State Manoeuvres in Hotel Acquisitions in Cameroon: An Analysis of the Ringway Hotel Saga, 1962- 1992

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Abstract

Since the independence and reunification of Cameroon in 1960/61, state engagements in hotel provisioning has been one of the essential socio-economic devotions. Decision making in this sector has most often largely depended on administrative preferences than well-versed managerial pointers. Consequently, some state ventures in this direction have been characterised by, inappropriate forecasting and mismanagement. These setbacks in the long run culminate in the collapse of public hotel investments. Based on primary and secondary sources and informed by qualitative analysis, this article profiles a crucial case of a public hotel investment, the Ringway Hotel in the chief town of Bamenda (Cameroon) as it quivered and writhed for survival. It argues that the purchase and management of the hotel was trapped in controversies involving but not limited to the strategic interest of the state and different stakeholders. The state purchase and operational principles of the hotel did not fluidly align with the desire for which its purchase was envisioned. This had as long run consequence, the collapse of the Ringway hotel.

Key Words: Acquisitions, Manoeuvres, State, Ringway, Hotel, Board of Directors, Cameroon Hotel Limited.

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Introduction

State engagements in hotel provisioning in Cameroon were often marked by certain manoeuvres after the reunification and establishment of a Federal State in 1961. Despite the dominance of the private sector in the domain, the state often engaged in this sector in a bid to corroborate entrepreneurial ventures and improve on standards. The government aside from acting as a facilitator, funds provider and legislator, also played its part on the development of the sector. The partition of Cameroon between the British and the French had ushered in new perspectives to the industry. In 1952, the Buea mountain hotel saw the light of day as an extension of the Buea Guest House.[1] The Cameroon Development Agency Law, 1953 had stipulated its assistance to the government in financing hotel projects that were to be under the control of the government. After the attainment of independence, the federal structures made provisions to which the Buea Mountain Hotel was to be recognized as the property of the Cameroon Hotels Limited under the auspices of the government of Cameroon.[2]

Certain plans of action went into effect that consisted of either purchasing or constructing hotels in major towns like Bamenda and Limbe. The cosmopolitan nature of Bamenda emerged out of its prime importance as a primate town attached to the different divisions. Equally, the exponential population growth in this town evolved from 1299 people in 1934 to 8000 in 1960. It was based on these changes that a modern hotel was envisaged in Bamenda by 1962, a year after independence and reunification of British Southern Cameroons with former French Cameroon. Away from this state of affairs, the administrative dispositions changed following the transition from the Federal to Unitary State in 1972. The management corporate business ventures like hotels

[1] Hortense Tchouta, (2007), "Buea Mountain Hotel, Abandoned Treasure" .Available online at http//www.postnewsline.com assessed on July 10,2021.

[2] Buea Mountain Hotel and its Contribution to the Development of Buea Community, Fako division, South West Region Cameroon. Available online at http//www.project-house.net assessed on June 30,2021.

were transferred from the Cameroons Hotels Limited,[3] to the Ministry of Tourism. State centric governance policy became more prominent as opposed to public-private partnership.

In 1962, given the paucity of standard hotels, a scheme was nursed to broaden the facilities in West Cameroon. It is in this vision that attention was focused on the Ringway Hotel, a private hotel concession in Bamenda. The hotel was negotiated, purchased and later placed under the Ministry of Tourism in 1977[4]. Considering the fact that the form of state had changed in the management of hotels, certain setbacks began to resurface during the late 1970s. Consequently, Ringway hotel faced numerous glitches in the 1980s that was further complicated by the economic crisis and multiparty upheavals in the 1990s. The Ministry of Tourism was charged with the responsibility of ensuring the proper and professional functioning of hotels in Cameroon. The provisions guiding its functioning were laid down by the Board of Directors. The private stake holders operating in the hotel sector were also policed for compliance by the administering authorities who provided guiding rules.[5]

The provisions of presidential decree no 73/672 of the 27 the October 1973(modified and completed by decree no 77/419 of the 24th October 1977) actually amplified the management and control of tourist establishments as well as patrimony. It equally envisaged the carrying out of close research and valuation of important tourist attractions (lakes, caves, waterfalls) for the purpose of eventually developing the sector by the government and utilization of potential tourists.[6] Based on this background, this paper probes into the different maneovres that characterized the purchase of Ringway hotel and how its management became a major impediment, paving the way towards its collapse in 1992.

Ringway Hotel Saga

One of the most spectacular scenarios that animated the hotel service industry in former West Cameroon was the Ringway Hotel saga. The state of West Cameroon in a bid to ensure standard and quality, tried to enhance its hotel and leisure services in Bamenda. Under the tutelage of the Cameroon Hotels Limited, a plan was initiated to purchase a hotel in Bamenda.[7] This was to be a replica of the new wing of Buea Mountain Hotel (BMH) that was situated in the capital of West Cameroon. In a report on the 25th of September 1962, the Board Chair endorsed the plan and the architect's report about the hotel building in Bamenda which was owned by D.A. Nangah.[8] According to preliminary discussions with Nangah, he had expressed interest of a deal in partnership at the valuation price of 15,916,000 francs CFA and also to be at the helm of the management in the new dispensation.[9] A 10 KVA[10] electric plan valued at 519,000 francs CFA was equally considered as a necessary complement of the scheme. Nangah had requested that 2/3 of the sum of the transaction be paid to him in cash and about 1/3 reserved as his share capital on admission to the company. In view of these developments, the director had wished government to relinquish about 29 of its 80 shares and make it available for use as they thought it fit in accordance with the articles. He further postulated that a realisable amount from the government relinquished shares be left in the company for development purposes[11].

Based on a memorandum by the honorable Secretary of State for Labour, Internal Trade, Marketing and Inspection, the Cameroon Hotels Limited took interest in the purchase of the Ringway Hotel in Bamenda. It decided *inter alia*, that the board had the authority to negotiate the possibility of the hotel owner to be part of the

[3] The Cameroon Hotels Limited constituted the board of directors that were charged in the running of state facilities in the hospitality sector. With bias on hotels, this structure under the tutelage of the Ministry of Commerce and Industries in west Cameroon took specific measures in the purchase and running of hotels with certain clearly outline principles based on legislature.

[4] Annual Report on the Activities of the Provincial Delegation for Tourism, 1977/1978, no 5, July 1978.

[5] Annual Report on the Activities, 23.

[6] Annual Report on the Activities of the Provincial Delegation for Tourism,1976/1977,no 5, January 1977.

[7] RAB, File No. Sa 1962/8/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Memorandum by the Honourable Secretary of State for Labour, Internal Trade, Marketing and Inspection, 02.

[8] Ibid.

[9] RAB, File no p3/61/3/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Purchase of A Hotel In Bamenda from Nangah , West Cameroon, 4.

[10] KVA actually refers to the Kilovolt-Ampere. Also known as the kilowatt, it actually measured the apparent power of a generator. This was previewed because of the unavailability of power supply in Bamenda during that period. The hotel was therefore to be powered using a generator. See, RAB,file no ch4/13/64 Letter from the Board of Director Cameroon Hotels Limited to the Secretary of State for Labour, Trade, Marketing and Inspection, September 25,1962, 2.

[11] Ibid,

company as a shareholder after handing over the concession to the state. The hotel infrastructure had been inspected by the architect of the Public Works Department, Peter Inglis, whose report provided ostensible evidence of the existent state and prospects of the facilities.

The report of the Inglis facts finding mission had to be put before the Director and the potential shareholders to federate their considerations. This was of vital importance since the government in its capacity as the major shareholder in the company had to give its final word on the proposal. Following the conclusions and arrangements, the board committed itself to providing Nangah the first installment of the agreed sum.[12] This initiative on the part of the State was definitely received with mixed feelings since the commitments appeared to have been entered into without the full approval of the shareholders and the submission of the scheme as requested. This issue indeed was of considerable concern consequent to the report submitted by the architect on the project and because as far as could be ascertained, the company had no sufficient funds to meet the commitments.[13]

As a corollary to the foregoing, the Board of Directors had requested government to relinquish twenty nine of its eighty shares thereby still being able to exercise control of the company by retaining 51% of the share's holding. It was the view of the Directors to give out the extra shares in order to attract subscribers and also to meet its commitments with Nangah. As per the concerns raised the Directors' position stemmed from the fact that the government held 80% of the shares of the company and the West Cameroon Development Agency had 20%. According to the Board of Directors, if it was approved, certain alternations were to be witnessed on the shares structure of the company.[14] Consequently no issues of shares were to be made at that stage.

Assessment of Ringway Hotel

The board had attested to the fact that the town had small private owned hotels with the best being the Highland Hotel by 1962. The board equally went further to attest that Ringway Hotel appreciably exceeded the standards of the guest house at Upstation in accommodation and could attract guests and tourists in general. Given the Boards management of Buea Mountain Hotel (BMH), it was easier for them to make technical and financial comparisons with the scheme. The purchase of a hotel in Bamenda had to culminate with valuation by a chartered architect to ascertain its quality and standards in line with the new wings of the BMH. One major prerogative was to determine that the hotel in Bamenda was to be a replica of the new wings of the BMH that had been constructed.[15] Peter Inglis, a chartered architect of the BMH was charged with the responsibility of evaluating the Hotel in Bamenda owned by Nangah before the purchase. In a letter dated June 21, 1962, Peter Inglis was required to submit an evaluation report to the board of the Cameroon Hotels Limited.[16] It was against this backdrop that he visited the site on Sunday the 8th of July 1962 with certain observations, which he tabled before the board for consideration.

With regards to the site, the area was evaluated at an approximate 1680 square yards; little more than one-third of an acre. The land sloped evenly down from the back boundary towards the main road and most of the undeveloped area of the site was neither paved nor tarred. A certain amount of hardcore had been placed within the surrounding of the building that helped in avoiding any standing water.[17] The architect went further to appreciate the site based on the fact that it was near the main trading center of Bamenda-just around Commercial Avenue and was thus a well-populated area. His main concern about the site centered on the fact that the existing post and wire fence on three sides of the site was in a very poor condition and thus needed replacement.[18]

[12] Ibid,.

[13] Victor Penzumbia , aged 65^{+},Former Regional Delegate for Tourism and Leisure North West , interviewed by Narcisse N. Awa Ngomgham Bamenda, August 1, 2020.

[14] RAB, File no. p3/61/3/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries,6.

[15] Cameroon Hotels Limited constituted the management board that was charged with the responsibility of running the day to day activities of hotels in the state of West Cameroon. Under the authority of the state , this hotel took center stage in not only running hotels but also in the training of personnel as well as the purchase of establishments that could be used for hotel purposes. The management board constituted members of the state of West Cameroon and some renowned personalities. Considering the fact board members were not experts as such, they often contracted specialist in the field for consultation. This analysis is contained in the ordinances of the state of West Cameroon for 1962.

[16] File no p3/62/4/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Valuation of an Hotel In Bamenda, West Cameroon by Peter Inglis, RAB, 4.

[17] File no p3/62/4/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, RAB, 6.

[18] Ibid.

From Peter Inglis' report, there existed certain dichotomies between the new wing of the BMH and D.A Nangah's. To begin with, Nangah's hotel had cement floors throughout the entire building whereas the BMH had wood block floors[19] in all bedrooms and corridors. It also had thermoplastic tiles in all bath rooms and pantries. Equally, the kitchen and bathrooms in Nangah's hotel had no wall tiling while those of BMH had walls in the kitchen and bathrooms tiled to a height of 4.00 with built-in soap holders. Concerning electricity, Inglis reported that:

> the structure never had supply or generating set or face wiring (The BMH new wing had a completely concealed supply installation in steel conduit (94 no lighting points and 84 no power points) perhaps the only similarity on the bases of assessment laid in the fact that both structures never had bracket and ceiling lighting, fittings water or cupboard heaters. It was estimated that these installations were to cost £1600.[20]

Another pertinent aspect evaluated was the state of furniture and equipment in the facility. Equipment in the Nangah's hotel was evaluated at £1000 while those of BMH cost £25000. In terms of the value of built-in furniture provided, it was estimated that those of Nangah's hotel cost £200 and the new wing of BMH cost £1,000. The plumbing installations were equally assessed by Inglis within which a dichotomy emerged; those of Nangah's hotel were exposed and while those of the new wing of BMH completely concealed alongside drainage.

The cubic capacity also came under scrutiny which indicated that Nangah's hotel occupied 134,000 cubic fit as compared to BMH 124,000 cubic fit. Peter Inglis' last valuation was based on the cost price of both hotels that showed that BMH cost £33.795.00 and Nangah's hotel, £38,851.00.This hotel actually had two buildings and a small structure which contained equipment used for water heating. The main hotel building consisted of a two-storey building that stood facing the road. This main building contained the principal public rooms, bar, lounge, kitchen, office, and limited amount of bedroom and bathroom accommodation.[21] The external walls to the ground floor were 14 inches thick, with part of the main elevation being built with stone and the remainder in block work. All the walls were painted and cemented externally and the block work had been colored-washed with "snowcap" or a similar paint. Internal walls were cemented throughout the entire building as a whole.[22]

The ground and first floor were mass and reinforced with concrete, respectively finished with a cement screed which had been left unpainted. The window, doors and roof were made of timber and the roof was covered with corrugated galvanized iron sheets. The single-storey building was a bedroom annex and stood behind the two-storey building at the rear of the site but was not connected.[23] Services in this hotel consisted of water supply, electricity supply telephone and sewage disposal. Based on water supply, the structure had an existing main water supply and cold water that was available in all bathrooms, cloakrooms and in the kitchen. A hot water supply was available in the bathrooms in the single-storey bedrooms. Electricity supply on its part was one of the impediments. It was based on the fact that no main electricity supply (hydroelectricity power) existed in Bamenda but there were strong possibilities that it was to be installed within few years as stated in the report.[24] Although a 10 kilo watt diesel generating plant had been ordered by the vendor, this item was not included in the sale price and was to become an extra charge on the purchaser.

In spite of these impediments, the building had been wired for lighting throughout and three power points had been installed in the kitchen for refrigerators. Unfortunately, no power points were available for cupboard, water heaters and table lamps. Telephone services were absent but a connection could easily be obtained with the Bamenda Exchange. A good appraisal was equally advanced as to the sewage disposal due to the efficient drainage system connecting both buildings and discharging into septic tanks near the front car parking space.[25]

In relation to the leasing terms, certain decisions were arrived at. A lease of 99 years was granted to Nangah from the 1st of July 1961 at an annual rental of £24.18.0 (17,231 francs) which was subject to revision every 20

[19]Ibid,.7.

[20] File no p3/61/3/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Purchase of A Hotel In Bamenda from Mr. Nangah , West Cameroon, 8.

[21] Ibid,

[22] Ibid.

[23] Henry Awafong(former worker with Nangah company limited and technical school teacher) in discussion with author on August 15,2019.

[24] Interview with Henry Awafong.

[25] File no p3/61/3/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 12.

years. Other points of interest, in the lease were found in the certificate of occupancy No.C.285, issued by the Lands and survey Department in Buea. The lease also provided space to erect building on the site to a total value of not less than £20,000.0.0 within a period of two years (that is by the 30th June 1963). This was found on clause 14 that gave leads for the erection of a residence for occupation by the holder, his dependent and domestic servants only. Technically, Nangah in constructing the Ringway Hotel had overlooked clause 14 of the lease but still had the possibility to catch up given that the duration of the lease was quite extensive.[26]

Moreover, the valuation inscribed in the Inglis report had also highlighted certain additional works that were to be done in order to render the hotel worthy of standards. The following additional works and cost were relevant as far as the structure was concerned.

Table 1: Valuation of Additional Cost Estimates at Ring Way Hotel

Item	Description of Work	Approximate Cost(£)
1	Additional hardcore and complete tarring of space adjoining the buildings.	300.0.0
2	Fencing- timber posts and barbed wire- on three boundaries.	100.0.0
3	Kitchen store, with 9” block work walls rendered in cement internally, concrete floor with cement screed, reinforced concrete roof, windows fitted with heavy M.S mesh, shelves on three walls	350.0.0
4	10 kw. Diesel electricity generating plant, with 500 gallon oil storage tank, and concrete bases.	600.0.0
5	Provision of lobby to screen the “public” lavatory under the stairs.	30.0.0
6	Fixed bar, shelves, and cupboard canteen.	80.0.0
7	Provision of wood pelmets and curtain rails throughout two-storey block.	60.0.0
8	Shelves in store, adjoining canteen.	30.0.0
9	Additional shelves etc. in kitchen.	25.0.0
10	Shelves and cupboard in ground floor office	35.0.0
11	Replacement of all glass in existing glazed doors with ¼”	40.0.0

[26] Ibid.

	thick polished plated glass.	
12	Provision of 2No. 1st floor "office" into bedrooms; complete with plumbing and waste pipes.	30.0.0
13	2No. additional power points.	10.0.0
14	Electric cooker circuit in kitchen.	10.0.0
TOTAL		**£1700.0.0**

Source: File no p3/62/4, Valuation of a Hotel in Bamenda, West Cameroon by Peter Inglis, RAB, 6.

Inglis's valuation report was a major pointer to the various lapses that were inherent in the purchase of the hotel. He suggested that it was not going to be in the interest of the board or government if the property in Bamenda was to be bought on behalf of the Cameroon Hotels Limited either at the price of £38,851.0.0 requested by the vendor Nangah or at the valuation of £23,000.0.0 given in this report [27]. He further suggested that it was not going to be beneficial if the board could rent this property or sub-lease the vendor on behalf of Cameroon Hotels Limited. Accordingly, if the board felt that there was necessity for a hotel in Bamenda with a higher standard of accommodation that will be of public interest to meet the demand, a capital expenditure in the region of £30,000 to £40,000 (20,760,000 to 27,680,000 francs) competent professional advice on the placement, planning, design and equipment of the hotel should be sought at all stages.

This valuation report by Peter Inglis was a major pointer to the numerous lapses that were bound to be faced in case the Board of Directors decided to proceed with the purchase. Consequently extensive studies were made as to the physical structures for accommodation. The following table depicted the valuation analysis on the physical and accommodation outlook.

Table 2: Schedule for accommodation

Item	**Position**	**Name of room**	**Size**
1	Two-storey block; ground floor	Lounge	25′0″ x 24 ′0″
2	Two-storey block; ground floor	Kitchen.	20′0″ x 12 ′0″
3	Two-storey block; ground floor	Office	10′0″ x 12 ′0″
4	Two-storey block; ground floor	Bedrooms (4No)	10′0″ x 12 ′0″
5	Two-storey block; ground floor	Toilets. (For2no/ bedrooms.)	10′0″ x 12 ′0″

[27] Ibid.

6	Two-storey block; ground floor	Toilets –male(under stairs)	10′0″ x 4 ′6″
7	Two-storey block; 1st floor	General bar	43′0″ x 25 ′0″
8	Two-storey block; 1st floor	Store.	12′6″ x 6 ′6″
9	Two-storey block; 1st floor	Canteen.	13′3″ x 10 ′0″
10	Two-storey block; 1st floor	Bar	13′3″ x 22 ′0″
11	Two-storey block; 1st floor	Offices-2no(to be converted into bedrooms)	10′9″ x 13′3″
12	Two-storey block; 1st floor	Female toilet –"public"	3′0″ x 13′3″
13	Two-storey block; 1st floor	male toilet –"public"	7′5″ x 13 ′3″
14	Single –storey block	Bedrooms(4no)	16′0″ x 16 ′0″
15	Single –storey block	Bathrooms(for 4 no. bedrooms)	7′6″ x 7′9″
16	Single –storey block	Bedrooms(2no)	21′3″ x 13′2″
17	Single –storey block	Bathrooms.(for 2no.bedrooms.)	8′3″ x 7 ′9″
18	Single –storey block	Bathrooms. (2no)	13′2″ x 13 ′2″
19	Single –storey block	Bathrooms.(for 2no.bedrooms.)	8′3″ x 7 ′9″
20	Single –storey block	Stores.(2no)	4′9″ x 7 ′9″

Source: File no. p3/62/4/Valuation of a Hotel in Bamenda, West Cameroon by Peter Inglis, RAB, 7.

Table 2 clearly indicates that the various compartments that characterized the Ringway hotel. An elaboration of the various sizes was done by Inglis to ascertain the standards of the hotel. The conclusion of these elaborated studies actually indicated that this structure could not be compared to the Buea mountain hotel although the costing was proportionate. Considering the lapses that were bound, the hotel at the initial stages of existence functioned effectively right up to the moment were modern hotels like Skyline emerged. In other to sustain the hotel, DA Nangah ensured that when bookings for skyline were full, Ringway was proposed to tourists or visitors. This became evident when the hotel became effective.

Eventual Purchase and subsequent collapse

Considerable concern was shown by the government of West Cameroon at the proposal to alter the shareholdings of the company without any prior reference to the shareholders. This was pertaining to the eventual purchase of the structure. The government at no time had recorded its intention as the major shareholder to relinquish any proportion of their shares. In reply to the letter scheduling the above proposals, the financial secretary after taking the directions of the Prime Minister indicated to the Board of Directors certain lapses as reported by Inglis.[28]

The financial secretary had indicated that a detailed scheme for the participation in the company by Nangah needed to have been drawn up including a certified valuation of the hotel in Bamenda with a plan. This was in accord with the instructions of the government as recorded in the conclusion of the executive council. The financial secretary equally highlighted in a letter section 68 (1) of the company's ordinance within the government. He took specific interest in the capacity of government as a major shareholder in the company which may requisition a general meeting of the shareholders to relinquish part of its share.[29] The financial secretary further reiterated that no commitment should be entered into with any hotel owners in Bamenda in connection with the proposal until after the shareholders had considered the detailed scheme and expressed approval.[30]

Furthermore, the general meeting considered the term for any loans negotiated with the organization contacted by the Board of Directors and that no agreement had to be entered into with the lending organizations concerned until the meeting of the shareholders had considered the proposals.[31]The financial secretary lastly highlighted his position on the issue of shares. He insinuated that the government had not agreed to any alternation in the share structure of the company. Based on this allusion, no issue of shares could be made to anyone outside the shareholders until the other actions were to be described considerably.[32] Amidst this dichotomy, the Board of Directors in April 1962 went ahead to purchase the hotel.

By 1982, the agreement between the government and D.A Nangah expired. Although with the absence of statistics, the hotel during this period was already facing a low occupancy rate[33]. Numerous reasons accounted for this state of affairs ranging from the fact that the hotel was run as a state corporation whereby officials used the services and never paid immediately. Most payment from state officials often came in the form of bonds and cheques that took very long periods for reimbursement. Considering the new dispositions that emerged with the Unitary State in 1972, the government had to restructure the sector. The hotel at this time came under the control of the Ministry of Tourism and the laws of 1977 reoriented any partnership the state had with private individuals. In this regard the hotel in 1983 was transferred to Francis Acha on a hire purchase[34]. The new management tried to revamp the hotel immediately they took over. Even the partnership agreement improvised to save it from collapse did not allay the worsening performance situation that was already evident with the new dispositions.

On 5 September 1962 a loan was contracted on behalf of the Cameroons Hotel Limited from the Cameroon bank to finance projects for Ringway hotel. This amount was later on borrowed in 1963, which will hinder the growth of this hotel in due course. This would become one of the key issues that collapsed the Cameroon Bank as no account ever indicated that payments were done. The advent of a unitary system in 1972 led to the emergence of new structures within the hotel sector. As the former structures were dissolved in 1977, a new governance culture emerged that was not adaptable to the new business environment. The monitoring mechanism that were replica in west Cameroon hotels limited was replaced with the Ministry of Tourism that never had very rigid control. With this type of managerial character, embezzlement, mismanagement, inertia and poor project conception were common as witnessed in The Southern-West Cameroon(s) Development Agency[35].

[28] File no p3/61/3/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Purchase of A Hotel In Bamenda from Mr. Nangah , West Cameroon, 4.

[29] Ibid,.

[30] Anonymous ,aged 72, Former Worker at Ringway Hotel, Interviewed by Narcissi N. Awa , Commercial Avenue, May 29,2021.

[31] Ibid.

[32] File no p3/61/3/ Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Purchase of A Hotel In Bamenda from Mr. Nangah , West Cameroon, 4.

[33] Annual Report on the activities of the provincial Delegation for Tourism, 1980/1981,no 4 ,October 1981,4.

[34] Edi Mesumbe, Annual Report on The Activities of the Provincial service for Tourism,1984/1985 financial year ,August 1985,12.

[35] Nixon K. Takor and Kenneth N. Yufenyuy, "The Southern-West Cameroon(s) Development Agency, 1956-1973: Historical Evidence of Hope and Despair in Economic Development", *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*

Unfortunately the economic crisis and multiparty politics set in and negatively affected the course of affairs. According to Edi Mesumbe the hotel at times could go for a weeks without a single guest[36]. The bar and restaurant attached to it were equally facing numerous difficulties in terms of customers. The hotel suffered from mismanagement which was compounded by the fact they did not pay their creditors who were supposed to be their partners. Some of their partners lost trust in them. Conterminous to the BMH, some employees swindled scandalous amounts of money from the hotel and consumed drinks without pay. Although it was perceived as an Ayaba annex which emerged in 1985, the standards were dropping as numerous new hotels had evolved in the likes of Mondial, Wisdom Garden, Savannah and Holiday hotels[37]. These new hotels attracted more guest than Ringway due to their innovative standards. The unhygienic nature of the premises both in and out negatively affected its lure for tourists. Owing to these ebbing situations, the hotel could not even sustain its man power as it warped in numbers of personnel from seven to barely two by 1992. Based on this backdrop the hotel went out of business in 1992 as it could no longer meet its business objectives. Viewing this challenge, the provincial Delegation for Tourism that was lodged at the former Highland Hotel edifice at the Bamenda city center, (Commercial Avenue) decided to transfer its administrative activities to defunct Ringway Hotel[38]. This decision officially sealed all hopes to resuscitate the hotel as one of the tourist destinations that gestated in the early 1980s in Bamenda town of Cameroon.

Conclusion

The implication of the state of Cameroon as one of the decisive actors in hotel provisioning in the town of Bamenda was quite remarkable but challenging. The events that surrounded the purchase of the Ringway Hotel somehow exposed the irreconcilable tension between state-centric socio-economic forecasting and expert business perspective in the market-oriented-hospitality sphere. The absence of the state to properly take into account the Inglis feasibility expert report on the state and anticipated shape of the Ringway hotel initiated its course to oblivion. This coupled with inappropriate managerial dynamics to adjust the operation of the hotel to the dynamic changes that were accompanying the growth and expansion of the town of Bamenda contributed immensely to the collapse of the hotel by 1992. Even the partnership agreement improvised to save it from collapse did not allay the worsening performance situation. State procurement of this structure, therefore became more of a liability than and asset.

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Pierre, Fotse**,** 65^{+} years, Former Regional Delegate for Tourism and Leisure North West, February 2019.

Sendze, Luke, 85 years, Barister, Patron of Club 58 And Former Lawyer of Nangah, Foncha Street, March 18, 2019.

Akah, Ernest, 44 years, PhD Researcher and Resident at Fons Street Bamenda, January, 2020.

Njube Joseph, 76 years, Retired worker at the provincial delegation for tourism, July 07, 2021.

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