic, social, and environmental development. However, community participation still needs to be improved despite a call for stakeholder collaboration in tourism (Gohori & vander Merwe, 2022; Shereni & Saarinen, 2021). While there are some success stories of the symbiotic relationship between tourism development in local communities, Reindrawati (2023); Adebayo and Butcher (2021) have noted challenges such as lack of training, missed opportunities, power inequalities, and limited participation.

Literature evidence from recent studies alludes that tourism has many benefits, yet there is limited local involvement in the tourism sector (Harilal & Tichaawa, 2020; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020). Scholars call for strengthening interrelationships at the local operational level for sustainable tourism development (Acha Anyi, 2023; Frederick & Nguh, 2020). Other scholars focused on residents' perceptions of quality of life-related to the impacts of tourism (Nange & Ozturen, 2022) and maintain that residents' support for tourism development directly influences residents' overall quality of life. Despite some studies examining the impact of tourism development, a gap still exists in the literature. Few researchers have focused entirely on understanding local perspectives on tourism development. Yaoundé's unique position in Cameroon's socio-political structure, combined with its urban-rural dichotomy, presents an intriguing context to explore the local perspectives and their underlying influencing factors on tourism development. The underrepresentation of the locals residing in the tourism hub contributes to a significant research gap with potential implications for sustainable tourism planning and management. The study aims to close this gap. To achieve this, the study objectives are to identify the factors that influence local perspectives on tourism development and to explore the potential implications of local perspectives on sustainable tourism planning and management.

Understanding locals' perspectives on tourism development is crucial to the success of any tourism strategy. Given the increasing recognition of sustainable tourism as a vital lever for economic development, exploring these perspectives provides critical insights into how tourism policies and practices can be shaped to align with the needs and aspirations of local communities. The study contributes to the literature on locals' perspectives in the tourism context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, the development of tourism has become increasingly important. Tourism has been widely recognized to significantly impact the local economy and residents' social and economic lives (Truong et al., 2020). The study aims to understand the perspectives of locals in Yaoundé regarding tourism development, necessitating it to ground its footing in the stakeholder and social exchange theories. The stakeholder theory proposes a balanced approach that considers the interests of all stakeholders, challenging the traditional view that an organization's primary responsibility is to maximize wealth (Al-Badarnah et al., 2019). Thus, the study considers the interests of the locals. Social exchange theory suggests that residents are more likely to have a positive attitude towards tourism activities if they perceive economic gains in their community or personal benefits (Pham et al., 2019). This approach can also be applied to social interaction and intangible benefits (Wang, Y & Pfister, 2008).

Tourism development relies heavily on locals. They are important determinants contributing to tourist satisfaction at a destination (Pekerşen & Kaplan, 2023). The impact of tourism development on the local community has been the subject of extensive research (Harilal et al., 2021). As tourism develops, locals become more aware of its economic benefits (Beritelli et al., 2013). However, they also critically observe the impacts on nature and culture, particularly the changes in the local community's identity. Research has shown that the local community's attitude towards tourism impacts tourism's direction and development (Khan et al., 2021). If local communities positively perceive the impacts of tourism, they will have a positive attitude toward tourism

development and the presence of tourists. On the other hand, if they negatively perceive the impacts of tourism, they are likely to oppose any tourism development in the community (Frleta, 2022). As local community participation and support for tourism development effectively contribute to achieving tourism's long-term success, the local's perceptions toward tourism are needed more in tourism planning and policies.

### **Factors influencing local perspectives on tourism development**

Residents' support for tourism is not unconditional and can be influenced by several factors. Tourists are attracted to communities where tourism is developing (Pekersen & Kaplan, 2023), encouraging the locals to take pride in their culture. Tourism can facilitate an understanding of cultural identity and support preserving and reviving traditional arts, culture, and crafts (Tapfuma et al., 2023). The cultural heritage embodied in the traditional arts and crafts reflects the culture and traditions of the locals (Yang et al., 2018). Moreover, tourism development can lead to more recreational and entertainment facilities within the community, which can enhance the quality of life for the residents (Ramkissoon, 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).

Tourism, one of the fastest-growing industries, benefits the local communities economically, specifically job creation (Shereni & Saarinen, 2021), and economic diversity, which can result in less reliance on traditional economic sectors like agriculture (Harilal & Tichaawa, 2020) and thus acts as a poverty reduction tool for the locals. Other benefits include empowering the local communities (Adebayo & Butcher, 2021; Tichaawa & Moyo, 2019), increased investments, and business activities such as deepened marketing and linkages (Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2015). Sustainable tourism is regarded as a cleaner industry, with fewer pollution challenges than other industries such as mining and manufacturing. As a result, the destinations and communities have a relatively clean physical appeal (Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2015).

The negative impacts of tourism often go hand in hand with the positive impacts. Concerns have been raised regarding the negative impacts of tourism development on local communities (Beritelli et al., 2013). For example, as communities are in the growth stage of the tourism area development life cycle, they experience using the transport capacity to excess, which can lead to environmental damage and traffic congestion problems. Literature underscores additional problems associated with tourism growth, such as crowdedness in public areas, cultural degradation, and social ills such as prostitution, gambling, excess consumption of alcohol, and drug abuse (Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2015; Tichaawa & Moyo, 2019). Further challenges communities experience are uneven distribution of economic benefits (Ristiawan & Tiberghien, 2021) and changes in the value system of families and family relationships (Douli & Slimani, 2016). Tourism development can increase the cost of living for local residents (Hu et al., 2022).

Taking into consideration the factors that affect communities' perceptions of tourism development, researchers (Ciro & Toska, 2020; Ristiawan & Tiberghien, 2021; Shereni & Saarinen, 2021) argued that it is crucial to develop systems that attend to and balance the needs of the locals with socio-economic and environmental considerations, with the failure to do so potentially results in lack of support from the locals. Conversely, with the growth of tourism, African locals have begun to reassess its multi-dimensional impacts on their communities, resulting in a shift in their perspectives (Pekersen & Kaplan, 2023; Reindrawati, 2023).

### **Community participation in tourism**

Community participation in tourism development refers to the degree of residents' participation during the crucial tourism development stages (Hu et al., 2022). Participation could include engaging in various activities such as decision-making, policy implementation, management, daily administration of activities, and marketing (Chabwe et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; Mpotaringa & Hattingh, 2019). The success of tourism development relies on local communities' support and participation (Adebayo & Butcher, 2021). In their study, Halim et al. (2022), echoing the same sentiments, indicate that residents' support for tourism is influenced by their participation and perceived impacts. Residents' participation is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, residents better understand how the community can adjust to changes brought about by tourism. Secondly, residents are the ones who are most affected by tourism development, so their input is valuable. Lastly, residents are an integral part of the tourism product, and their knowledge and involvement can help to enhance the overall visitor experience (Gohori & vander Merwe, 2022).

According to Nange and Ozturen (2022), locals can be financially empowered through meaningful involvement and participation in community-based tourism. In their study, Mpotaringa and Hattingh (2019) made recommendations using the example of the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event, in which the authors call out for locals to grab the opportunities that arise from the event. Despite tourism development creating new employment opportunities, research indicates that conflicts within the community result in uneven participation opportunities for the locals (Ristiawan & Tiberghien, 2021). For example, the economic benefits of tourism may not always be distributed equitably among locals.

### The study context

Cameroon's local geopolitical context dates back to the country's colonial era and is influenced by its historical division between anglophone and francophone nationals (Harilal & Tichaawa, 2020). Cameroon was colonized by three imperial powers, Germany, France, and Britain, at different times and was placed under the League of Nations in 1920. After World War I, Cameroon was divided between France and Britain when France gained control of the larger Eastern part of Cameroon, which covers about four-fifths of the country (Kimbu, 2010). Meanwhile, Britain gained control of the smaller Western part of the country, which covers about one-fifth of the country. This division gave rise to the political and cultural division of Cameroon between Francophone and Anglophone regions (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2013). However, the political ruling party of Cameroon is still embedded in Francophone ethos, resulting in a skewed ongoing conflict of power (Harilal & Tichaawa, 2020). Hence, locals' perceptions of tourism-related government initiatives vary across the geopolitical landscape.

Cameroon's ethnic diversity, with an ethnic fractionalization score exceeding the sub-Saharan African average, provides a unique opportunity for tourism development (Frederick & Nguh, 2020). Often called "Africa in miniature" because of its immense natural beauty and cultural diversity, developing a strong tourism industry in Cameroon can positively impact local communities and contribute to broader sustainable development goals (Harilal & Tichaawa, 2020). Despite tourism being a minor industry compared to agriculture and manufacturing, Cameroon tourism displays rapid growth (Siyabulela, 2019). Located in the central region of Cameroon, Yaoundé is the administrative capital and the second largest city in Cameroon (World Population Review, 2022).

### METHODOLOGY

The study follows the interpretive paradigm. The researcher aimed to comprehend the world from the participants' subjective experiences, views, and opinions (Okamoto, 2021). Data were collected from locals in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The study used a quantitative survey design to collect data. Quantitative research design allows for examining the relationship between variables, which can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The questionnaire used in the study was developed based on an extensive literature review. The questionnaire was split into three sections: the profile of the respondents, their perception of tourism impact, and the locals' involvement in conservancy. The questionnaire contained mainly closed-ended questions. Dichotomous or categorical questions were used for the questions aimed at understanding the locals' perceptions.

Trained community fieldworkers were utilized to administer the questionnaires in their respective communities. Field workers explained the study's aim and objectives and assured respondents that their information was for research purposes only. Using Raosoft (2023) as the sample calculator for a population of more than one million, using a 5% margin error and with a 95% confidence level, 384 suffice as a sample size. Using a non-probability convenience sampling approach, based on the respondents' availability and willingness to participate in the study, the research compiled the views and opinions of 385 local residents. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed, 392 questionnaires were returned, which resulted in a response rate of 93%, and 385 questionnaires were validated for analysis. The valid response rate was 91.7%. The questionnaire was shared with tourism experts for their expert views to ensure validity. Before the full-scale study, the questionnaire was pilot-tested to identify design and format issues (Mpotaringa & Hattingh, 2019). Descriptive statistics were performed on the data. The study used cross-tabulations to create contingency tables for categorical variables for analysis. By conducting the analysis, the Chi-Square test for independence was used for statistical analysis to determine if there is a significant relationship between the categorical variables.

### RESULTS

The study sought to explore locals' perspectives regarding tourism development, elucidating influencing factors and exploring the potential implications these perspectives could have on sustainable tourism planning and management. To understand the characteristics of the locals, it is imperative to profile them. Table 1 below provides a profile of the respondents.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics (n=385)  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

Variables	Key findings	n	%
Age	18-30	261	67.8
	31-45	84	21.7
	46-60	40	10.5
Gender	Female	178	46.2
	Male	207	53.8
Highest level of education	Primary	30	7.9

	Secondary	196	50.9
	Tertiary	118	30.7
	Other	41	10.5
Household monthly income (total in CFA)	0 -25000	147	38.1
	25001-50000	129	33.6
	50001-100000	51	13.3
	100001-300000	41	10.6
	300001-500000	10	2.7
	More than 5000000	7	1.7
Length of residency in the village (in years)	0-10	204	52.9
	11-20	130	33.7
	21-30	45	11.8
	31-40	3	0.8
	Above 40	3	0.8

As shown in Table 1, 67.8% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 30. Most respondents were male (53.8%), while 50.9% had secondary education as the highest level of education. Most respondents, 71.7%, earn 50,000 CFA (less than \$100 US) and below. It can also be seen that most of the respondents (52.9%) have stayed in the community for ten years or below.

### Locals' perspectives and observations on tourism

Table 2 shows factors that influence locals' perspectives on tourism development, including tourist presence, desired changes in numbers, positive and negative impacts, and tourism businesses in the community.

Results show that 45.7% of the respondents have seen tourists and indicated the absence of tourism businesses in the community. More than half of the respondents (54.3%) indicated that they have not seen any tourists in the community, nor are there any tourism businesses in the area. In exploring the locals's opinions on whether tourist numbers should change, the study findings illustrate that those who believe tourist numbers should increase (81%) are in communities with tourism businesses. In comparison, only 3.8% of those in communities with tourism businesses prefer the number of tourists to remain the same. Conversely, those who think tourist numbers should decrease (35.3%) are in communities without tourism businesses. Most respondents who believe that tourism has positive impacts have tourism businesses in their community (96.4%) compared to those who believe that tourism has no positive impacts (3.6%). This confirms the relationship between positive perceptions of tourism and the presence of tourism-related businesses. Regarding perceived negative tourism impacts, the findings reveal that 45.2% of the respondents perceiving negative impacts of tourism have tourism businesses in their community compared to those perceiving no negative impacts (54.8%). This suggests a weaker association between negative perceptions of tourism and local business presence.

**Table 2.** Factors influencing locals' perspectives on tourism development (n=385)  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

Items	Tourism businesses in the community				
		No		Yes	
		n	%	n	%
The presence of tourists in the community	Yes	176	45.7	14	3.6
	No	209	54.3	371	96.4
Desired change in tourist numbers	Increase	181	47.1	312	81.0
	Decrease	136	35.3	58	15.2
	Remain the same	68	17.6	15	3.8
Perceived positive tourism impacts	No	165	42.9	14	3.6
	Yes	220	57.1	371	96.4
Perceived negative tourism impacts	No	275	71.4	211	54.8
	Yes	100	28.6	174	45.2

A chi-squared test was performed (Table 3) to determine the correlations between the presence of tourism businesses in the community versus tourists' presence, desired change in tourist numbers, and positive and negative tourism impacts. The study could not establish a significant correlation between the presence of tourism businesses in the local community and negative tourism impacts, confirming the weaker associations highlighted in Table 2.

Regarding the locals' observations and perceptions concerning tourism, findings are shown in Table 4. Table 4 distinguishes respondents who have seen tourists in their community and those who have not, indicating the community's stance on desired changes in tourist numbers. Of the community members who have seen tourists in the community, 75.5% think that tourist numbers should increase, while 16% believe that tourist numbers should decrease. Most respondents who

perceive positive tourism impacts have seen tourists (88.8%) compared to those who have not (11.2%), while those who perceive negative tourism impacts and have seen tourists are 60.6%. These findings highlight a relatively even distribution of responses among those who have seen tourists and those who have not, suggesting that negative perceptions of tourism are not strongly tied to whether tourists are seen.

**Table 3.** Analytical statistics on the connection between tourism businesses, tourist presence, desired changes, and tourism impact.  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Interpretation
Tourists' presence	32.300	1	<0.001	Significant correlation between the presence of tourism businesses and tourists' presence in the local community
Desired change in tourists' numbers	14.119	2	<0.001	Significant correlation between the presence of tourism businesses and the desired changes in tourist' numbers in the local community
Perceived positive tourism impacts.	29.327	1	<0.001	Significant correlation between the presence of tourism businesses and positive tourism impacts
Perceived negative tourism impacts.	2.852	1	0.091	There is no correlation between the presence of tourism businesses and negative tourism impacts

**Table 4.** Locals' observations and perceptions of tourism (n=385)  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

Items	The presence of tourists in the community				
		No		Yes	
		n	%	n	%
Desired change in tourist numbers	Increase	171	44.4	290	75.5
	Decrease	192	50.0	62	16.0
	Remain the same	22	5.6	33	8.5
Perceived positive tourism impacts.	No	142	36.8	43	11.2
	Yes	243	63.2	242	88.8
Perceived negative tourism impacts.	No	223	57.9	233	60.6
	Yes	162	42.1	152	39.4

A chi-squared test was performed (Table 5) to analyse locals' preferences and tourism impacts. Similar to the findings in Table 4, the study could not establish a significant correlation between the presence of tourists in the local community and negative tourism impacts.

**Table 5.** Analytical statistics for locals' preferences and tourism impacts  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Interpretation
Desired change in tourists' numbers	10.404	2	0.006	Significant correlation between the presence of tourists and the desired change in tourist' numbers
Perceived positive tourism impacts	8.023	1	0.005	Significant correlation between the presence of tourists and positive tourism impacts
Perceived negative tourism impacts	0.49	1	0.825	No correlation between the presence of tourists and negative tourism impacts

### Community engagement and participation

Regarding locals' engagement and participation in the conservancy, the results are shown in Table 6. Most respondents (88.7%) have not participated in tourism decision-making and have yet to receive any tourism-related training, while 72.7% have received training and participated in tourism decision-making. Reflecting on locals' opinions on community involvement in tourism planning, most respondents (86.3%) indicated that local people should have a say on what kind of tourism and how tourism should be developed in their local community. Most respondents (81.8%) indicated the presence of a conservancy in their local area and having received tourism-related training. Regarding participation in the conservancy,

more than half (55.8%) have not received any tourism-related training. Nevertheless, they participate in decision-making in comparison to 25% who participate in decision-making but have not received any tourism-related training.

**Table 6.** Community engagement and conservancy participation (n=385)  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

Items	Received tourism-related training				
		No		Yes	
		n	%	n	%
Participation in tourism decision-making	No	341	88.7	105	27.3
	Yes	44	11.3	280	72.7
Should local people have a say on what kind of tourism / and how tourism should be developed in your community?	No	53	13.7	64	16.7
	Yes	332	86.3	321	83.3
Conservancy in the local area	No	237	61.6	70	18.2
	Yes	148	38.4	315	81.8
Conservancy participation	Decision-making	92	55.8	41	25.0
	Policy implementation	19	11.6	21	12.5
	Management of activities	23	14.0	61	37.5
	Daily administration of activities	30	18.6	41	25.0

The study found a correlation between tourism-related training received versus participation in tourism decision-making and having a conservancy in the local area (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Analytical statistics on tourism training and decision-making participation.  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Interpretation
Participation in tourism decision-making	26.516	1	<0.001	Significant correlation between tourism-related training received and participation in tourism decision-making.
Should local people have a say on what kind of tourism / and how tourism should be developed in your community?	0.077	1	0.781	There is no correlation between tourism-related training received and whether locals should have a say on what kind of tourism /and how tourism should be developed in their community
Conservancy in the local area	7.632	1	0.006	Significant correlation between tourism-related training received and having a conservancy in the local area
Conservancy participation	3.521	3	0.318	There is no correlation between tourism-related training received and participating in the conservancy.

**Economic assessment of tourism**

An understanding of the main economic and livelihood activity in any community is crucial for tourism development. Respondents were asked to state the main economic activity in their community and further specify their source of living. The findings are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Economic and livelihood activity  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

Economic activity	Distribution	
<b>Main economic activity in the community</b>		
Agriculture	n=340; 88.2%	
Business including tourism	n=42; 10.9%	
Teaching	n=3; 0.9%	
<b>Individual source of living</b>		
Agriculture	Farming	n=286; 84%
	Fish farming	n=3; 0.8%
	Livestock rearing	n=48; 14.3%
	Palm wine topper	n=3; 0.8%
Business including tourism	Arts and craft	n=11; 26.2%
	Buying and selling of food	n=5; 11.9%
	Decor	n=3; 7.1%

	Hairdresser	n=2; 4.8%
	Seamstress	n=3; 7.1%
	Shopkeeper	n=16; 38.1%
	Other	n=2; 4.8%
Teaching	Primary school	n=2; 66.7%
	Tertiary	n=1; 33.3%

Despite respondents bemoaning about inflation, unemployment, and income inequality, results (Table 8) show that agriculture (88.2%) was the primary source of income, where most respondents indicated that they were into farming (84%) and livestock rearing (14.32%). A total of 10.9% were into business, including tourism, with 26.2% of those respondents into selling arts and crafts.

**Table 9.** Economic aspects of tourism (n=385)  
(Data source: Authors based on fieldwork)

Items	Tourism businesses in the community					
		No		Yes		
		n	%	n	%	
Personal tourism-related income received	No	350	90.9	313	81.2	
	Yes	35	9.1	72	18.8	
Household tourism-related income received	No	350	90.9	286	74.4	
	Yes	35	9.1	99	25.6	

Findings (Table 9) show the absence of tourism businesses in the community, which corresponds with many respondents' indicating not having received any tourism-related income in either a personal capacity (90.9%) or as a household (90.9%). Encouragingly, for those with tourism businesses in the community, most respondents (81.2%) have received personal tourism-related income, and 74.4% have received household tourism-related income.

## DISCUSSIONS

The study aimed to comprehensively understand local residents' perspectives on tourism development, using Yaoundé in Cameroon as a case study. The study focused on identifying the factors influencing these perspectives and assessing their implications for sustainable tourism planning and management. Locals, the everyday users of the space tourism development targets, provide invaluable insights into the local community's desires and expectations regarding tourism development. The study findings have revealed that locals who have witnessed tourists in their community have different perspectives than those who have not, influencing their attitudes toward tourism development. The findings in Tables 2 and 4 show that tourism in the community is at a development stage based on Butler's tourist area life cycle (Butler, 1980). At this stage, findings show that the residents desire to increase the number of tourists visiting the community, are happy to benefit from tourism and have a positive attitude toward it.

The study (Table 3) also showed a significant positive association between the presence of tourism businesses in the community and the presence of tourists, desired change in tourist numbers, and positive tourism impacts in the community. The findings could be backed up by the fact that tourists tend to visit to buy souvenirs when tourism-related businesses like selling arts and crafts in the community exist. This is further supported by the findings, which showed that despite agriculture being the primary source of income, residents have received tourism-related income in areas with tourism businesses. As the residents benefit economically and socially, they desire the tourist arrivals to increase and view tourism as providing positive impacts. The study reaffirms the notions posited by the social exchange theory and the stakeholder theory that benefits derived from tourism can be perceived as crucial social exchange factors and the importance of residents' perception of the impacts on tourism development (Ramkissoon, 2020).

In support of the current study findings, Pekerşen and Kaplan (2023) posit that local communities in contact with the tourism sector support tourism development and perceive its effects positively. Scholars (Halim et al., 2022; Tichaawa & Moyo, 2019) have found different sentiments concerning the impacts of tourism development. Although the study revealed that some community members perceiving negative impacts of tourism have tourism businesses in their community, the study found no association between the presence of tourism businesses and negative tourism impacts. These findings suggest that no direct linear relationship exists between the presence of tourism businesses in the community and the negative tourism impacts, possibly due to various factors at play, such as tourists' behavior, infrastructure development, and local policies. Similarly, Pekerşen & Kaplan (2023) could not establish a correlation between personal benefits from tourism development and adverse environmental effects and socio-cultural effects of tourism development.

The study distinguishes respondents who have received tourism-related training. This distinction is important because it can affect residents' knowledge and awareness about tourism, potentially influencing their perspectives. Furthermore, a conservancy in the community affects local perspectives on tourism

development and environmental awareness. Unsurprisingly, the results (Table 6) show a high percentage of respondents who have not participated in tourism decision-making when they have not received any tourism-related training. A possible reason could be the lack of knowledge and awareness about tourism. Conversely, those who have received tourism-related training mainly participate in tourism decision-making. These trained people also prefer that local people's opinions be considered in tourism development. These findings concur with Mindzeng (2018), who maintains that capacity-building and empowerment promote community participation.

Of concern is the findings that most tourism-trained individuals do not participate in conservancy efforts. This aligns with a study by Shereni and Saarinen (2021), who state that communities living around protected areas have insufficient involvement in making decisions and fail to devolve authority to locals. Previous studies have also highlighted additional challenges, such as lack of training and power inequalities contributing to limited participation (Rastegar et al., 2021). The tendency of the government to retain authority in decision-making and the marginalization of the local communities, especially women in the management of conservancies, are common challenges in tourism development within communities (Gohori & vander Merwe, 2022). The study emphasizes the importance of implementing policies that tackle communities' challenges in supporting and developing tourism within their areas.

### **PRACTICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

For tourism stakeholders, the findings provide insight into the implications of the direct exposure of local residents to tourism activities and their influence on the perception of tourism development. Governments can establish programs that expose locals to tourists and tourism projects where they can see the benefits of tourism development. In communities where residents are more concerned about socio-economic benefits, support should be given to the local tourism business. This is because local communities who positively perceive the impacts of tourism tend to support tourism development.

The study showed that the presence of tourism businesses and tourists in the community does not significantly predict negative tourism impacts. From a tourism stakeholder point of view, locals are also concerned about and benefit from tourism development; hence, they are also responsible for tourism development. This might imply the need for policy interventions that effectively target other factors to mitigate the negative impacts and encourage residents' participation in the conservancy and other tourism-related issues such as decision-making.

However, when preparing tourism policies and plans, it is crucial to ensure the cooperation and involvement of the local community. Policymakers can create more sustainable and equitable development outcomes by engaging with communities and encouraging participation. Stakeholders, researchers, and communities must collaborate and develop sustainable solutions that are locally relevant. To achieve this, participatory methods are necessary to promote cooperation and inclusivity. Both the private and government sectors can implement more training programs to create more tourism awareness and promote participation.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study provided an exploration of the local perspectives on tourism development. The findings indicate that the presence of tourism businesses and tourists in the community is associated with the community's desire for change in tourist numbers and perceived positive and negative tourism impacts. Furthermore, the study highlighted the implications of tourism-related training on community participation. Challenges such as lack of participation in tourism-related decision-making and conservancy were common among residents without tourism-related training. To achieve the study aim, the study objectives were to identify the factors that influence local perspectives on tourism development and to explore the potential implications of local perspectives on sustainable tourism planning and management. Although agriculture was shown as the dominant source of income in the study area, those with tourism businesses in the community have received high tourism-related income either as individuals or within the household, highlighting the positive economic impact of tourism. The study has its limitations. The study only used surveys with locals in Yaoundé since the research aimed to capture the locals' experiences, opinions, and behaviors. Future studies could use more areas and use mixed methods research design by incorporating interviews with community leaders such as chiefs, representatives of the community leadership forums, and conservancy managers to get in-depth perspectives from different points of view within different contexts.

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