

AGBOR NTUI PASCAL MBU

**THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON THE HOSPITALITY ESTABLISHMENTS IN
YAOUNDE-CAMEROON**



**UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS**

2023

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**THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON THE HOSPITALITY ESTABLISHMENTS IN
YAOUNDE-CAMEROON**

Masters in Management - Tourism Management

Dissertation made under the supervision of:

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**UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS**

2023

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has incurred a substantial economic and social impact around the world with hospitality establishments suffering one of its biggest hits ever. This crisis led to over two million deaths over the past year. According to the United Nations World Tourism Barometer, after the 73% drop in international tourism recorded in 2020, demand for international travel remained scarce at the beginning of 2021. Novel information and facts continue to emerge, theoretical and conceptual models are evolving, and groundbreaking scientific discoveries are rewriting the scientific literature. However, the growing body of literature can only support policing decision-making if results, and knowledge, are transferred to decision-makers. Assessing the impact requires continually calculating the scale of the crisis and revising existing tourism crisis and public health management models. This research thus seeks to find out the economic and social impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. Specific objectives are to investigate the economic and social impacts as well as identify mitigation measures for Covid-19 in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. Using a quantitative approach, a structured questionnaire was administered to hotel owners. The results of the analysis show that the effects were primarily attributable to economic impact as hoteliers laid off personnel, lowered employee salaries and some workers placed on leaves in order to remain in business. Adequate check-in and hygienic management are required to enhance the cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of hotel rooms. The study recommends to management make some timely modifications to existing hotel policies such as flexible cancellation policies and ensuring strict hygiene policies are vital in mitigating the effect of the pandemic. Thus, taking some additional time for cleaning the entire hotel is essential in ensuring hygienically clean safety and a secure environment for guest stay. The findings of this study are limited to Yaounde therefore, the results cannot be generalized.

Keywords: Covid-19; Yaoundé; economic impact; social impact; tourism and hospitality establishments

Resumo

A pandemia de Covid-19 teve um impacto económico e social substancial em todo o mundo, com os estabelecimentos hoteleiros a sofrerem um dos maiores golpes de sempre. Esta crise provocou mais de dois milhões de mortes no ano passado. De acordo com o Barómetro do Turismo Mundial das Nações Unidas, após a queda de 73% no turismo internacional registada em 2020, a procura de viagens internacionais permaneceu baixa no início de 2021. As chegadas de turistas internacionais (visitantes que pernoitam) nos primeiros sete meses de 2021 foram 40% inferiores aos níveis de 2020, e ainda 80% inferiores quando comparadas com o mesmo período do ano pré-pandémico de 2019. Isto significa que o grave impacto da Covid-19 no turismo internacional é agora claro, com dados da Organização Mundial do Turismo que mostram que, em maio de 2020, o custo de uma paralisação já era três vezes superior ao da Crise Económica Global de 2009. Continuam a surgir novas informações e factos, os modelos teóricos e conceptuais estão a evoluir e as descobertas científicas inovadoras estão a reescrever a literatura científica. No entanto, o crescente acervo bibliográfico só pode apoiar a tomada de decisões políticas se os resultados e os conhecimentos forem transferidos para os decisores. A avaliação do impacto exige o cálculo contínuo da escala da crise e a revisão dos modelos existentes de gestão da crise do turismo e da saúde pública. Assim, esta investigação procura conhecer os impactos económicos e sociais da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. Os objetivos específicos são: 1) investigar os impactos económicos da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé, 2) examinar os impactos sociais da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé e 3) identificar medidas de atenuação da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé, nos Camarões. Este trabalho utilizou uma abordagem quantitativa para examinar os impactos da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. Utilizando um questionário estruturado, foi realizado um inquérito para investigar as perceções dos hoteleiros sobre os impactos. O inquérito foi realizado diretamente através de um questionário estruturado, que foi traduzido para inglês e francês. Foram selecionados 90 indivíduos, entre proprietários de hotéis (hoteleiros), para responder ao questionário, mas apenas 80 responderam efetivamente (50 homens e 30 mulheres). Os dados foram analisados utilizando o Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) versão 26.0. Foram calculadas

estatísticas descritivas para melhor compreender os efeitos da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. Assim, foram apresentadas as respetivas frequências, percentagens e médias, sempre que necessário. Foram utilizadas tabelas e figuras para ilustrar as conclusões. Os resultados da análise mostram que a Covid-19 teve um enorme impacto económico nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. O estudo concluiu que 41,3% dos empregados destes hotéis foram despedidos, 43,8% dos hotéis reduziram os salários dos trabalhadores e 14,9% dos trabalhadores foram colocados em licença temporária. O resultado da análise mostra também que a Covid-19 teve muitos efeitos devastadores nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé, incluindo uma taxa de redução de 90% na ocupação dos hotéis, normas no local de trabalho que consistiam em conversar nos corredores e que foram substituídas pelo distanciamento social, restrições de viagem, uso de máscaras em áreas públicas, lavagem das mãos, evitar a sobrelotação, ficar em casa, fumigação dos serviços, autoisolamento e quarentena para os infetados, o que afetou a sua vida social. No que diz respeito às medidas de mitigação, 65% dos inquiridos concordaram fortemente com o facto de terem adotado medidas ou planos eficazes para mitigar os impactos da pandemia de Covid-19. Para além disso, 35% complementaram esta mesma observação. Algumas dessas medidas foram o trabalho a partir de casa, a utilização de telefones para assistir os clientes, entre outras. Em conclusão, o estudo teve por objetivo examinar os efeitos da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. Os efeitos foram principalmente atribuíveis aos impactos económicos nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros, com a administração ou os hoteleiros a despedirem pessoal e a baixarem os salários dos empregados para se manterem em atividade. Especificamente no que diz respeito ao estudo dos impactos económicos da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé-Camarões, este objetivo foi alcançado, uma vez que o estudo concluiu que 41,3% dos empregados dos estabelecimentos hoteleiros foram despedidos, 43,8% dos hotéis reduziram os salários dos trabalhadores e 14,9% dos trabalhadores foram colocados em licença temporária. Isto mostra que a Covid-19 teve um impacto económico drástico nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. O segundo objetivo era examinar os impactos sociais da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé, nos Camarões. O estudo encontrou provas suficientes para sustentar que a Covid-19 teve um impacto negativo nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros de Yaoundé. Verificou-se que 95,0% dos empregados dos

estabelecimentos hoteleiros sentiram o impacto negativo da Covid-19 na sua vida social. O objetivo final consistia em identificar medidas de mitigação da Covid-19 nos estabelecimentos hoteleiros. Foi identificado que era necessário um check-in adequado e uma gestão higiénica para melhorar a limpeza, a desinfeção e a esterilização dos quartos de hotel. As respostas das entrevistas e as observações feitas em geral sugeriram invariavelmente que havia uma necessidade absoluta de fornecer medidas de saúde e segurança que garantam o emprego. Por conseguinte, a adaptação a estes padrões e normas foi imperativa para os hoteleiros. Por conseguinte, o estudo recomenda à direção que a manutenção da segurança e da proteção dos empregados e dos hóspedes seja claramente a prioridade máxima. Isto inclui a criação de um ambiente de trabalho remoto seguro. Embora haja inevitavelmente alguma perda de produtividade à medida que os colaboradores e os hoteleiros trabalham fora dos seus escritórios através de ligações digitais, as empresas precisam de garantir que os hoteleiros estão envolvidos de forma produtiva no novo ambiente operacional. Além disso, foi também vital fazer algumas alterações atempadas às políticas hoteleiras existentes, tais como políticas de cancelamento flexíveis, tarifas flexíveis para todos os serviços e garantir políticas de higiene rigorosas. Como resultado da situação pandémica, as pessoas ficaram muito preocupadas com a sua saúde e segurança. Assim, dedicar algum tempo adicional à limpeza de todo o hotel é essencial para garantir uma segurança higiénica e um ambiente seguro para a estadia dos hóspedes. As conclusões deste estudo estão limitadas a Yaoundé, pelo que os resultados não podem ser generalizados a outros países.

Palavras-chave: Covid-19; Yaoundé; impacto económico; impacto social; estabelecimentos turísticos e hoteleiros.

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Abbreviation List

CERC. Crisis Emergency Risk Center

CSR. Corporate Social Responsibility

FC. Fixed Cost

IATA. International Institute of Air Transport

IHR. Institute of Health Research

MINFI. Ministry of Finance

MINEPAT. Ministry of Economy and Territorial Development

MINTOURL. Ministry of Tourism and Leisure

MoPH. Ministry of Public Health

MTN. Mobile Telephone network

NIS. National Institute of Statistics

OCHA. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OMS. Organisational Mondial de la Sante

PBF. Performance Based Financing

PM. Prime Minister

SDO. Senior Divisional Officer

SMEs. Small and Medium Size Enterprises

SPSS. Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UNWTO. United Nations World Tourism Organisation

VC. Variable Cost

WHO. World Health Organisation

WTB. World Tourism Board

WTTB. World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, hospitality establishments have suffered one of its biggest hits ever. This crisis led to over two million deaths over the past year. According to the United Nations World Tourism Barometer (2020), after the 73% drop in international tourism recorded in 2020, demand for international travel remained scarce at the beginning of 2021. International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) in the first seven months of 2021 were 40% below the levels of 2020, and still 80% down when compared to the same period of pre-pandemic year 2019. This means that international tourism presented levels 80% down when compared to the same period of the year 2019 (United Nations, 2020). Total losses of 2020 are equivalent to a loss of about 1 billion arrivals and 1.1 trillion dollars in international tourism receipts (United Nations, 2020).

The severe impact of Covid-19 on international tourism is now clear, with data from the UNWTO showing that, in May 2020, the cost of a standstill was already three times greater than that of the 2009 Global Economic Crisis. The edition of the World Tourism Barometer showed that the almost complete lockdown imposed in response to the pandemic led to a 98% drop in the number of international tourists in May, compared to 2019. The Barometer also showed a drop of 300 million tourists and 320 billion dollars lost in international tourism revenue more than three times the loss during the 2009 global economic crisis.

This research has acknowledged the continual extant gap in knowledge on the impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality industry and the recovery. Presently, the world is emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is still unfolding; thus, new developments in information and research make this a fluid research area. Novel information and facts continue to emerge, theoretical and conceptual models are evolving, ground breaking scientific discoveries are rewriting the scientific literature (Ciotti *et al.*, 2020; Sohrabi *et al.*, 2020). However, the growing body of literature can only support policing decision-making if results, and knowledge, are transferred to decision-makers.

Previous research has fallen short of quantifying the extent of the damage of the Covid-

19 pandemic, and even more, explaining it in practical terms. Researchers have had a tunnel vision of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on hospitality establishments. It also seeks to compensate for the knowledge gap in the stages with a deficient scope and depth. Resolution and reflection, for instance, are covered through projecting and predicting an outlook of the hospitality establishments in the posterity. The preparedness and planning stage is boosted by assessing the hospitality establishments in Yaounde.

As a result, countries all around the world established stringent travel restrictions and closed their borders, effectively halting international travel (Mao *et al.*, 2021; Peterson *et al.*, 2022). Airlines in particular have grounded their fleets and halted operations (Sahin & Can, 2022). It is worth noting that the tourism crisis has been a grey area in research, as evidenced by the scant literature on the area (Aliperti *et al.*, 2019; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). Still, the majority of tourism crisis and hospitality management models lack efficiency. This research draws from conceptual and theoretical frames to provide a useful guide in the hospitality sector in Cameroon. To this end, it seeks theories and concepts to evaluate the impacts of Covid-19 in this area and gauge their validity and relevance to explain the current case of Covid-19 in Yaounde. Such a double-sided approach helps in retrospectively looking at the hospitality establishments before the pandemic. Equally important, this research also grows the extant literature on the response and recovery phase of this hospitality study.

Similarly, the international hospitality and leisure business has been hit hard by the epidemic in Yaounde. Hotels were forced to close as a result of governments' lockdown reaction (Farmaki *et al.*, 2020). Cameroon witnessed a rapid drop in hospitality establishments with many closing their doors or temporarily reducing the numbers of workers. Many workers worked online. The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact not just economically, socially, and technologically (Jaipuria, Parida & Ray, 2021). Measures and limitations such as social distancing, lockdowns, work from home, self or mandatory quarantine and crowd control were being implemented (Sigala, 2020; Jaipuria, Parida & Ray, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic was caused by an outburst of the Corona virus disease 2019. The Corona-virus disease is caused by a virus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona- virus (SARS-CoV-2), a highly transmissible virus caused by respiratory

symptoms, cough, difficulty in breathing, and fever are the primary characteristics of the virus. Coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan, a region of Hubei province in mainland China, in December 2019. It spread to the rest of the world (United Nations, 2020). By the end of January 2020, it had reached the intensity of a pandemic.

This health crisis was declared a global pandemic in March 2020. According to Global Covid-19 trackers as of August 5, 2022, there are a cumulative case of 582,009,363 and 6,412,752 deaths. The Coronavirus pandemic is one of the deadliest pandemics in history and the most significant crisis post World War II (Nueangnong, Hasan-Subih & Al-Hattami, 2020; Srivastava *et al.*, 2020; Feehan, Tripodi & Apostolopoulos, 2021). Human transmission is through coming into contact with respiratory droplets, contaminated surfaces, or airborne aerosols. Responses in the form of public health protocols were imposed to curtail the virus. They include social distancing, travel restrictions, wearing masks in public areas, hand washing, avoiding overcrowding, staying at home, fumigation of services, self-isolation, and quarantine for the infected. Vaccines came to be in the late quarter of 2020. Data from late-stage clinical trials show the pioneering vaccines AstraZeneca, Pfizer BioNTech, and Moderna as being over 90% effective in the prevention against the virus (Christof *et al.*, 2019). Recently a complicated development has been the emergence of Coronavirus variants.

According to the World Health Organization, the causative agent for Coronavirus diseases, the SARS-CoV-2 virus, evolved through mutation, bringing forth variants of the original virus (Christof *et al.*, 2019). For example, upsurges of the pandemic in India and the United States have been brought forth by new variants. Mutations and new variants are feared to render vaccines ineffective. Even more, data is developing in light of new facts and novel discoveries in scientific research. Since March 6, 2020, with exponential increase the Cameroon governments have moved to put in place various measures to contain or mitigate the spread of the pandemic. These measures include lockdown of non-essential travel in-country and between member states. The movement of cargo has however been allowed to continue to ensure no interruption of the supply of essential commodities including food, non-food items, medicines and other essential supplies through road, air, and sea. Road transport remains a major conduit for delivery of cargo with trans-boundary

travel cross-border, long-distance truck drivers on a regular basis thereby increasing the risk of cross-border transmission of Covid-19. To address the potential transmission of Covid-19, the governments have developed a strategy for containing or mitigating the transmission of Covid-19 (MoPH, 2020). It is therefore paramount to ensure a systematic flow of information among, within and without borders. This is intended to facilitate information sharing among nations. The information to be shared include but not limited to demographic information, travel route, means of transport used, mobility corridor including stop over, results of the Covid-19 tests and its validity (last for 14 days) origin and destination case management of positive cases and contact tracing.

Following the report of the index case of Covid-19 in Yaoundé, Cameroon on March 6, 2020, the President of the Republic, Paul Biya, prescribed on March 17, thirteen (13) measures to limit and control the spread of the virus in the country. These measures included the closure of borders, the postponement of sports competitions, the closure of schools and universities, the closure of bars and the suspension of entry visas to Cameroon. In addition, restaurants and leisure facilities were closed from 6 p.m. onwards. Gatherings of more than fifty (50) people and overloading in buses, taxis and taxi-motos were prohibited. The measures also covered the restriction of urban and interurban travel and the regulation of customer traffic in markets and shopping centers. In addition to these measures, the Cameroonian government recommended that the population respect the rules of hygiene and social distancing measures announced by the World Health Organization. A summary of the main Covid-19 strategies, policies, plans, or actions taken by the government of Cameroon is presented in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: The main Covid-19 strategies, policies, plans, or actions taken by the government from March 2020 -July 2021

Aspects	Government decisions, Actions, Policies, Strategies
Governance and Accountability	<p>Coordinate Covid-19 activities in the public and private sectors.</p> <p>Ensure resources for managing the pandemic are used efficiently.</p> <p>Ensure transparency in managing resources for the pandemic response.</p> <p>Creation of a \$1 billion Covid-19 response solidarity fund on April 1, 2020.</p> <p>President’s appeal for Cameroonians to respect the government’s response measures.</p> <p>Decentralization of the Covid-19 response to the regions On April 20th, 2020.</p> <p>Order prohibiting the raising of funds for the pandemic without authorization from the MTA.</p> <p>Ministerial order to close accounts opened to raise funds for the pandemic without from the MTA.</p> <p>Order by SDO of Leke Division prohibiting the distribution of Covid-19 materials without authorization.</p>
Internal infection control and basic services	<p>Cameroon’s land, air and sea borders were temporarily closed.</p> <p>Implementation of Covid-19 safety/preventive measures at points of entry into Cameroon.</p> <p>Temporary stop of visa issuing at all entry points into Cameroon.</p> <p>Travellers entering Cameroon are mandated to complete a health declaration form.</p> <p>Temporary suspension of Cameroon’s para-public sector/diplomatic missions abroad.</p> <p>Restrictive border measures allowed essential goods/essential.</p> <p>Repatriation of Cameroonians stranded abroad.</p>

Table 1.1 Continue

Aspects	Government decisions, Actions, Policies, Strategies
Internal infection control measures	<p>Cameroon's land, air and sea borders were temporarily closed</p> <p>Implementation of Covid-19 safety/preventive measures at points of entry into Cameroon.</p> <p>Temporary stop of visa issuing at all entry points into Cameroon.</p> <p>Travelers entering Cameroon mandated to complete a health declaration form.</p> <p>Public sector/diplomatic missions abroad.</p> <p>Restrictive border measures allowed only essential goods</p> <p>No restrictions on internal transport to allow circulation of essential services and goods.</p> <p>Repatriation of Cameroonians stranded abroad.</p>
Scaling up measures	<p>Specialized treatment centers to be established in the regional capitals.</p> <p>Establishing and increasing testing in all the 10 regions of the country.</p> <p>Sensitization to be done in Cameroon's official and vernacular/indigenous language.</p> <p>Pledge to intensity Covid-19 screening, and awareness raising campaigns, acquire essential hospital equipment and encourage local production of Covid-19 materials</p>

Table 1.1 Continue

Aspects	Government decisions, Actions, Policies, Strategies
External infection control and basic services	<p>Face masks made mandatory in all public spaces and means of transport.</p> <p>Temporary closure of all educational/training institutions and sporting activities throughout the country.</p> <p>Sanctioning of populace that fail to respect restrictive/confinement measures.</p> <p>Temporary prohibition of gatherings of more than fifty people throughout the country.</p> <p>Opening times for restaurants, bars and entertainment facilities restricted to 6 pm.</p> <p>Business premises to implement infection control measures.</p> <p>Public administrations urged to have virtual/digital meetings.</p> <p>Pledge for search of Covid-19 patients through massive testing.</p> <p>Raising awareness about the pandemic via many platforms and sources.</p> <p>Setup of emergency Covid-19 toll-free hotline number (1510)</p> <p>Presidential decree of April 15, 2020, commuting and remitting prison sentences.</p> <p>Set up of few quarantine and treatment centers in some regional capitals.</p> <p>Requisition of private health facilities essential to implement Covid-19 response.</p> <p>Order from the Governor of the Littoral Region prohibiting on- the-spot consumption of drinks.</p> <p>Order from SDO of Menoua Division prohibiting corpses from entering his division and the burial of people who die within the division at their place of death</p>
Scaling up measures	Specialized treatment centers to be established in the regional capitals.

	<p>Establishing and increasing testing in all the 10 regions of the country.</p> <p>Sensitisation is to be done in Cameroon's official and vernacular/indigenous language.</p> <p>Pledge to intensity of Covid-19 screening, and awareness-raising campaigns, acquire essential hospital equipment and encourage local production of Covid-19 materials</p>
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SOURCE. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2021) Cameroon: COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report No. 14.

1.2 Social and economic measures

To deal with the socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the President of the Republic called on his government to show ingenuity and creativity. On 31st March 2020, President Biya established a special solidarity fund to fight the pandemic. According to the Cameroonian presidency, the fund, initially endowed with the sum of US\$ 1,681,833 (CFAF 1 billion), was intended to finance operations under the strategy for preventing the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic in Cameroon. On 30th April 2020, measures aimed at cushioning the shock suffered by households and businesses as a result of the restrictions related to the fight against Covid-19 were announced by the Cameroonian Prime Minister. They covered the suspension, for a period of three months of the payment of parking charges (i.e., the penalty for occupying port space beyond the duty-free days) and demurrage (the penalty for holding the container at a terminal beyond the duty-free period) in the ports of Douala and Kribi, as regards essential goods. This was a measure that would have an impact on customs revenue.

In addition, at the tax level, the government prescribed full deductibility for the determination of corporate income tax of donations and concessions granted by companies for the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic; exemption from the axle load tax for the 2nd quarter; exemption from the tourist tax in the hotel and restaurant sector for the rest of the year 2020, starting from March 2020. The Government also decided to cancel penalties for late payment of social security contributions due to the National Social Welfare Fund, the payment between May and July 2020 of allowances to workers whose employers find it difficult to pay their social security contributions, an increase in family allowances from CFAF 2,800 to CFAF 4,500 and a 20% increase in pensions. The management of this fund was strongly criticized by the social partners, who considered the measures taken insufficient to alleviate employers' tax burdens. Further, none of the accompanying measures addressed the loss of earnings of workers who went on unpaid technical leave.

1.3 Enforcement of measures adopted.

The issue of enforceability particularly arises in relation to non-legally binding measures since it questions the basis for their imposition on citizens. As a rule, since these

measures are not contained in binding legal instruments, they have no legal effect and can therefore not be binding. They are mere announcements and can therefore not be relied upon to impose duties on citizens. One would have expected that as in other countries, the announcement made by these authorities would be followed by appropriate legal instruments. This has not been the case and it is difficult to find a reason for this choice since nothing prevented the authorities from doing so. However, it is interesting to note that in practice, these measures have received the most stringent application, with the involvement of administrative authorities and law enforcement forces. This is particularly the case for primo-ministerial measures, the violation of which is sanctioned by the sealing of recalcitrant shops, the impoundment of cars not respecting the passenger-limit, the payment of fines, police custody (notably for the compulsory wearing of masks) and the. The absence of legal bases for these measures violates the principles of “*nullum crimen sine lege*” (no crime without law), and “*nulla poena sine lege*” (no punishment without law). As for the measures of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, they led to the suspension of accounts opened with mobile operators (MTN and Orange). All this is done with no legal basis.

On the other hand, the introduction of measures at both national and local levels could create an issue in determining the ultimately applicable law, particularly in areas where national and local measures differ. This is, for example, the dilemma faced in the Littoral region; is the Governor justified in deciding on a more restrictive measure than that decreed by a higher authority in the person of the Prime Minister. In a unitary state like Cameroon, the *lex superior* rule gives Prime Ministerial measures precedence over any other law, and in particular a Governor’s order. However, this rule does not preclude the adoption of adjusted texts which are more context-specific, that is to say texts containing lighter or more stringent measures where local conditions are so required.

1.4 Hospitality measures

To prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Yaoundé, the Ministry of Public Health adopted strict measures which were directly applied in the hospitality establishments throughout this period. Maintain a safe distance from others (at least 1 meter), even if they do not appear to be sick. Wearing of mask in hotels, especially indoors or when physical

distancing is not possible. Choose open, well-ventilated spaces over closed areas such as in hotels with restrictions for entry. Open a window if indoors. Hands cleaning use soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub. Get vaccinated as a preventive measure for the pandemic. Follow local guidance about vaccination campaigns. Cover your nose and mouth with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. In case of severe fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, seek medical attention. Calling in advance so your healthcare provider can direct you to the right health facility (MoPH 2020). This protects and prevents the spread of viruses and other infections.

In addition, properly fitted masks can help prevent the spread of Corona virus from the person wearing the mask to others. Masks alone do not protect against Covid-19 and should be combined with physical distancing and hand hygiene. International travel-related control measures such as restricting cross-border travel may help to contain the spread of Covid-19 Cochrane Public Health Group August 2022. Additionally, symptom/exposure-based screening measures at borders may miss many positive cases. While test-based border screening measures may be more effective, it could also miss many positive cases if only conducted upon arrival without follow-up. The review concluded that a minimum of 10 days quarantine may be beneficial in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and may be more effective if combined with an additional control measure like border screening (Christof *et al.*, 2019).

Ministry of Economy Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) and the main economic actors in order to mitigate the effects of the crisis and promote a rapid resumption of activity. Tourism in the digital era. As technology evolves, social media plays a vital role in society, especially in connecting institutions with its audience. On Tuesday 24th November 2020, the Digital Marketing Committee for Cameroon Destination of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure (MINTOUL) organized a working session to this effect. The session was chaired by the Secretary General of MINTOUL, Ndioro A Mamoum, representing the Minister of State, Minister of Tourism and Leisure in the conference hall of the ministry. During this session, emphasis was laid on the structure and how the different units involved will ensure the active presence of MINTOUL on the different social media platforms. The technical coordination unit, led by the chief of the Division for Planning and

Cooperation was asked to set the units at work for the ambitions to be achieved.

Yaounde formed one of the main epicenters of infection in the country. It is the largest city in the country and was almost at par in population in 2017. Yaoundé has a population of approximately 2,969,156 according to National Institute of Statistics 2019 (NIS). Official government communication on the pandemic in Cameroon started on 17 March 2020 when the Prime Minister presented the country's response strategy. This aligned with pre-crisis and initial crisis stages of the crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC) model. These strategies were as follows:

- The closure of Cameroon's land, air and sea borders to international movements of people and goods except for cargo flights and vessels transporting essential goods and materials.
- An indefinite closure of all schools in the country from kindergarten to higher education, including school sporting activities.
- The prohibition of gatherings of more than 50 persons throughout the country.
- A curfew on the hospitality activities after 6.00 p.m.
- A limitation of urban and inter-urban travel to essential movement and commercial vehicles with a prohibition of overloading.
- The potential requisitioning of some private health institutions, hotels and lodging facilities, vehicles and specific equipment to fight Covid-19.
- An encouragement of civil service workers to adopt electronic communication in their work and meetings where more than 10 people could be expected to come together.
- A suspension of all travel by government officials abroad; and an urge to step up hygiene, social distancing and face masking.

1.5 Problem Statement

Noteworthy, the global hospitality establishments have been an instrumental driver of the world's economy. Economists puts the market size of the hospitality establishment before the pandemic at upwards of \$ 8 trillion. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (United Nations, 2020) global tourists' arrivals were above 1.5 billion

in 2019. Furthermore, this should have increased by 4% were it not for the Covid-19 pandemic.

The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality establishments informs a practical research problem. Covid-19 is an unprecedented disaster whose impact must be quantified and equally important, formulating a way out of the crisis. Nevertheless, with the onset of the pandemic, the hospitality sector has been disrupted and stretched to its limits. Global tourism between January 2020 and January 2021 plummeted by 87% (United Nations, 2020), which translated to international tourists of less than 10,000. Sources in the Ministry of Public Health June 3, 2022, and World Health Organization Covid-19 figure in Cameroon stood at 120,0002 with 1,930 deaths and 117,791 recoveries. A total of 1,837,626 doses of vaccines have been administered to patients. Furthermore, the new variants threatening the bounce back, vaccine inequality, production and supply chain issues, the Covid-19 pandemic could extend out. As such, the short-term resilience building with temporary mitigating measures is not bound to stand the test of time. Assessing the impact requires continually calculating the scale of the crisis and revising existing tourism crisis and public health management models. Equally, another key is considering how the disruption and subsequent innovation will reawaken the hospitality establishments in the long term.

This research thus seeks to find out the economic and social impacts of Covid-19 in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. It also handles mitigation measures adopted by the government to better handle the prevalence of this pandemic. Therefore, it is worthwhile and topical to find out the effects Covid-19 pandemic in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. This will provide a relevant reference point in managing future prospects for the hospitality establishments.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is of immense benefit to the scholarly community. Covid-19 has significantly affected all sectors of business especially the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. The governments had taken measures to slow the spread of the virus: Imposed lockdowns, including closures of accommodation and hospitality facilities, leisure activities,

restaurants, and show businesses. Implemented several restrictions on domestic mobility and international travel during the Covid- 19 crisis and loss of employment for hotel workers. Adoption of precautionary measures and vaccines for Covid-19. Most hospitality establishments in Yaoundé intensified with online marketing for prospective customers. Generally, the pandemic had a significant change in the hospitality establishments.

1.7 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following question: What are the impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishment in Yaounde? To answer this question, the following specific research questions were raised:

1. What are the economic impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaoundé-Cameroon.
2. What are the social impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon.
3. What are the mitigation measures for Covid-19 in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon

1.8 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aims to determine the impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishment in Yaounde?

Specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the economic impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaoundé-Cameroon.
2. To examine the social impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon.
3. To identify mitigation measures for Covid-19 in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon

1.9 Structure of the study

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the background information needed for the study and explains its relevance, rationale, and related issues. This chapter also explains the purpose of the problem statement. Chapter two reviews the existing information related to the topic and explains concepts based on existing literature. Chapter three is the main chapter that explains the methods used in addressing the research questions as well as the analytical methods used. Chapter four examines the results there is a detailed analysis of a survey with tourism professionals on the impacts of the pandemic in the hospitality sector, and its long-term effects on the hospitality establishments in Yaoundé. Chapter 5 discusses the results and relates it to other literature. Chapter 6 concludes the overall objectives of the study and concludes with recommendations and limitations.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter situates this study in the context of previous literature that relates to this topic. That said, it synthesizes all scholarly materials and research through citing, comparing, contrasting, critiquing, and connecting these pieces of scholarship to this research topic under investigation. Toward this end, it covers: the impact of Covid -19 on hospitality establishments with reference to Cameroon and Yaounde in particular. Finally, it discusses the changing landscape in hospitality and the future of hospitality establishment. In the end, literature gaps and a summary of the chapters are also identified.

2.2 Impacts of the Covid-19

Covid-19 has both economic and social impacts in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. On economic aspects hoteliers had to cut down employees on a temporal basis. They suffered from reduction of customers in take in different hotels. The government provided major control measures to regulate this sector. Working online from home became the priority for some hoteliers as they worked online planning and reporting their activities. Financially, the income situation of hoteliers declines drastically.

Socially, this sector was severely affected. Customer retention was deduced enormously as the effects of Covid-19 affected both internal and external tourists and residents. Hotel activities were dominantly online and the total number of places reserved was not above 50 participants for seminars and workshops in Yaounde. Consequently, the impacts of Covid-19 greatly affected hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon. The current context, with a pandemic crisis with consequences in multiple dimensions of social life (from purely health to the economic, labour, affective, and social realm). Several studies have valued the role of social media impacts as a focus of misinformation. Anspach and Carlson, (2020) noted a greater propensity for users of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to be misinformed, then tending to “report factually incorrect information”. Based on data collected very recently, already during the covid-19 pandemic, Allington *et al.*, (2021) found that the greater the dependence on Twitter, Facebook or YouTube as

main sources of information, the more likely the acceptance of the various conspiracy theories related to the pandemic. Hoteliers used these social platforms to work with employees during the pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic and associated prevention and confinement measures created favorable conditions for the development of conspiratorial beliefs. These conditions include the feeling of physical, psychological and financial vulnerability in a framework of uncertainty drawn from impositions from formal power (government, authorities, scientific elites). Furthermore, the effects of the restrictive measures were greater on those who find themselves more fragile, more vulnerable to socio-economic circumstances.

Furthermore, confinement also provided greater availability to consume online content: individuals had more free time, were isolated and had internet access. Based on this framework, Freeman *et al.*, (2022) found that a significant minority of the population supports excessively skeptical views, including false conspiratorial beliefs, regarding official explanations on the covid-19 pandemic. These ideas are linked to pre-existing conspiracy theories, less compliance with government guidelines and greater skepticism about the strategies proposed by the entities and the Ministry of public health in Yaoundé.

Research conducted between April and June 2020 of the pandemic's generalization identified a strong positive relationship between the use of social media platforms as sources of information on Covid-19 and the maintenance of one or more conspiratorial beliefs, with YouTube being the most strongly associated social media, followed by Facebook (Allington *et al.*, 2021). In a true outbreak of conspiracy theories, these types of messages pose a global threat to public health.

2.3 Economic impacts

According to McKinsey and Company, the Covid-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis, but also “an imminent restructuring of the global economic order” (Craven *et al.*, 2020). Its economic impacts have been particularly severe in international tourism. Domestic tourism is likely to recover first, as governments will strongly bet on local and regional travel (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020; Ranasinghe *et al.*, 2020). International tourism saw some decrease with arrivals declining by 82% in 2020 (compared to May 2019), after

falling by 86% in April, as confidence is slowly being restored and destinations started to ease travel restrictions (United Nations, 2020). According to IATA, (2021), although air travel should improve, some late developments highlight that the recovery will take time and will be uneven. The impacts on airlines' financials and on the restoration of economic and social benefits generated by aviation companies in 2022. There are political and establishment pressures from companies for governments to „restart“ the economy as soon as possible, and to generate employment in a climate of huge economic recession, where lockdown has led to massive unemployment. Governments can work on several measures to reduce economic impacts, such as to improve domestic tourism (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020) or to reduce unemployment, in a context where millions of workers and themselves are unemployed (Khan *et al.*, 2022). Covid-19 has a profound socio-economic impact on the Cameroonian economy. Firstly, in the short term there is likely to be a sharp drop in domestic consumer demand in most developing countries including Cameroon. Demand for food, medical assistance and other essential items may increase, but this would be more than offset by lower demand for non-essential goods such as apparel and various services. This will be accompanied by falling demand for Cameroonian products abroad. In the case of hotels or restaurants, social distance implies receiving and serving fewer people, which inevitably brings less revenue. These effects were evident in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde.

Hotels globally are witnessing cancellations worth billions of dollars (Ozili & Arun, 2023). Hotels reserved by enthusiastic tourists and meeting participants first before current Covid-19 pandemic. This has made most of the hotels to postpone operations and this has brought the loss of jobs to employees to 24.3 million worldwide (Ozili & Arun, 2023). The effects of Covid-19 prove to be problematic for many participants in the tourism sector to keep paying employees, culminating in a severe decline in sales and incomes. A study by (Abbas *et al.*, (2021) in Yaounde stressed that several hospitality establishments were shut or slowed down because of low sponsorship and the failure to pay the salaries, electricity and water bills of the staff. Most have already slashed their personnel whereas others have cut their wages by 50%. With most hotels shut down, or with very low demand because of a reduction in hotel intake. According to Gössling, Scott & Hall, (2020), it is not yet clear how hotels and other related accommodation

facilities can make rooms safe for guests and also how individuals with the virus would be handled in accommodation facilities.

The introduction of lockdowns, closure of borders, stay-at-home policy and social distancing announced by the government in March 2020 as part of measures to curb the spread, unfortunately, resulted in rapid shutdowns by most cities and metropolis. The resulting effects from these measures threw several restaurants and hotels across the country into abrupt shock. Hotel bookings worth millions of dollars were cancelled; hotel owners laid-off staff while others were asked to proceed on leave without salary (Abay, Tafere & Woldemichael, 2020; Milojevic & Katsadze, 2020). There is a general agreement that the industry will not be the same long after the lockdowns and travel limitations have been lifted. Hoteliers cannot afford to follow the existing model of business operation but must adopt survival strategies against Covid-19 (Adom, Adu-Mensah & Sekyere, 2020; Ozili & Arun, 2023).

Decline in wages and employment of workers triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic which is predicted to cause a significant reduction in remittances and as such directly reduce the purchasing power of beneficiary households and threaten to push them into poverty. Research has shown that the hospitality establishments has noteworthy potential to drive economic growth and job creation increasingly an area of focus for venture in Cameroon. The sector contributed to 4.2% GDP in 2021.

2.4 Social impacts

Hospitality establishments are very diverse and include restaurants and cafes in addition to hotels and lodging (Pascual & Cain, 2022). Due to restrictions imposed by governments in travel destinations around the world, the hospitality establishments have also been affected (Kong, Oh & Lam, 2021). Without a traveler or tourist in a destination, there is ultimately no business in the hotels, accommodations and restaurants. “Stay-at-home” policies and social distancing policies were reinforced, which ultimately led to the closure of places and businesses (Arbulú *et al.*, 2021). Hospitality establishments in Yaounde were directly affected experiencing government enforced orders of the pandemic. According to Mbunge, (2020), in response to the pandemic restrictions imposed, many

cancelations were recorded in the hospitality industry. Hotel occupancy rates dropped drastically. Many airlines' companies in Yaounde cancelled flight tickets and rescheduled later. This study Covid-19 on the hospitality sector affected the lives of communities, workplaces, hospitality establishment. Hoteliers were affected with reduction of hotel intake during the pandemic in Yaounde. This has impacted hotel occupancy and revenues that hotels around the globe are able to achieve per available room as countries are imposing travel restrictions, quarantining travelers and citizens and also isolating infected persons in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus. To these effects the hospitality establishments in Yaounde were not left out. Global flight suspension, hotel reservations, restriction of airports and crossings, and the prohibition of large venues have an effect on financial operations in the hospitality establishment. According to Sahoo *et al.*, (2021) the Covid-19 pandemic could cut 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism establishments, reflecting a 12-14% reduction in jobs. International travel could be adversely impacted by up to 25% this year, equivalent to a loss of three months of travel Hui *et al.*, (2020). The sector in Yaounde was severely affected especially during the lock down periods.

Hotel revenue rates have dropped significantly and some hoteliers sent their employee's home. Even before the current lockdown, restaurants were witnessing a 60 percent decline in patronage (Ozili & Arun, 2023). Hospitality establishments are a big income provider also with ability to create numbers of employment every year (Ridwan *et al.*, 2021). Faced with these situations hoteliers are closing hotels, bars and restaurants, it is a certainty that the virus is affecting hotel services.

2.5 Organizational impacts

The challenge posed by the Covid-19 pandemic has been tremendous. The virus has emerged as an important threat to human life due to its rapid spread and high degree of contagion. This led to important adaptations in the sector. According to Roman, Niedziółka & Krasnodębski, (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic is an opportunity to reconsider and redirect the hospitality establishments. Due to the uncertainties of the current situation, companies have had to adopt strategies, such as efficient communication with customers, work planning, digital enhancement, and tele-working. According to Mao *et al.* (2020), when the

pandemic emerged, companies supported and helped hoteliers deal with this new situation. At the start of Covid-19, emergency management programs were implemented. These provided long-distance work and training, which many companies adopted in order to keep their hoteliers working. One of the adopted measures was using e-learning systems to train workers. This can contribute to the general improvement of a business (Mao *et al.*, 2020). Virtual platforms to hold meetings were introduced, which encouraged dialogue between employees. This facilitated the sharing of knowledge between members of the same group. The role of organizational capital is, according to Filimonau, Derqui & Matute, (2020), an important key during the pandemic. Hence, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can contribute to the satisfaction of the workers or staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. Good CSR practices influence the perception of job security, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism among hospitality staff. Therefore, it creates an aspect of staff wellbeing in the hotel sector in Yaoundé during the pandemic.

2.6 Impacts on technology

The rapid evolution of technologies will intervene in consumer service, ensuring the efficiency of operations in the hospitality sector. Introduction of new ways of accommodation for visitors, that is, short-term rentals. As Mauguin, (2020) noted, in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, hotels reacted swiftly innovated through putting some of its services online, and reinvented their services local travel, more extended stays, communication with guests, capitalizing on last minute bookings, improving the guests' experience. Some major hotel chain like Hilton and Mount Febe hotels adjusted their online services to improve on its hospitality management. From the foregoing, the identity of the hospitality establishment is certainly changing. As Stoica *et al.*, (2022) point out, it is time to challenge the point of view that success in tourism means any growth in the volume of visitors and increase in the numbers of visitors. Present themes in hospitality and tourism such as safety, overcrowding, over tourism and scarcity. Hospitality business in Yaounde presents few arrivals which translates to less visitors, and by extension of profits. A trend that will challenge this is travel in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.7 Impacts on hygiene and sanitation

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, travelers will likely patronize hotels that offer

reassuring lodging services and accommodation products in terms of hygiene and cleanliness. To this end, hotels should implement regular hygiene surveillance at facilities via manual (i.e., staff rounds) practices. Given that cleaning nowadays is endowed with sensors measuring the quantity of dust in a specific area of a hotel and either work more on that area or generate data that can be useful for the cleaning teams, future research could investigate how hotel cleaning staff should collaborate and achieve decent hygiene and cleanliness goals. In addition, hotel restaurants and resort centers should emphasize their commitment to safety and hygiene protocols to ensure high housekeeping standards. These were necessary prerequisites for operations of hotel in Yaounde during the pandemic (MoPH, 2020).

Guestroom cleanliness (e.g., of bedrooms and bathrooms) is a core component of hotel reputation (Gu & Ryan, 2008). This study considered overall hygiene and cleanliness as a principal determinant of travelers' hotel choices (Lockyer, 2005), guest satisfaction (Gu & Ryan, 2008), guest delight (Magnini, Crotts & Zehrer, 2011) and guest loyalty (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010). However, scholars have rarely considered the hygiene and cleanliness of specific areas in a hotel (Park *et al.*, 2019). The thesis therefore recommends that researchers should move beyond typical perspectives on outcomes of hotel hygiene and cleanliness to delve into guests' perceptions of the cleanliness of hotel surfaces (e.g., key cards, bed linens, light switches and TV remotes) and other areas (e.g., air conditioning systems). As noted, hotel surfaces receiving frequent human contact are more likely to be contaminated through touch (Park *et al.*, 2019) and become sources of transmission of infectious diseases such as Covid-19 (Chen *et al.*, 2020). Areas that are out of hotel guests' reach, such as the central air conditioning system, may also facilitate aerosol transmission of viruses (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). A more granular understanding of hotel cleanliness will assist hoteliers in streamlining their housekeeping procedures to ensure effective cleaning and sanitization of hotel properties.

Given the growing consumer demand for hotel hygiene following the Covid-19 outbreak, enhanced cleanliness and sanitization to prevent or limit the spread of disease can be promoted as a selling point during and after this pandemic. Zemke *et al.*, (2015) found that younger travelers and women of all ages would be willing to pay a premium for

enhanced guestroom disinfection. Based on their work, forthcoming research should examine whether different hotel guest segments are willing to pay a premium for enhanced sanitization.

The notion of hygiene can extend beyond sanitization to encompass broader aspects of health care. Customers are likely to become more concerned about general health care access when planning trips following the Covid-19 pandemic, such as how to seek medical care if they fall ill. On a personal level, guests tend to prioritize their health and hygiene, such as through a healthy diet and sleep hygiene, as lines of defense against diseases. Hotel-centric health-care considerations are thus discussed elaborately because the safety and health of clients count most in the hospitality establishment. This element is cardinal in maintaining a good customer service and bonding. Hospitality establishments in Yaounde applied these rules to the latter.

2.8 Impacts on hotels and restaurants

Some hoteliers laid off workers as shops were temporarily closed, while some were completely closed (Ozili & Arun, 2023). Hospitality establishment is very diverse and includes restaurants and cafes in addition to hotels and lodging (Pascual & Cain, 2022). Due to restrictions imposed by governments in travel destinations around the world, the hospitality establishments have also been affected resulting (Kong, Oh & Lam, 2021). Booking cancellations in the hospitality establishments were once again the order of the day following global measures to contain the pandemic (Mao *et al.*, 2021). Restaurants in Yaounde were directly affected by the pandemic. “Stay-at-home” policies and social distancing policies were reinforced, which ultimately led to the closure of places and businesses (Arbulú *et al.*, 2021). Given previous reports and discussions, it is a proven fact that the novel Corona-virus (Covid-19) has a high impact on hotel transmission and ultimately thrives in large populations. In Cameroon, the transport, restaurant, hotel, and accommodation sectors are the most affected by the Corona-virus crisis, according to Ministry of Transport August 2022. While some of those sectors are still operating albeit slowly, the hotel and accommodation sector has come to a complete standstill. The most striking example is the La Falaise hotel chain, which is one of the most prominent in the country with four establishments in Douala and Yaounde, Cameroon’s two main cities.

After the closure of Cameroon's borders on March 17, 2020, the hospitality sector was seriously affected by the pandemic as it witnesses low in take in hotels (MINTOUL, 2021).

2.9 Cameroon Government's strategy against Covid-19

Some hotels, whose managers are a little optimistic, continue to operate but the few employees still at work are most of the time idle. As soon as the restrictions decided on March 17 to curb the spread of the Coronavirus were imposed, hotel reservations sharply slumped. At the Hotel Mont-Fébé for example, a four-star public hotel in the Cameroonian capital, 1,050 overnight stays were canceled in March 2020, according to the managing director Nicolas Tchobang. At the same time, 600 foods ordered could not be served because of the cancellation of banquets.

Due to that sharp decline in active ties, the managing director decided to provide paid leave to about 60 employees. For the entire sector things are not getting any better. On 6 July it stood at 19,604, on 10 September 2020 with 415 deaths; 18,448 recoveries; and 742 active cases (MoPH, 2020). This figure is certainly under-reported, as testing was never rolled out on a massive scale within the period. The first confirmed case of Covid-19 in Cameroon was announced on 24 February 2020 (MoPH, 2020). From this date, the official number of cases rapidly rose to 14,916 on 2020, ban on tourist arrivals and the prohibition of ceremonies (conferences, seminars, banquets, etc.) which contribute a significant part of hotel's turnover- the hotel chain simply closed its doors.

Although the virus spread to all the regions of the country, the Centre and Littoral regions whose capital cities are Yaounde and Douala, respectively, formed the main epicentres of the infection in the country. They accounted for 13,612 or 74% of confirmed cases in the country, with the centre alone accounting for 52% of the cases in August 2020 (Figure 2). They are the largest cities in the country and were almost at par in population in 2017 (Yaounde, 2,969,156 and Douala, 2,954,443).

Financing measures have played a major role in facilitating a rapid and organized response, notably through providing appropriate services and lifting financial barriers to enable rapid diagnosis and treatment of Covid-19. A Special Allocation Account, referred to as CAS Covid-19, was created by the President of the Republic with an initial allocation

of one billion CFA Francs. The purpose of CAS Covid-19 was to provide financial support to the “Special National Solidarity Fund for the fight against Corona-virus and its economic and social consequences” and facilitate better monitoring of the use of resources mobilized in the response’s framework, as well as fulfill transparency and accountability requirements (MoPH, 2020). The fund is structured into four programs that are in line with the overall strategy to respond to the pandemic. These include health system strengthening, economic and financial resilience, strengthening research and innovation, social resilience, and strategic purchasing. CAS Covid-19 was organized in terms of resources and used in two main forms: on the one hand, revenue constituted by payments from the general budget, non-tax payments from natural or legal persons for the fight against Corona-virus, contributions from technical and financial partners (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc.) in the form of grants or loans; and on the other hand, expenditure corresponding to the achievement of the objectives of the overall response plan. While the limit of resources to support the fund was set at 180 billion CFA francs for the 2020 financial year by the National Assembly, individual contributions of between 20,000 and over one million CFA francs were made by bank transfer cheque or deposits. Several administrations were beneficiaries because a Task Force had been set up to make decisions on allocating resources within the response framework. Coordination was done using a multi-sect oral approach, with an inter-ministerial committee coordinated by the Prime Minister as Head of Government.

The Cameroonian government also used exceptional and derogation procedures, notably the awarding of special contracts by the Minister of Public Health to purchase equipment and consumables and the provision of services, which exempted Covid-19 contracts from all public procurement procedures. In addition, all equipment and consumables purchased were exempt from Value Added Tax (VAT) and customs duties. All these significantly reduced delays in the payment of service providers and facilitated the rapid allocation of resources.

The implementation instruments for specific health financing schemes, such as Performance-Based Financing (PBF) and payment methods for service providers, have been reviewed. In particular, the Covid-19 indicators have been added to the evaluation matrix

for stakeholders, and a mechanism for making financial resources available in advance to health facilities (FOSA) prior to the verification of care has been put in place to enable them to have funds regularly to function better. The costs of the indicators have also been reviewed.

2.10 Government revenue mobilization and allocation

With the crisis, there were budget reallocations in the ministries. All the ministries revised their budgets to provide an amount for the Covid-19 response. As part of the response, we have witnessed the revision of Law No. 2019/023 of 24 December to lay down the finance law of the Republic of Cameroon for the 2020 financial year. Apart from health, education, training, social and women affairs, some administrations have lost an average of 20% of their initial budget. Indeed, the revenue and expenditure estimates of the general budget voted at 4951.7 billion CFA francs have decreased in absolute value by 542.7 billion CFA francs and by 11% in relative value, bringing the overall expenditure to an amount of 4409.047 billion CFA francs. For initiatives such as the PBF, the contingency emergency response component (CERC) was launched, making it possible to raise 5 million CFA francs. Financial partners were also approached to mobilize resources. The funds were directed towards specific expenditure lines such as managing Covid-19 patients, active tracing of cases, awareness-raising, prevention and disinfection. None of the care structures had autonomy over resource allocation decisions (MoPH, 2020).

In Cameroon, the vast majority of health care funding is provided by households, with more than 70.6% provided through direct payments. In Covid-19, care for patients was free of charge, according to the official discourse by government authorities in general and the Minister of Public Health in particular, as broadcast in the media. All inputs related to the treatment protocol in force in the country, namely the combination of hydroxychloroquine, azytromicyn, paracetamol and zinc, were provided by the Ministry of Public Health. In addition, accommodation and meals were provided (MoPH, 2020).

However, on a practical level, health facilities were often short of certain drugs such as zinc, antibiotics or anticoagulants, which patients had to buy on their own; on the other hand, some hospital structures did not have a large capacity test patient. The administration

of Covid-19 tests was sometimes deliberately limited to avoid shortages. Patients were sometimes referred or directed to other testing centers. In addition, the thoracic scanner, which was financially inaccessible to most patients, was the preferred method of diagnosis in many private health facilities. In one region in the country's far north, patients had to wait a long time for their Covid-19 test results before being admitted to the health facility. Despite their frail state, the equipment needed for the tests was located far away from the city. The problem of access to care is noted below by a health professional. It appears that the provision of free treatment to Covid-19 patients has faced considerable challenges in the field, reflecting the gap between policy formulation (theory) and implementation (reality), especially when these policies use a top-down approach as in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic in Cameroon. With the allocation of Covid-19 funds, health staff and volunteers received monthly bonuses. The conditions for payment of bonuses varied according to the health facility. The quota of people tested determined the payment, the number of missions carried out, performance criteria such as punctuality, attendance, participation in meetings, the grade of the staff involved, etc. However, this motivation is "*not commensurate*" with the risks associated with the pandemic, and some of the payment criteria have "*nothing to do*" with the management of Covid-19. The government has recruited several volunteers to strengthen outreach, diagnosis and management activities. In several cases, volunteers reported working for several months receiving no salary or bonus. In some health facilities, staff were critical of the way bonuses were paid out (MoPH, 2020).

At the beginning of the response, the management of Covid-19 cases was centralized in Douala and Yaounde, the country's two major cities. The government of Cameroon opted for decentralization, which has been the main pillar of the fight against the pandemic. Indeed, local management has been transferred to regional health authorities and districts, while regional hospitals have been set up as Covid-19 care centers. Funds were allocated directly to the latter for pandemic preparedness and response to improve the technical efficiency and effectiveness of the overall response. This decentralization appears to have helped improve access to inputs, enabled more staff to be involved in the response, contributed to mass testing of people, and improved alert management. Prevention was the strategic choice, although not evidence based. It was more about limiting the spread of the

disease and in-hospital transmission and maximizing staff protection. Measures related to case management included establishing a national management protocol based on the cases, the drugs to be used, and the approach to healthcare. It was also based on severe and mild cases and the setting up of management structures (MoPH, 2020). However, in the distribution of resources, particularly financial resources, each district had received equal amounts to the tune of ten million CFA francs per district, regardless of the epidemiological situation and contextual realities. Also, the budget lines were insufficient in relation to the needs. For example, the allocations did not meet the expectations of some health districts. The health facilities approved for case management have experienced a disruption in their income due to the drastic drop-in attendance rates.

The pandemic has impacted consultations, para-clinical examinations, and vaccination, among others, to such an extent that quota shares have decreased by over 70% in some health facilities. The current Corona-virus pandemic has been a source of major crisis for the health system in Cameroon but constitutes an opportunity for fundamental reforms. If the government, together with its financial partners, mobilized a certain number of resources that were considerable support in the fight against Covid-19, the allocation and use of these resources towards greater effectiveness and efficiency deserve to be looked at closely. Funds for the response to Covid-19 have been directed towards a two-tiered response. The focus has been on prevention first, then management. Cameroon's level of preparedness for future responses still needs improvement. For example, the emergency number should be permanent so that it can be used for other pandemics such as cholera; a budget should be set aside to deal with emergencies; staff at the operational level should be retrained and involved at all levels of decision-making in the event of a pandemic; provide resuscitation services; create special centers in the regions or districts ready to intervene in the event of a pandemic; create operational molecular biology laboratories and possibly initiate actions to promote the local development of an entire pharmaceutical industry. It is also important to fight against inequalities by facilitating access to care in a pandemic (MoPH, 2020).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains in detail, the study design, research setting, research sample and data sources, as well as data collection methods. Information on the analytical tool used is also presented in this session.

3.2 Study Design

This work employed a quantitative approach to examine the impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. Using a structured questionnaire, a survey was conducted to investigate participants perceptions of hoteliers. The survey was carried out directly using the structured questionnaires. Respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire, based on which the researcher subsequently received an array of primary data. The questionnaire was translated into English and French. The questionnaire was anonymous and included in the appendix (See Appendix A).

3.3 Survey instrument

The research tool i.e., the questionnaire was developed based on sample questionnaire and literature review of works on similar topics in different countries around the world. This study made use of a quantitative research design in that it has been widely used in studies related to impacts of covid-19 on the hospitality establishment in Europe, Asia, Africa and USA. This method uses interview data and documented data to critically identify themes, draw patterns, and interpretation of the text (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A quantitative research design was selected for this study because of its formal objectivity and systemic process in which numerical data are utilized to obtain information. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data for each participant. The interview research was conducted with adequate research ethics.

3.4 Population of the study

According to Banerjee & Chaudhury (2010) a population is defined as a complete set of possible observations of the type of people to be investigated. The population is made up of the hoteliers or hotel owners in Yaounde. Hoteliers are one of the main actors in

hospitality establishment in Yaounde. Our concern in this study is based on hoteliers. During this research, the researcher focused more on hoteliers who are based in Yaounde.

The study included individuals from both genders and ranged from different age groups. Cameroon's hotel establishment can be said to be on the move to modernity with renovations and construction of modern lodging facilities burgeoning in different parts of the country. Statistics obtained from the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure indicated that the country had some 766 registered hotels of different categories spread across the ten administrative regions of the country. The number of beds according to the President of the National Syndicate of Hotel Proprietors, Chantal Lewat is estimated at 30,000. The Centre Region that also happens to have the lone five-star hotel (Hilton Hotel) in the country for the moment tops the chart with 172 hotels followed by the Littoral Region with 134 hotels amongst which four four-star and 11 three-star hotels of high standing. As of 2021 the Ministry of Tourism and leisure count some 250 standard or recognized hotels in Yaounde. The West Region that is also earmarked as one of the hosts for the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations is next on the line with 124 hotels even though only five are of three-star standard. In terms of the quality of services offered, high standing hotels are aligned to international standards. Public authorities have not been relenting in emphasizing on the necessity for standards to be upgraded. The professional and educational background of this population was also taken into consideration. The minimum educational level of respondents ranged from GCE advanced level to master's degree. There was no discrimination of the population as to race and cultural background. The respondents were hoteliers (hotel owners).

3.4 Data Collection and Sampling Techniques

A purposive sampling technique was used in collecting data from individuals. That is selecting or collecting data from a particular or chosen department in the organization. The data collection was performed in August 2022. The questionnaires were first tested on a small sample population to determine the feasibility and to examine whether the data being gathered were the required data. The final questionnaires were then used to collect information from hoteliers in some specialized hospitality establishments in Yaounde. Two languages of communication were used in this exercise - French and English - since

Cameroon is a bilingual country. We administered questionnaires directly to targeted respondent hoteliers in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. The principles of anonymity, confidentiality and individual privacy were respected during the survey. No incentive (i.e., monetary, or non- monetary) was offered to the respondents. The respondents also invited some of the participants who could provide useful information for this study.

In this study 90 individuals made up of hotel owners (hoteliers) were selected to answer the questionnaire, but only 80 responded (50 men and 30 women) effectively in the study. This makes the research adequate as data collected is from the right source representing the hospitality establishments. The researcher adopted purposive sampling method as we could not talk openly to most of the respondents especially during this moment of Covid-19 and also because it was not easy to contact all hotels. The researcher selected hotels that were more accessible to him. Purposive sampling was chosen because it enabled researchers to narrow down to participants who could supply in-depth and relevant information on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality establishments. These research participants were selected since they shared specific characteristics as key stakeholders in the hospitality establishment.

The sample size was determined by the stipulated criteria and the researcher's judgment as they had to be stakeholders in the hospitality establishment. The advantages of the purposive sampling method are the effectiveness of resources of time and money. Again, the sources who could contribute to the study were a limited number of players in the hospitality establishments who could respond to questionnaires during this moment of covid-19 pandemic. Most of these respondents were hoteliers (hotel owners) in hotels, particularly Hilton, Djeuga, Mount Febe and Jovence 2000 hotels. These are major international hotels which are suitable for top clients in Yaounde. They are also situated at the center and strategic locations. Such a research sample was suitable for this research since they experienced the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic directly. As such, the information supplied by this group becomes insightful and adds credibility to this research.

3.5 Data analysis

For a better quantitative study of Covid-19, the Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used to analyze data collected from informants. The data quality was properly examined to minimize processing errors before conducting analysis. Data quality was examined by reviewing every single response sheet and evaluation of missing entries in the data following method developed and used by Hair (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The researcher used descriptive analysis in this section to better understand the effects of Covid-19 in hotel establishments in Yaounde. As such respective frequencies, percentages and means were presented where necessary. Tables and figures were used to illustrate findings.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the data collected. We shall first present the data collected using frequency and contingency tables, reporting absolute frequencies and percentages. The first section of the chapter comprises of descriptive analysis where gender, age, level of education, occupation, longevity of service, marital status, location and duration in Yaounde are presented.

4.2. Sociodemographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic elements help in explaining Covid-19 affected gender, marital status, level of education and job titles of actors in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde.

Analysis of data from the respondents shows that of the 80 respondents 53 representing 66.3% are males, while 27 representing 33.7% are females as presented in Figure 1. This is due to the fact that during the distribution of the questionnaire to the hotel owners more males were available for responses than females. Therefore, we can conclude that males are more represented in the sample than females. With respect to marital status, the results indicate that 11.3% of respondents are singles, 1.3% are divorced and 87.5% are married with children (Table 4.1).

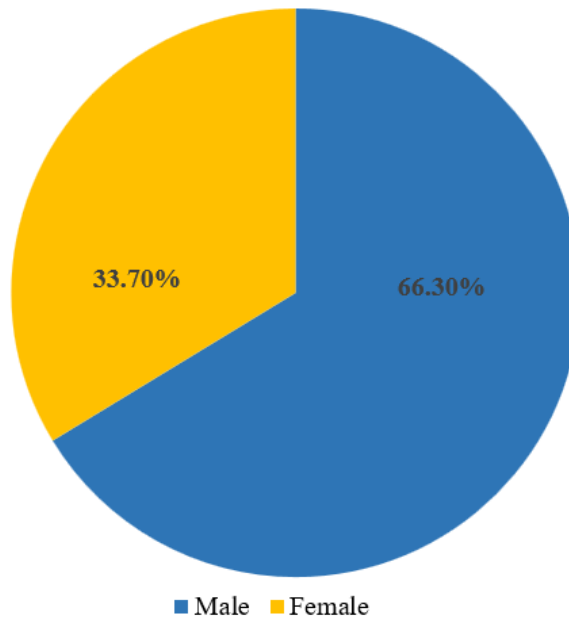


Figure 1: Percentage of Female to Males respondents

Similarly, the results show that 3.8% of the respondents are from primary school, 35% from secondary school, 40% from professional school or bachelor's degree and 21.2% with master's degree as shown in Table 4.1. We can then conclude that those who are more represented in the sample are First Degree holders and those least represented are those from the primary school. Their experience played a fundamental role in the application of Covid-19 principles in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde.

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Response	Count	%
Gender	Male	53	66.3%
	Female	27	33.7%
Marital Status	Single	9	11.3%
	Divorced	1	1.3%
	Widow	0	0.0%
	Married with Children	70	87.5%
Level of Education	Primary School	3	3.8%
	Secondary School	28	35.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	32	40.0%
	Master	17	21.2%
	Ph.D.	0	0.0%
Job Title	Hotel Owner	68	91.9%

4.2.1 Location of hotels

The dispersion of hotel establishments in Yaounde needed a useful and random selection so as to have the needed effects in the hospitality establishment. From our sample, it is evident that 31.6% of hotels are located in Bastos, 12.7% in Biyemassi, 8.9% in Obili, 17.7% in central town, 15.2% at Omnisport and 13.9% at Fouda. As shown in Table 4.2. Bastos is a residential quarter in Yaounde having many hotels created as far back as 1990s with the intension of hosting tourists and it is also an excellent residential quarter with most diplomatic representations. Therefore, it is convenient and classic for hostel establishments. The central town is a host for Cameroon administrative headquarters. It is busy and very comfortable with so many standard and classic hotels of international reputation. Omnisport is another good residential area with a dense population. Most hotels in Yaounde had adequate safety and followed the Covid-19 pandemic rules. In general Bastos represented one of the best safe areas for Covid-19.

Furthermore, duration in business accounted for the experience of hoteliers and how they adjusted with Covid-19 pandemic. Some hotel owners had 10-5 years in the hotel establishment. This represented 26.3% as well as 20-25 years with 26.3% respectively. Those with more than 25 years had 18.8%, 15-20 years 8.8% and 5-10 years 3.8%. It is

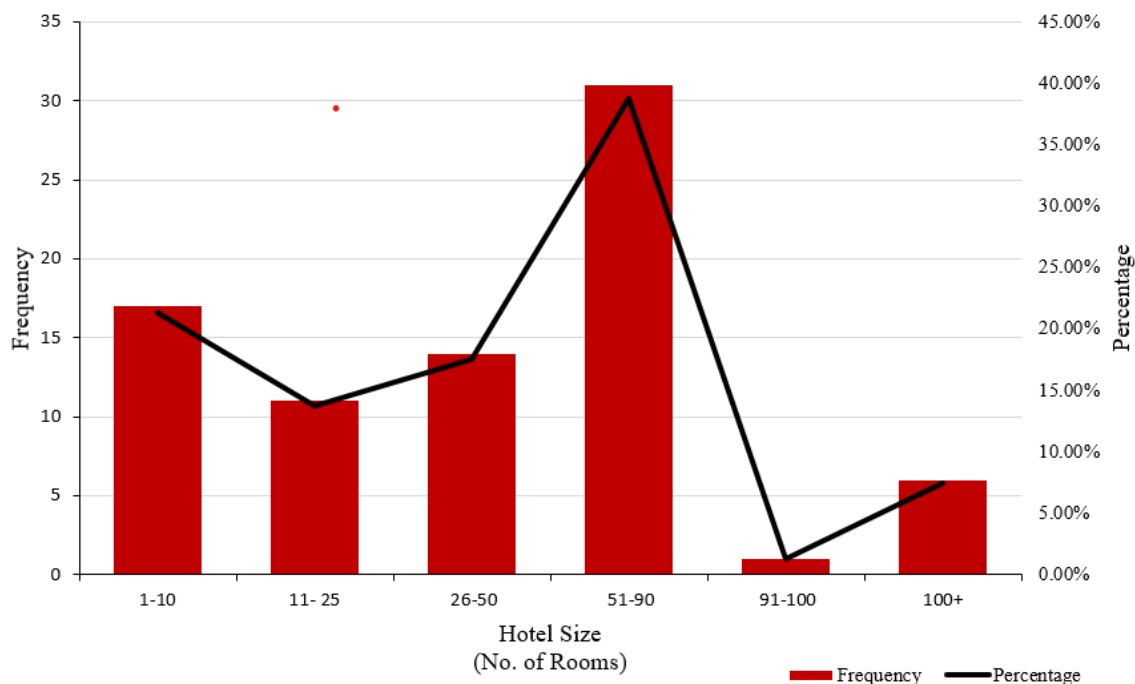
certain that experience in hotel management and duration are better ways to improve customers' welfare and hospitality. Therefore, there is a close relationship between the place of residence and safety of residents in the hotel establishment. Intense hygiene and safety procedures were applied as social distancing, washing of hands and disinfectants around the hospitality establishment which created a favorable environment for customers. Also, the result shows that 98.8% of the hotels were partially opened, 1.2% were opened, and none was closed at the time of the data collection as presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Location of hotels in Yaounde

Variable	Response	Count	%
Location	Bastos	25	31.6%
	Biyemass	10	12.7%
	Obili	7	8.9%
	Central Town	14	17.7%
	Omnisport	12	15.2%
	Fouda	11	13.9%
Number of Workers	Less than 10	11	13.8%
	11-12	14	17.5%
	31-40	16	20.0%
	41-50	10	12.5%
	51 - 60	15	18.8%
	61 and above	14	17.5%
Duration In Business	1-5 years	13	16.3%
	5-10 years	3	3.8%
	10-15 years	21	26.3%
	15-20 years	7	8.8%
	20-25 years	21	26.3%
	More than 25 years	15	18.8%
Hotel Status	Closed	0	0.0%
	Partially	79	98.8%
	Opened	1	1.2%

Also, the result shows that 21.3% of the hotels in Yaounde have 1-10 rooms, 13.7% have 11-25 rooms and 17.5% have 26-50 rooms. Only 7.4% of hotels have more than 100 rooms as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Sizes of hotels in Yaounde according to the number of rooms



Among the hotels where the study was conducted, the hotel status was as follows. In Bastos, the least hotel size was 150 beddings or places. Out of 25 hotels, we had 3 with 5 stars, 8 with 4 stars and 14 with 3 stars respectively. In Biyemassi, there were 10 with 3 stars. For the case of Biyemass hotel sizes range from 20 to 80 places. The status was as follows, 3 hotels with stars and 7 with 2 stars. For the case of Obili, the 7 hotels were all stars having an accommodation of at least 50 to 80 places. At the central town which is the administrative headquarters, the sizes of hotels interviewed ranged from 100 to 300 places. Some of the most prominent hotels are Hilton and Djeuga Palace. At Omnisport, it is also a quarter with many hotels. The size ranges from 20 to 95 places. The status of these hotels was as follows; 8 hotels had 3 stars and 4 with 2 stars. For Fouda, all 11 hotels were stars with accommodations ranging from 60 to 100 places.

4.3 Economic Impact of Covid-19

On the economic impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishment in Yaounde, the study found 41.3% of employees in these hotels were laid off, 43.8% of hotels reduced salaries of workers and 14.9% of workers were placed on temporal leave as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Effective strategies to contain Covid-19

Questions	Responses	Count	%
How has Covid 19 affected employment in your hotel or establishment	Workers are laid off	33	41.3%
	Salary Reduction	35	43.8%
	Planning to lay off workers	0	0.0%
	Placed workers on temporal leave	12	14.9%
	The hospitality establishment provides direct employment to Yaounde workers	0	0.0%
Which are the measures provided by government to support the hospitality establishment in Yaounde	Extension in innovation with measures	30	37.5%
	wage extension	0	0.0%
	Implementation of a new branding strategy for Covid-19	28	35.0%
	Low-cost airline companies	22	27.5%

From the analysis above it is clear that Covid-19 had a strong impact on employment especially within hotel establishments in Yaounde. 41.3% of employees in these hotels were laid off. There is no denial following this economic impact. Salary reduction was also affected so as to help maintain and support the business. This accounted for a 43.8% response rate from hoteliers. 14.9% of workers were placed on temporal leave as a measure to help survive hotel establishments in Yaounde during the health crisis. The value recorded for extension in innovation with low interval was 37.5% while that of branding which is a marketing strategy to make the brand known and improve on its image and reputation had 35% response as a significant measure used by the Cameroon government to support the sector during the health crisis and 27.5% for low-cost airline companies. These were

formidable strategies to sustain hotel establishments in Yaounde.

Cameroon was the epicentre of Covid-19 and Yaounde its headquarters was greatly affected. For this reason, the government took significant measures to scale up and expand the testing and tracing of Covid-19 patients. Intensive health care centres were created and equipped with medical personnel, rapid implementation of education and hygiene and social distancing in crowded towns. The rate of infections is high supported by multi-sectoral approaches from UN agencies such as UNAIDS and MOPH. Strategies through teleconferencing and assistance from partners, physical distancing and self-isolation, closing down of schools, and educational centres, banning of gatherings, and imposition of face masks in public places. These are legitimate concerns indicating a high level of Covid-19 pandemic in the hospitality establishments. More than 80% of the population is dependent on the informal sector. As such, from a public perspective, lockdowns are of great necessity.

The result of the analysis of the data shows that Covid-19 has many devastating effects on the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. The results are shown in Table 4.4 and discussed below.

Table 4.4: Economic and social impacts of Covid-19

Questions	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
EICH1 How has Covid-19 affected employment in your hotel establishment	70.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%
EICH2 Effective Strategies were Implemented by businesses to recover from Covid-19	65.0%	23.8%	0.0%	11.3%	0.0%
EICH3 You took actions to respond to Covid-19	96.3%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EICH4 Covid-19 has a high impact on the occupancy rate in your hotel	90.0%	6.2%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
EICH5 You adopted effective plans to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19	65.0%	35.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EICH6 Support was required to safeguard the company	73.8%	23.8%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%
EICH7 Government provided support	72.5%	26.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%

4.3.1 Effects of Covid-19 on Employment in hotel establishments

Drawing from the analysis on EICH1 in Table 4.4, 70% attested to the fact that Covid-19 strongly affected employment meanwhile, 25% agreed on the same note and 5% strongly disagreed. These findings support findings by Soehardi, Untari & Raya, (2020) who found a similar situation in hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia as well as Sucheran, (2021) in South Africa. The result attested to the fact that travel bans, border closures and quarantine measures adopted in Cameroon affected many workers. They could not move to their job sites and carry out their activities accordingly their jobs were affected which severely touched their income, especially for workers in the informal sector who were casually employed in some hospitality establishments in Yaounde. Given the current environment of Covid-19, establishments are likely to delay investments, purchase of goods and hiring of workers. This situation rendered many workers in this sector jobless. Generally, the pandemic has changed the nature of hospitality establishments in Yaounde necessitating more smart and skilled workers. Some frontline workers may have moved to their native areas thereby shrinking the temporal workforce. The few permanent workers are still facing low intake in some hospitality establishments. Some will change establishments or sectors for a quick cash flow (Jones & Comfort, 2020a, 2020b).

4.3.2 Effective strategies implemented by businesses to recover from Covid-19 pandemic

As illustrated in EICH1 in Table 4.4, Most hoteliers representing 65.0% of responses encouraged the usage of telephone contacts for workers in Yaounde during the pandemic, while 11.3% did not agree to this idea. Hoteliers in Djeuga Hotel, hotel la Falaise, Hotel Jovence 2000, Mont Febe, and Prestige Hotel were encouraged to work at home and basically online. This accounted for 65% of respondents. The main reasons were to avoid direct contact with clients and improve on the social conditions at work, especially in the sector. Cameroon government exemptions from the tourist tax in the hotel establishments in Yaounde for 2022.

4.3.3 Actions Taken to Respond to Covid-19

The result of the analysis as shown in EICH3 of Table 4.4, shows that Hoteliers in Yaounde-Cameroon took several actions to remain in business during Covid-19 pandemic. 93.3% strongly agreed that actions were taken to respond to the devastating effects of the pandemic while 3.8% agreed also to that effect. This testifies to the fact that both the private and public sector jointly took actions to respond to Covid-19 which has greatly helped to curb the situation of the pandemic.

4.3.4 Effects of Covid-19 in hotel occupancy rate in Yaounde

EICH4 of Table 4.4 shows that, 90% of hoteliers strongly agreed that Covid-19 had a high impact on the occupancy rate in their hotel establishments in Yaounde followed by 6.2% who agreed for standard operations, 3.8% remained neutral. Despite the devastating effects the pandemic continues to have, hotel sales and marketing teams are doubling down on their efforts and doing everything they can to maximise their revenues. Hotel owners are putting a greater emphasis on health-related features such as indoor/outdoor architecture, antimicrobial finishes and high-performance ventilation systems to reassure guests and heighten their sense of well-being and safety.

Furthermore, Covid-19 had severe implications on the hotel occupancy rate in Yaounde with the government imposition of lockdown and checks at airports, the hotel establishments were faced with mass cancellation of accommodation and bookings. Many hotels had to reduce its workforce and depend on stimulus factors of government assistance. This confirms situations in other countries (Yacoub and ElHajjar, 2021). Major problems included finding qualified staff and upskilling their knowledge on payment online, increasing hotel reputation and operations. A typical was the case of Hotel La Falaise. After the closure of the Cameroon border on 1/3/2020 with a ban on tourist arrival, and prohibition of ceremonies, conferences, seminars and banquets, the hotel closed down its activities. Another illustration of a high level of Covid-19 in the hospitality establishment was the Mont Febe Hotel which cancelled over 1050 overnight stays in March 2020; 600 food orders could not be served because of the cancellation of banquets. As the managing director of the hotel decided to provide paid leave to 600 employees. These are evidence of the severe impacts of Covid-19 on hotel occupancy rates in Yaounde during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.3.5 Mitigation Measures for Covid-19

From EICH5 of Table 4.4, 65% of respondents strongly agreed with the fact that they adopted effective measures or plans to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, 35% complemented this same observation. Ascertaining how much of economic and social activity should be restricted by quarantines and lockdowns to achieve what level of disease prevention and control; how much of economic lockdowns may disproportionately affect the capacity of public financing to keep up with health protection, promotion and routine patient treatment; and how lockdowns may be managed to prevent irreparable damage to the economy in economic, social and technological aspects of hotel establishments.

4.3.6 Safeguard Measures for Covid-19 pandemic

From the EICH6 of Table 4.4, respondents pointed out how devastating the pandemic affected hospitality establishments in Yaounde. 73.8% strongly agreed that support was required to safeguard the company, 23.8% agreed and 2.4% disagreed with this statement. They responded by containing variable costs and decreasing the hospitality establishment. Fixed cost affirmed that monitoring cash collected on a daily basis was a good measure that hoteliers used and could better manage finance during the Covid-19 pandemic in Yaounde. Negotiating contracts and procedures with stakeholders and implementing direct cash control collection in the business. Consequently, there is a strong consensus that finances were cut down and career development changed or stifled. Financial fitness before the pandemic and the ability to adapt to the current increase in prices of products is not doing good for these workers. The reputation of hospitality establishments is also at risk because most qualified workers were sent home. The ability of hoteliers to hire and fire was very high during the pandemic.

4.3.7 Government Support to the Covid-19 pandemic

It is evidently clear that government assistance to hotel establishments was inevitable as this was a public sector risk. 72.5% of respondents strongly agreed on the need for government support, 26.5% agreed and 1.2% remained neutral. To this effect, government support was strong in fighting the pandemic as there were quarantine centres in Yaounde

to take care of patients who had signs of the pandemic. Attention to health and safety measures are strictly implemented in the sector. Based on the economic and social effects of Covid-19 in the hotel industries in Yaounde, out of the 80 hotels sampled more than 90% opined that the hospitality establishments suffered from Covid-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Main conclusion

The study aims to examine the effects of Covid-19 on hospitality establishments in Yaounde. Eighty (80) hotels in various categories in Yaounde one of Cameroon's main cities were sampled. The effects were primarily attributable to economic impacts in hospitality establishments with management or hoteliers laying off personnel and lowering employee salaries in order to remain in business. Specific to the economic impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaoundé-Cameroon, this objective was achieved as the study reviewed that 41.3% of employees in hospitality establishments were laid off, 43.8% of hotels reduced salaries of workers while 14.9% of workers were placed on temporal leave. This shows Covid-19 had a drastic economic impact on hospitality establishments in Yaounde.

The second objective was to examine the social impacts of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon was achieved. The study found enough evidence to support that covid-19 has a negative impact on hospitality establishments in Yaounde. 95.0% of employees in hotel establishments have felt the negative impact of covid on their social life. Workplace norms of having conversations in hallways have now been replaced by social distancing, travel restrictions, wearing masks in public areas, hand washing, avoiding overcrowding, staying at home, fumigation of services, self-isolation, and quarantine for the infected has affected their social life.

The final objective is to identify mitigation measures for Covid-19 in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon. Adequate check-in and hygienic management are required to enhance the cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of hotel rooms. The responses from the interviews and observations made overall, invariably suggested that there is an absolute need to provide health and safety measures which will guarantee employment. Therefore, adapting to these standards and norms is imperative for hoteliers. Regarding the effects of mitigation, appropriate measures are needed to better reinforce international and national strategies adopted by the government of Cameroon.

In terms of practical contributions to the hospitality establishment, this study has

brought about relevant insights for understanding the real situation of the pandemic in the hospitality establishments in Yaounde. First, it proposes a range of measures to be adopted in the sector and aspects to improve decision-making by identified experts, which can support managers in decision-making for the sector. The second contribution to the sector is for hoteliers to improve their knowledge of how to deal with Covid-19 in this magnitude. It is essential to improve on hospitality suppliers and stakeholders to reduce the effects because if care is not taken the incidence from the sector can be damaging to the economy. So, various strategies were highlighted by hospitality experts to minimise the negative impacts of Covid-19. Thirdly, this study contributes to the definition of structural measures by governments willing to improve establishments and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

It has become obvious that the novel Covid-19 has negatively affected the hospitality establishments in Yaounde and the world at large. With regards to the objectives of the study which sought to find out the economic, social and mitigation effects of Covid-19 in Yaounde- Cameroon. It was realized that lifting of bans on social gatherings, and reopening of the closed borders, though they remain uncertain. The effect on hospitality establishments is negative but we can also not rule out some positive impacts, especially in the new orientation of technology and digitalization of hotels with social media tools with content to advertise and remained within the establishment.

The current crisis is having social impacts on the closure of international borders which continues to have a negative impact on many hospitality establishments, particularly higher-end hotels such as Hilton hotels. This prompted more cost-cutting measures, such as layoffs. Many hotels may eventually close down. To avoid this, the government should move quickly with the proposals to provide assistance to hospitality establishments in Yaounde, SMEs support fund, which intends to provide financial assistance to enterprises in the hospitality value chain establishments in Cameroon. The government might go even further by equipping hoteliers with hand sanitisers. Mitigation measures are also focal to reduce the impacts of Covid-19 on hospitality establishments in Yaounde- Cameroon. These will ensure that hotel operators remain in business and continue to provide long-term employment opportunities for their citizens.

5.2 Management implications

There is no doubt that this pandemic situation has brought a lot of negative impacts to the hospitality establishment in Yaounde. Maintaining the safety and security of employees and guests is clearly the highest priority. That includes setting up a secure remote working environment. While there will inevitably be some loss of productivity as hoteliers work away from their offices through digital connections, companies need to ensure that hoteliers are engaged productively in the new operating environment.

The world, with respect to the special attention of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has already launched several practices to save the essentials of tourism establishments at present. The special campaign named “Travel Tomorrow “has become the common thread that runs through the World Tourism Organizations' response to the current crisis, highlighting the enduring values of tourism.” By staying home today, we can travel tomorrow”. Availability of cash keeping cash on hand through liquidity management strategies, such as maximizing one-time revenue opportunities, realigning and reducing costs, online payment, employing working capital crisis management techniques and deferring capital expenditures. Like other countries, Cameroon was not ready for this pandemic, adding to the different political crises that the country is facing. The economy is already feeling the Covid-19 negative impacts like job loss, business closure, and general economic slowdown, on his economy and it is a pessimist about their economic goal achievement for this fiscal year.

Further, promoting flexible rates and allowing guests to move a booking to a new date is another key strategy to promote hotel business in compensation for emergency cancellations. In addition, making some timely modifications to existing hotel policies is also vital, such as flexible cancellation policies, flexible rates for all services, and ensuring strict hygiene policies are some of the key areas of concern. As a result of the pandemic situation, people are very much concerned about their health and safety. Thus, taking some additional time for cleaning the entire hotel is essential. These strategies will positively impact on ensuring hygienically clean safety and secure environment for guest stay.

5.3 Limitations and direction for future research

This research has some limitations, which may be addressed in future research studies. First, the findings of this study are limited to Yaounde, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other countries. Secondly, the researchers have only used quantitative technique to reach the objective of the study. Future researchers can use the triangulation approach to address this research problem to get more valid and reliable results. Thirdly, due to the limited literature on the addressed topic in the Yaounde context, it was difficult to identify the critical factors for analyzing economic and social impacts. Further studies can be conducted by including other factors that may draw different findings and conclusions. Lastly, a comparative study can be conducted among developing countries to analyze the economic and social impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality establishments.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a master's work titled The Impacts of covid-19 on the hospitality establishment in Yaoundé.

Please answer as sincerely and objectively as possible.

All the information collected is anonymous and the data will be used for research purpose of this research only by the researcher Agbor Ntui Pascal Mbu

Thanks for helping improve on scientific knowledge.

Economic Impacts

	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	How has Covid-19 affected employment in your hotel or establishment?					
2	What effective strategies were implemented by businesses to recover from Covid-19?					
3	What actions did you think were taken to respond to Covid-19?					
4	What do you think is the impacts of Covid-19 on the occupancy rate of your hotel?					
5	What effective plans were adopted to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19?					
6	Which measures were used to safeguard the hospitality establishment/company?					
7	How has government provided support helped the hospitality establishment?					

Socio demographic profile

8	Gender	Male	Female				
9	Marital status		Single	Divorced	Widowed	Married with	Married without
10	Level of education	Primary school	Secondary school	Bachelor Degree	Master	PhD	
11	Occupational status	Employed	Unemployed	Self employed	Retired	others	
12	Location in Yaounde	Bastos	Biyemassi	Obili	Central town	Omnisport	Fouda
13	Your longevity in the hospitality service	2-5 years	5 -10 years	12-15 years	14-16	16-18 years	18-20 years
14	What is the status of your hotel operation?	Closed	Partially	Opened			
15	What is the size of your hotel?	11-25 rooms	26-50 rooms	51-90 rooms	91-100 rooms	Above 100 rooms	