



CURRENT TRENDS IN THE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IN CAMEROON

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Abstract

Books are concrete manifestations of human memory and they play central role in shaping society but despite this wide strength, current publishing trends in Cameroon are not extensively documented as well as Cameroon's growing digital landscape based on global trends. Reason why this study delves into this research work "Current Trends in Book Publishing in Cameroon" and has as its main objective to examine book publishing as a vital component of the creative-culture industry in Cameroon. A framework was developed to illustrate the connections between influential factors. Sociological theories employed was Cultural Industry Theory by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. A combination of survey and ethnographic approaches were used in this study, utilizing questionnaires and interviews to collect data. The research has as its main objective to examine and analyze the current trends of book publishing industry. A triangulation approach was used to analyze the data, cross-verifying results through multiple methods thematically using descriptive statistics and statistical tools for presentation of the findings. The area of investigation included Buea, Bamenda and Yaoundé. The study focused on key stakeholders in the publishing industry, including; writers, illustrators, publishers, literary critics, literary agents, printers, book distributors, book sellers, librarians, consumers, state authorities and agencies concerned with books in Cameroon. Findings reveal that there is increasing knowledge on e-Books, growing market for book consumption, increasing government actions, an upgrade in quality and quantity of books produced as well as increasing number of authors. Insights also show that the book industry produces different genres of (creative works); pedagogic literatures, motivational books, religious books, children's literature and romance books. Motivational books are the most produced followed by fictional literature. Although printed books on their part dominate the quantity of books produced in Cameroon there are attempts to publish electronic books and audio forms. Conclusively, despite the enormous challenges as not enough has been done in developing local knowledge given that knowledge is power, the future of book publishing in Cameroon however looks promising with opportunities for growth, innovation, and increased accessibility. As recommendation, the book industry constitutes an ideological fight for knowledge thus this study is encouraging Africans in general and Cameroonians particularly to engage in making the book industry a reflection of Cameroonian ideas and identity.

Keywords:

Books, Book Publishing, Book Industry.

INTRODUCTION

The book publishing industry in Cameroon is undergoing significant transformations, driven by technological advancements, shifting reader demands and behaviors as well as evolving market demands. As the country continues to grow and develop, its literary landscape is becoming increasingly vibrant, with new voices and perspectives emerging. In recent years, Cameroonian authors and publishers have been leveraging digital platforms to reach wider audiences, while also exploring innovative ways to produce and distribute books. This piece explores the current trends shaping the book industry in Cameroon, from traditional to the rise of digital publishing and audio books to the growing importance of social media and online communities.

RESEARCH STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite the growing demand for sustainable publishing practices with the rise of digital technologies, changing reader preferences, and evolving business models, in the situation seems to be different as many publishers seem to still struggle to adapt to these changes. The Cameroon publishing industry is facing significant challenges, including limited access to digital platforms and inadequate infrastructure, hindering the promotion of local literature and culture and lack of skilled professionals. As a result, Cameroonian literature and culture are not being adequately represented in the global market, and local authors are facing limited opportunities for publication and recognition. This study aims to investigate the current trends in publishing in Cameroon, identifying opportunities and challenges, and exploring strategies for promoting the growth and development of the industry.

The central focus of this study was to assess the position of book publishing in the creative culture industry. The study therefore seeks to critically identify and analyze the current trends of book publishing in Cameroon; to examine the challenges faced by publishers in Cameroon; to explore strategies for promoting the growth and development of the publishing industry in Cameroon.

This research objectives take us to the following research questions. What is the current trend of books in Cameroon with regard to traditional and digital methods? What are the key challenges faced by or confronted by publishers in Cameroon? What strategies can be employed to promote the growth and development of the publishing industry in Cameroon?

THE STUDY AREA

This study was carried out in three regions of Cameroon; In the Center Region of the Yaoundé municipality i.e., the Administrative Centre, Biyem Assi and Obili in the district municipality of Yaoundé VI council area, Nlongkaka in Yaoundé I, all located in the Mfoundi Division. Yaoundé is the Capital of Cameroon which is host to government ministries, some national and international organizations concerned with books; South West Region particularly in Buea municipality in the communities of Molyko, Great Soppo and Buea Station; and North West Region in Bamenda municipality in the areas of Bamenda II and III sub-divisional council areas

of Nkwen precisely in Mile 3, Mankon precisely in the communities of Commercial Avenue, Meta Quarter, Treasury Street, Mallam Baba street, Fomukong Street, Unification Street and Up-Station. These communities were chosen and deemed necessary for this study because they are home to stakeholders or actors of the book industry.

CULTURAL INDUSTRY THEORY

This research drew inspiration from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer context of the cultural industry which refers to not only the production process, but also to the standardization of things and the reasonable and efficient allocation of technology. As media technology has advanced, cultural and artistic products are embellished with items that share the same elements, stories, and aesthetics. Such works can garner or win the public's approval, but it is challenging to make a lasting effect on their hearts. In order to achieve standardization and mass production, cultural industry technology subtracts the two conceptual distinctions between social work and social systems. Producers rationalize in accordance with consumer preferences in order to make items appealing to consumers and occupy the market. Because the available options are more and more in line with the tastes of the great majority of people and current fashion trends, the displayed works of culture works lose their individuality despite the manufacturer's claims that each item is special and cannot be replicated.

Adorno highlights commercialization by stating that technology has hastened the standardization of cultural and creative products' mass manufacturing, which was made possible by the industrial period. These are all intimately related to the fundamental qualities of commodities produced by the cultural sector. Artworks produced by the cultural industry are not genuine works of art, rather they are produced as goods that can be bought and sold right away on the market. Books must look appealing and draw attention as aesthetic products. In the book market, some authors' works lack appeal because their sole goal is to increase sales. Publishers occasionally exclusively accept certain genres, either permanently or for a specific submission period. No matter how amazing their books may be, if they submit a manuscript that isn't in that genre, they won't be taken into consideration. If publishers don't believe a book will sell, they won't waste their effort on it. After all, publishing requires a significant financial commitment on the part of publishers. They need to be convinced that this book will make money and have a sizable readership before they will even consider publishing it.

Adorno talks about falsehood in culture industries by stating that cultural and creative works now have a false identity due to the standardization and commercialization of the artistic and cultural sector. This false persona gained popularity as a result of the ruling class's deliberate defense in order to influence public opinion and set the trend. Therefore, even if someone is aware of this character's hypocrisy for instance plagiarism and copyrights infringement, he will not speak up for fear of being rejected. Adorno offers a number of connected assertions regarding the truth-content of art. A certain type of non-discursive presentation is associated with artistic truth-content, which is contrasted with discursive truth on some level. The ability of the people to discriminate between truth and untrue diminishes over time. In this regard, the personification of the cultural industry is nothing more than a marketing strategy, an age of deceitful consumers.

Adorno's critical theory on cultural industry is criticized for being too concentrated on the commercialization of culture and the nature of products. It has not done too much explanation and research for the purchasers of goods, that is, the general public, and has ignored the subjectivity of the people.

METHODOLOGY

POPULATION SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The target population in this study constitutes resident stakeholders within the book chain i.e., of the two English Speaking Regions of Cameroon (Buea and Bamenda) and Yaoundé the Capital of Cameroon; writers, literary agents and critics, publishers, printers, book distributors, book sellers, consumers, librarians and archivists as well as state authorities and agencies concerned with books in Cameroon.

For this study, non-probability sampling method was used as samples selected were based on subjective judgement of the researcher. More precisely purposive sampling was used in selecting participants for key informant in-depth interviews. This is because the researcher focused on key informants who are knowledgeable in the domain or subject matter.

Meanwhile non-probability convenient sampling method was used for respondents of closed-ended questionnaire because they were the easiest for the researcher to access. This was due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time, willingness to participate in the research, the having a low budget to conduct research or budgetary constraints and it was also due to requirement to act quickly within a limited timeframe to meet a deadline. This was done in order to achieve a rich description for the case it was important to do selection based on their experiences and potentials to contribute to a better understanding of the social processes within the Cameroonian book industry. Consequently, a diverse range of experiences was selected.

The book industry participants were carefully selected according to their background from a range of sectors in the Cameroon book industry in order to provide a comprehensive view of the research issues and have further practical and theoretical implications for the Cameroon book industry and the research literature in this area. The population of interest was defined as those people in the study area; Buea, Bamenda and Yaoundé. The participants were selected across multiple sectors in the Cameroon book industry, because it was important to investigate participants that would be directly or indirectly linked in the book industry chain. It was important to avoid observations specific to a particular sector of the book chain. Thus participants were selected from a range of sectors within the chain and in doing so, it helped identify an all-rounded aspect of the participant's different opinions and views. The participants involved were; book writers, book publishers, government agencies concern with books, consumers and others as aforementioned.

The sample was identified through personal knowledge and relationships. Both supervisors and current employer provided contacts of some pertinent persons to contact who could provide relevant facts. Participants in the sample were contacted by email, phone contact and WhatsApp in order to request participation in the research. A total of two hundred and twenty-three

respondents were sampled quantitatively, while a total of twenty-two participants were sampled qualitatively. At this point the researcher reached data saturation where enough data had been collected to draw the necessary conclusions and any further data wouldn't have had value added insights as this researcher was assured that further data collection would yield similar results and serve to confirm emerging themes and conclusions.

RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURE

This research adopted an ethnographic research design so as to give the researcher a deeper understanding of the subject matter by providing better insights into core aspects and specificities, as well as authentic experience and holistic views of the book industry. That being said, data was collected through the following techniques; observation (naturalistic observation) and in-depth interviews which were then used to draw conclusions about how the book industry functions and how the various stakeholders interacted with one another. Through this research design the researcher was able to observe the type of machines used in printing houses, the type of books printed (hardback and paperback), the content in some of the books as well as their qualities. Also, the researcher observed the bookshops, their manner of organization and the type of items displayed and sold in those bookshops, libraries and archival services. The researcher equally took note of workers in the book factories as well as the various players and their functions within the book chain.

Quantitatively, empirical research in this study made use of survey design with the use of structured questions as the research technique. The researcher designed and administered questionnaire survey applying clarity, self-guided completion and brief wording because it reduces bias or ambiguity. This method ensured quantity by measuring and counting demographic information as well as the quantity and quality of books produced and published in Cameroon. This quantification of the research work enabled the researcher to achieve high reliability, precision and authenticity.

The questionnaire contained different sections addressing the research questions. The questionnaire administration started on April 3rd 2022 and the final copies were administered on May 15th, 2022 in the study areas. Questionnaires were administered through the use of Open Data Kit (ODK collect) which was shared through emails and Whatsapp forums while printed copies (self-administered questionnaires) were distributed to some respondents. All participants were presented the letter of authorization from the University of Buea and there was an introductory remark for every questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study involved qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews (in-depth-interviews), and quantitative analysis of close – ended interviews (questionnaires) from stakeholders within the book industry. Data from the semi-structured interviews were coded and then grouped by frequencies. Quantitative analysis was done with the help of a computer program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative analysis was done using content and narrative analysis with the use of NVivoTM 6 computer software, which is a powerful benchmark for the

qualitative analysis of large bodies of unstructured text, mixed methods, graphical, audio and video data. It offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible and systematic forms. Data was processed and analyzed using the descriptive method. This method is made up of tabulations, figures, bar charts and pie charts were used to present data collected, and also the use of pictorial maps.

Mindful of the fact that this study was qualitative and quantitative, considering the fact that some participants responded through verbal talk that was taped recorded and written down, the researcher paid attention to similar responses to avoid repetition. These responses were grouped into segments and manually analyzed in accordance with the objectives of this study. Selected comments from the respondents were presented word verbatim in quotes to elucidate their in-depth interpretations and contributions to the study. This method of data analysis gives room for voices of masses to be heard. However quantitatively demographic information and other findings are presented on tables, charts, and graphs. Data triangulation was used because of the multiple data sources this method provides in answering the research questions. This involved developing pre-defined or interactive sets of concepts or categories.

The researcher developed a code list based on the major indicators of the study. The primary documents of textual data were coded for existence and for frequency of concepts by coding for every single word or phrase that appeared. Relevant categories not included in the initial code list were added during the coding process. Introducing this coding flexibility allowed for new, important material to be incorporated into the coding process that could have significant bearing on results. During the coding, it was assumed that any idea that emerged at least once was relevant. However, the frequency tables also reflect how many times a concept emerged and a major indicator of emphasis.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study had three specific objectives including: The current trend of book publishing industry in Cameroon with regards to traditional and digital methods as one of its specific objectives. In answering research question one and meeting up with objective one, Table 1 below presents respondents view on the genres of books produced, quality and quantity as well as the form of books (e-Books, pint or audio).

Table 1: Respondents' Views on the Current Trends in Book Publishing

Indicators	Options	Freq(N=245)	Percentage
Observation about type of books produced	More children's books	23	9.4
	More of motivational books	118	48.2
	More of novels books	46	18.7
	More of religious books	29	11.8
	All	28	11.4
	Others	00	00
Observation about quality of books produced	Increased in quality	60	24.5
	Reduction in quality	71	29

	No major change in quality	55	22.4
	Don't know	59	24.1
Observation about forms of books produced	More of audio books	25	10.2
	More of print books	106	43.2
	More of eBooks	43	17.5
	All the forms	50	20.4
	Don't know	21	8.6
Observation about the quantity of books produced	Increased quantity	117	47.7
	Reduction in quantity	41	16.7
	No major change	39	15.8
	Don't know	48	19.5

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Despite dwelling challenges book publishing in Cameroon has emerged completely to meet some of the world's standards. The book industry has evolved from when Cameroonian publishers did not even have author's rights to current trends of rights. NMI, Nyaa, Buma Kor, Dove ANUCAM publishers and others have been able to create a niche for themselves as an indigenous publishing industry.

Zezeza in Stringer (2002, p. 3) reported that in the years immediately following independence in Africa, the publishing industry and library system in Anglophone Africa experienced rapid development, thanks to massive investment by the new states facilitated by vibrant economic growth in the sectors and symbols of development, including education and indigenization. New local publishing houses, both state-owned and private, were established to compete with the British multinational publishing houses such as Longman, Heinemann, Nelson, Macmillan, Evans Brothers, and the Oxford and Cambridge university presses that dominated the scene at independence. The new publishing houses either emerged out of new investments or were acquired through nationalizations or purchases. For example, NMI Education is representing *Cambridge University Press* in Cameroon. In Malawi Longman was nationalized and incorporated into Dzuka, while in Kenya it was purchased by local private interests and renamed Longhorn; the same happened to Heinemann, which was renamed East African Educational Publishers. If the 1960s and 1970s were boom years for the book industry in Anglophone Africa, the 1980s were years of crisis, and the 1990s were characterized by recovery and transformation.

The effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which were adopted by many African countries in the 1980s at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, were contradictory. On the one hand, the programmes undermined the publishing industry by raising production costs as a result of currency devaluations, which increased the prices of imported inputs such as paper and machinery. Also, sales were reduced thanks to falling real wages and massive retrenchment and cuts in educational budgets.

Moreover, the high interest rate policies made borrowing difficult for many businesses. But economic liberalization also transformed the industry in that deregulation and privatization allowed private publishers to compete with, and in some cases supplant, state or parastatal

publishing houses. Furthermore, economic recession forced many transnational publishing companies to relocate or localize their interests, thereby removing one of the major obstacles to the development of an indigenous publishing industry.

Findings related to the current trends of book publishing are presented on the table 4.1 above. From the information gathered, publishers mostly practice what is called "Print-on-demand". They print paperback books, audio and e-Books. This means that books are printed only when ordered and then dispatched or shipped. Distributors thus keep only a few copies in stock because they fear the risk of dumping in their magazines and warehouses in case the books are not purchased. It was observed in Presbook Buea that they have piles upon piles of abandoned books which have never been purchased and some have become obsolete especially in the case of educational text books. Publishers revealed that their books are sold in Cameroon, Africa and the world at large. Some noted that other Africans and Westerners read Cameroonian books because they are interested in knowing more about Cameroonian perspectives. For instance, some publishing houses revealed that their works have been purchased by almost 500 to 1000 libraries across the world. People also read Cameroonian works through technological electronic mobile devices such as Kindle, iBook and others. Also, some scholars do research, consult and cite from Langa Books through Google Books and other digital platforms.

Nearly half (48.2%) of the participants indicated that based on their observation, more of motivational books are published in Cameroon, and only 18.7% of them indicated that, currently more of fictional books are being published in Cameroon. Thus, it can be noted that motivational books lead the current trend of book production as far as creative writing is concerned in Cameroon. In addition, nearly one quarter (24.5%) of participants observed that there has been improvement in the quality of books produced in Cameroon in recent times. In a sharp contrast, about a third of them (29%) claimed the quality of books produced in Cameroon has reduced while 22.4% of them maintained there has not been any major change in the quality of books produced in Cameroon in recent times.

Furthermore, over one third (43.2%) of respondents held that there are more of print books produced in Cameroon in recent times, 10.2% claimed more of audio books are produced, 17.5% others indicated that more of e-Books are produced while 20.4% maintained there is a mixture of print, audio and e-Books are produced in Cameroon. More to this, findings showed that there is increase in the quantity of books produced in Cameroon according to 117(47.7%) of participants. However, 41(16.7%) of them observed that there is reduction in the quantity of books produced in Cameroon, 39(15.8%) others claimed that there has not been any major change while 48(19.5%) of them were not able to decide on this. It was observed that if a book is printed using all formats, a separate ISBN code is issued to each book format printed.

The descriptive findings revealed that more of motivational books are published in Cameroon according to about half of the sampled population. It can be observed that even though motivational, children's books, romantic and religious books are published in Cameroon, more of motivational books are produced and published according to this study. This contradicts the findings of Ngwane (2005) examined the challenges and changes within the Cameroonian book industry and concluded that in Cameroon mainly school textbooks are published. This difference

is justifiable given between it is a long period between 2005 and now 2022 and it is but normal that the book production and publishing trends in the country should change. It can be argued that more of motivational books are produced in the country to motivate people to engage in innovative ways of doing things especially in the entrepreneurial domain. In addition, with regards to the quality of books produced in Cameroon, about one quarter of respondents claimed there has been improvement in quality as against nearly one third of them who content that there has been a drop in the quality of books produced in Cameroon with below one quarter asserting that there has not been any major change in the quality of books produced in Cameroon.

This study holds that there is an improvement in quality of books produced in Cameroon in terms of richness and value about what is written in terms of happenings within the society. Most Cameroonian writers are very involved in wanting to effect change and in doing that, they are creating realities. Many of them want to see a better democratic society and thus they write in a holistic manner that makes sense. This is a relative judgment because no scientific procedure was used by respondents to ascertain the quality of books produced in Cameroon. Similarly, the argument that the quality of books produced has improved in recent times is also seen as relative. The position of this study is that it would be beneficial to the economy and development of Cameroon should the quality of books produced be improved and enhanced more and more so that the Cameroonian book society can easily compete with more advanced and developed societies. Valdehusa (1985) in Oyeyinka et al. (2016) relays the impact of books in the national integration. He opines; “The quality, quantity and diversity of books produced by a society are important indicators of that society’s level of development, intellectual sophistication, capacity for technological innovation and industriousness”.

Furthermore, over half of respondents held that there is more of print books produced in Cameroon in recent times, below one quarter maintained there is a mixture of print, audio and e-Books meanwhile the remaining proportion perceived that there is more of either e-Books or audio books.

Anglophone writing has evolved by leaves and bounds especially with creative writing in the 90s with the opening of the flood gates of democracy or literalisation. There was a lot that Anglophone writers had to be very involved in. Basically, some were out to articulate the ‘Anglophone Problem’ but there were those who were good at writing very sweet and romantic stories and they were really doing great in that. (Male, aged 63, interviewed on April 12, 2022)



Figure 1. Good quality hard-back books printed and published in Cameroon
Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The book industry in Cameroon produces books in different forms namely print, audios, and e-Books. The book industry in Cameroon is predominantly traditionally print paper-back publishing. There is very insignificant quantity of hard-back books and which is usually requested by the government (as seen in the picture above), only very few people can afford the production of hard-back books because they are expensive to produce when compared to other forms of print books.

Nearly half of the sample reported that there is an increase in the quantity of books produced in Cameroon in recent times. The findings are suggestive that many more Cameroonians are venturing in to the book industry. This further demonstrates that many more Cameroonians are buying and reading books since people cannot be producing books that are not consumed.

Upgrade in Quantity and Quality

Talking about the quantity and quality in the trend of books, Cameroon's literary production has also been more prolific than in the past, in terms of the number of books published. According to Edmond VII (2023) those participating in book production are members of ANELCAM and CANPA, two professional associations on books which following their records, majority of publishing companies produce textbooks and instructional manuals, which make up somewhat less than 30% of titles and slightly more than 80% of production in terms of volume. In actuality, the majority of the production is built on the manual and instructive books. With 2069 titles out of the 3415 titles published and registered for legal deposit between 2018 and 2023, this segment

accounts for approximately 60,58% of the overall volume. Cameroon, which produces 400 titles yearly on average, is the country with the largest production in Central Africa. Over the past six years, the quantity of young adult graphic novels has substantially fallen, while the genres of romance and poetry have remained constant and practical books have seen significant market growth in Cameroon over the past few years, contrary biographies have not contributed significantly to the output of the sector.

Conversely, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, technical, scientific, and legal works all of which are not produced in Cameroon record a less positive development. Although the school book grows year after year in sales volume, general literature, humanities, and books for children all enjoy some degree of stability.

Enunciating on quality of books produced, some of the good books carry good content in their message, physically they are well designed, durable, proper binding and with quality paper. More importantly they have an engaging plot, properly edited and error free with clear speech and language style, grip factor, developing characters and satisfying ending. However, this researcher expresses that some of the book quality as described and observed by respondents is just their perception of quality and not the reality of qualities in a quality book. There is also marked increase on the quantity of books produced as compared to the past. Anglophone Creative writers' works are essentially cultural and ideological as they are anchored on their Cameroonian experiences and their social significance. They have produced so far novels, poetry, drama, short stories, essays and children's literature. Book illustrators in the book chain have upgraded as well from the traditional pen, pencils, water color and ink drawings of the past to digital arts and the proliferation of new tools and techniques.

The local production of books in Cameroon has improved compared to when we lastly evaluated in the past three years. We are trying to produce more to ensure that more books are printed in Cameroon than abroad, the quality has improved because the National Book Commission has put in place training sessions for publishers and writers. (Male aged 49, interviewed on April 6, 2022)

Publishers are also adapting to new ways of creating and producing illustrated books.

This aspect is very essential since book illustration acts as an integral part of the publishing industry in bringing stories and characters to life on pages. With evolution in digital technology and the rise of e-Books many artists are now able to create stunning illustrations using computer software. This has also allowed for wider range of styles in book illustration, resulting in more diverse and dynamic fields.

The demand for print and e-Books (especially PDFs and Amazon Kindle e-books) is on a timid increase. Audio books are only less timidly being published in Cameroon as only very few people request for them and the few that do most of the time request basically dictionaries. Results show that because printers and publishers are competing, the quality is significantly better now. The quality of books produce is high, it is of standard comparatively. For instance, NMI publishers produce high quality books as a prerequisite due to the training and technical expertise they get

from Cambridge. Their products are definitely of a superior quality. The problem is that most of the quality books are produced abroad for Cameroonians. But this does not mean that such quality cannot be produce in Cameroon. High quality books are printed and produced in Cameroon but at exorbitant rates which most individuals are unable to the pay the cost because very heavy taxes are imposed on paper, printing material, ink. The business persons who import all material used in printing pay very high cost at the level of taxes and that is killing printing companies in Cameroon therefore publishers and authors have no choice than to go out to other countries to print for less cost such as neighbouring Nigeria, China, India. Putting aside sea freight and the clearing cost at the Douala port it still beats the printing cost in Cameroon. A book distributor had this to say:

With the book industry, the publisher that has the biggest market is Cambridge and all their books are being produce from outside. NMI is using Cambridge license to operate in Cameroon but they print in India and they have 56% of books on the national book list from nursery to secondary. So, on that particular base most of our books is printed out and most authors or writers print on Edition Cle publishing house but sometimes Presbook would print the books but most of the writers would print in France because the cost is cheaper and the quality is good but there has been a drop on the quality as well. Like for the Cambridge when they started printing, they did it locally but when the demand of their books got high, they could not reach their target and so they had to go internationally for their printing. But the Cameroonian population does not benefit from that increase in quantity (Male aged 39, Interviewed February 2, 2022)

In as much as the quality of book production is improving, we cannot say same for the design and layout which are all part of the system of book production. There are well published books which are badly designed because there is an art and a science in the making of everything and those who have not mastered it get it wrong. Yenshu (2022) states that professional practice should always be accompanied by a reflection on the practices, the nature of the practice (epistemology and methodology), the question of proper practice (ethical/axiological), and the objects. This is to say professionalism must go with practicing and doing things right. There are few professional publishers in Cameroon who work professionally and their works have great outcomes. There is a scheme to design books where the numbers of pages, words in a page are taken into consideration. Page numbers should be in a position which serves a format for referencing but we don't see that in presentations of some books where there a long line which crosses the whole width of the paper in a write-up which makes the reading process boring.

Nevertheless, we think it is all a gloomy picture for the book industry in Cameroon especially as new printing technologies and the whole issue of information and communication technologies have facilitated and simplified the production, consumption and also the distribution of books, even though to the detriment of publishers who are business inclined. That notwithstanding, when compared with other African societies like Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and other East African countries, we notice that the book development culture is still very lacking.

This study believes that a lot still needs to be done by the MINAC and other stake holders within the book chain in order to see the need of making the book industry to be as vibrant as other industries because it seems more focus is on music and football as when it comes to creativity and the creative industry reference is usually only made to the music and sports industries. We need to go back to the reestablishment of book fairs both nationally and internationally as it was done in the 90s. It should be a call for all African governments to see the need for this idea to be reborn because this “cross fertilization” between countries helped a lot to spur the book industry. A writers’ response was thus:

In 1999 with late Comfort Ashu during the Zimbabwe book Fair, we as Cameroonians were ashamed to exhibit our books because of what we saw from other countries like Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa etc. because our book quality was so low as compared to theirs so we decided that we had to come back home and do more work, put in much effort to meet up with them. Right now, I think there are books published by some Cameroonians with high quality. (Male aged 63, Interviewed April 12, 2022)

More books are written and self-published or professionally published on the Cameroonian writing landscape and in all genres as every genre seems to be on the increase. Some genres like poetry have found particular favour with the internet as some poets even write and freely publish or share their poems on their social media handles. Bakwa Books has built a community of writers through workshops and writing contests through which they are able to identify potential writers. An example of such writers include; Howard Meh-Buh Maximus who is one of the fastest rising Anglophone poets who have won grants worth 25000 dollars to produce manuscripts for books he had proposed from the Miles Morland Scholarship, a charity organization funding annually writing projects of African creative. Some other writers whose works are gaining international recognition through Bakwa Books include; Nkiacha Atemkeng, Clementine Ewokolo Burnley, Nana Nkweti.

Also, the mission of Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group (Langaa RPCIG) is to contribute to the cultural development and renaissance of Africa by conducting research, providing training in research and writing, publishing and promoting African scholarship and creative writing. So far Langaa has published closed to 500 titles in Cameroon and other African countries like Nigeria, Malawi, and Sierra Leone with others.

Empirical evidence reveals that to some extent there is increase quality and quantity of books, although some publishers and writers publish almost everything and anything, at the end of the day we have huge quantity of books out there in the market with low quality books. But overall, there are few good books. Books of both good and bad quality are on the increase. It is believed that good quality comes through serious professional publishers, and bad quality often results from self-publishing, vanity publishing, and social media sharing, all of which do not apply rigorous editing and proofreading. With regards to e-books some respondents revealed that;

Before the advent of digital technology there has been marked improvement in the number of books published. I have done a data base on the number of works published by members alone and there were more than 130 before the crises started. This is without considering those who are non-members of the association. (Male aged 56, Interviewed February 8, 2022)

There is a mark increase in the number of books written in Anglophone Cameroon. The “Third Phase”, which is still in progress, has been defined by this study as the writing phase of “decolonising” and “androistic authoritarianism” which simply means “distancing or undoing the colonial” and self-publishing respectively. In this stage Anglophone Cameroonians writings are all about creating awareness, sensitisation and consciousness of Anglophone Cameroonians’ identity and values. The school curriculum is west dominated by western ideologies and as such Anglophone Cameroonians are lost and lacking in their own ideas and thoughts. The kind of books we read shape and structure our response to society and reality. There has been some sort of “colonialism of knowledge” and those who own knowledge control the world. Although Africans and more particularly Cameroonians claim to be free from, and independent of colonialism, they are still very much dominated by Western ideologies and paradigms. The Cameroonian reference has always been mostly about the West and may be that is probably the reason for being an underdeveloped nation because we do not own knowledge and knowledge is power. Modern forms of domination take the form of knowledge to be spread, shared and internalised by targeted segments and the internet especially the social media outlets is not helping. This is the reason why we must create national consciousness and develop the Cameroonian book industry so as to define our identities through books.

Writings in this era include prose literature works like “Ceded at Dawn: The Aborted Decolonisation of the UN Trust Territory of British Southern Cameroons” by Augustine Ndangam, “The Absurd and the Cameroonian Tragedy at Decolonisation” by Emmanuel Fru Doh and “Not Yet Damascus” by Emmanuel Fru Doh. Poetry works such as the “The Basket of Flaming Ashes” by Joyce B. Ashutantang and “A Basket of Kola Nuts” by Bongasu Tanla Kishani. Some other authors in the writing field include Dzekashu MacViban, Johnnie MacViban, Lum Louisa, Francis Nyamnjoh, Nkemgong Nkemasong, Oscar Labang and others.

The term androistic authoritarianism describes the digital authority in publishing trends where some writers self-publish their works. Recently there has been marked increase in children’s literature i.e. fiction storybooks, folk laws, fairy tales meanwhile for adults, more motivational, novels, religious books are written. The tendency today is that most authors are bypassing the traditional process of publishing.

Contrary to what other respondents’ belief, some hold the view that more of religious books are on the rise as more are produced than motivational books. The thought that religious books have increase is because Cameroonians believe more in religious spirituality and miracles. Some respondents stated that:

If you find a Cameroonian who is sick, he or she will prefer to read a religious book and pray instead of getting health related books in which he or she will see how to get first aids and other measures in curbing the illness and curing the sickness (Male aged 54, Interviewed March 3, 2022)

From the aforementioned code, it is observed that the production of religious books in Cameroon has increased chiefly because a good proportion of Cameroonians are Christians and serve as a ready market for such genres of books. Furthermore, being Christians, they believe in reading religious books and pray for healing that seek medical care from hospitals.

A good number of writers and publishers revealed that religious books are what is considered a very 'bad market' and damaging to the book sector because people always have the belief that religious books should be free. The belief that very few people can actually afford money to buy religious books because they have the notion that such genre of books has to be off charge. But this study acknowledges that Pentecostal pastors are doing well with their books because they have large number of followers in their congregations. Thus, they have a ready market as the contents captivate their followers. However, mostly the upper middle class and women often buy these books.

Women have different interest and they mostly go to church than men so it's easy to see them acquire such books more. They are more women believers as women visibly practice religion than men. But again, they revealed that most of such materials end up only as write-ups on the internet and are not published or following publishing norms, because any write up which does not have an International Standard Book Number or a Direct Object Identifier (DOI) cannot be considered as a published work. So, people just write and disseminate their material to the public. Some respondents disclosed that:

I have not really seen a lot of motivational books but I have seen a lot of religious books because every pastor wants to publish something, so most often it is just a write up (Male aged 54, Interviewed March 3, 2022)

Generally, there are quite a good number of books keeping aside religious, health related materials and romance and creative works were individuals principally use their imagination and creativity to come up with stories. A writer stated that:

I have seen a lot of literally text around and many more people are writing poetry, which is creative writing and I also see a lot of novels coming up but I do not know about the other books. But I know so many people do write because every now and then you will hear people doing the book launch (Male aged 79, Interviewed on April 15, 2022)

Examining further, it is observed that book writing in Cameroon is progressively striving. It is further observed that different kinds of books are written and produced in Cameroon with interesting progress in creative writing which is an important aspect of writing and worth encouraging. Objectively, this is thanks to the fact that there has been great improvement in regulating the sector. Since the 1990 laws that paved the way open for social communication

culture in Cameroon. The cost on publicity, sponsoring and all others gives rooms for private sectors to invest in the field of culture. But at the end of the day when you look at it critically, either the texts are not applicable or implemented or some of them cannot really be applied. A respondents' opinion on the 1990 law on books in Cameroon as reflected below stated that;

Personally, I think the 1990 laws on books in this country are not applied as stated. How available are these books in the shops and libraries, their cost and prices? Like you see my own novel cost 7000fcfa, I did everything for it to be 7000fcfa while others are 14000fcfa. In a country where the salary is less than 30.000fcfa, a person trying to buy 3 books has use up all his salary. It means nobody can buy and out of that you have libraries where you cannot find Cameroonian books because they are too expensive or have not been promoted yet (Male aged 59, Interviewed on February 4, 2022)

Findings disclose that people don't buy books nowadays as was the case in the past, normally when books were published and printed, people never printed less than 1000 copies. In terms of quantity, the print runs have gone down because of a fall in the demand of books, loss of interest in reading and unattractive content. Secondly, there is no mechanism to market the books especially on export basis. Books constitute heavy investment marketing. We are in the times where "books fight for money in people's pocket" but the money is limited due to economic and political crises. 'Book' on its own has to make a case why people should by a bottle of beer or buy it.

Writers have a great role to play here in advancing their write-ups, making them very catchy and interesting and disseminating to the public. The publishing industry itself has to be able to professionalize its self and its services because if they don't do that, they wouldn't be able to break through the book market which has limited number of resources. When thriving publishers all tend to textbook production and marketing, writers of creative works will become philanthropists. In Cameroon it is hard to have someone who can sponsor books and it is equally difficult to have a publisher to publish a book without upfront payment. Most writers pay to get their works publish. Many people do write but most people do not have enough money to pay for the good quality books, which makes them go for the lower quality. Unfortunately, even the print quality is so poor, the paper work which is not so good. Therefore, the realization that the material used is of low quality. Many respondents shared from their experiences that most times as they handle books to read, the moment they start flipping through the pages, some pages start falling off probably because the binding was poorly done and even the quality of the material used was not also good enough. This happens even with children's books without the hard-back material and hence fragile to hold and such books won't stand the test of time because they lack sustainability. Evidence has shown that for a child to use a book for two years and above, the papers need to be hard especially the cover page so that the book is well protected. The middle pages are supposed to be hard as well so that as the child flips through the pages, they don't tear off. But with the way the economy is tough and the laws are unfavorable, if most people want to produce the hard material copies, at the end you will realize that one book can cost at least 5000fcfa or more and then there are no people to buy in the end.

Digital books will always have good quality because the quality that was being input in to the computer is that which stays there. So, if you have a book which has colored pictures in the digital form, they remain colored but if you have to print out the books, they might be printed uncolored. Following the aforementioned, printed books are on the rise than digital books in Cameroon because we are still lacking in the other forms and people don't seem to request for them.

Following Edmond VII (2023) although about 80% of publishers are involved in the sales of textbooks, a small number of publishers are still quite active in general literature. The Cameroonian publishing industry is distinguished by the significant participation of many actors with varying roles, whose vital role in the production contributes to the diversity of the scholarly offerings. Thus, about 448 editorial structures identified in files maintained by the MINAC, more over 350 of those have publishing as their primary activity, but just about 10 have editorial activities that are significant from an economic standpoint. Based on the above, it is evident that the quantity of published books by Cameroonian authors is increasing steadily, it is hoped that the future of the book industry particularly book publication is promising and worth supporting. Furthermore, it is hoped that the advancements in technology will help to enhance the sector.

Knowledge about e-Books

Observably there are more publishing options as well as broader opportunities, thanks to digital exposure there is growing knowledge on e-Books in Cameroon. Self-publishing is the new trend and Cameroonian writers are not left out. Most local publishers now publish e-Books as in the case of Langaa RCPIG and Bakwa Books and others. With digitalization they have come to the understanding that the era of validation is over, nobody needs to pick you, you need to pick yourself. Writers more specifically have known some of the advantages that come with professional self-publishing. They have learnt that it is not just about the money that comes in but it is also about the other special packages that flow in like foreign rights that have never been mentioned in the field of traditional publishing. Self-publishers now have control over the designs of their works, content control and they make more money.

Another trend is the increasing accessibility of publishing tools in the field of illustrators as more authors are taking control of their own works and creating their own books, there is an increase in freelance illustrators who have the power to transport readers to new worlds and bring stories to life. Thanks to digitalization illustrators have evolved from full page artworks to smaller flexible designs especially with children's books. Digitalization allows illustrators to design with high level precision and detail than what was previously with traditional tools. It also enables artists to make changes and adjustments to their works easily through the use of 3D modeling software. This digital art has also made it easier for writers to collaborate with publishers and other members of the book production team resulting to more efficient ways and cost-effective production.

The process in self-publishing is very easy to follow as a writer who wants to self-publish all he or she needs to do is to go to "Createspace" by Amazon, check the box that he or she wants to

belong in i.e., either paper back or kindle, it costs about an extra 69US Dollars. Pick a cover and upload their manuscript and in a few days the book will be published on Amazon. Some creative works of some Anglophone Cameroonians can be spotted on Amazon through this process. Miraclaire Publisher, Nyaa publisher and others with some writers like George Ngwane, Nkemgong Nkemasong, Shadrack Ambanasom like many others have their works published Amazon.com. Many Platforms have been created by different individuals to make available Anglophone Cameroon Literature digitally and non-digitally. These publications include poem, prose and drama collections and their themes include culture, religion, economy, politics, decolonization, tribalism, racism, corruption, and migration amongst others. These stories will definitely go a long way to print a clear picture of the 21st century Cameroonian society particularly, in Africa generally and the world at large.

Langaa publishing house believes that supportive collaboration research and writing is part of the publication process. In that respect, Langaa has been organizing research and writing workshops at the Langaa Guesthouses based in Buea and Bamenda, on themes such as “Information and Communication Technologies”, *“The 2011 Caine Prize for African Writing workshop”*, *“The Future of Anthropology in Africa and Archives”*, *“Mobile Africa”* and *“Natural Resource Management in Africa”*. Also workshops for Cameroonian authors and readers are made available for authors who volunteer and invest the time and creativity through the Langaa website www.langaa-rpcig.net/+Literary-Workshop-Cameroonian+html. The mission of Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group (Langaa RPCIG) is to contribute to the cultural development and renaissance of Africa. This is achieved by conducting research, providing training in research and writing, and publishing and promoting African scholarship and creative writing.

According to Labang (2012), there are a number of open access journals, including Syllabus Review published by The Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaoundé, Epsa Moto published by the University of Buea, and Journal of English Language Literature and Culture (JELLiC) published by the Cameroon English Language and Literature Association (CELLA). Cameroon Anglophone literature currently counts on several websites, reviews, online magazines/ e-zines, blogs and others; African Books Collective (<https://www.africanbookscollective.com>), Espace Culturel Gacha (<https://espaceculturelgacha.org>) Culture Trip (<https://theculturetrip.com>), Afro Hustler (<https://www.afrohustler.com>), the Ngoh Kuoh Review, (Bakwa Magazine at <http://www.bakwamagazine.com>). There are also freelance websites for creative ghost writers in Cameroon such as Upwork (<https://www.upwork.com>).

A couple of blogs (Cameroon Literature in English at <http://www.anglocamlit.blogspot.com/>, George Ngwane at <http://www.gngwane.com/>, Scribbles from the Den at <http://www.dibussi.com/>, Batuo's World at <http://www.joyceash.com/>, and Nsah Mala's Literary Creations at <http://www.nsahmala.blogspot.com/>) and one personal journal (La Bang at <http://www.labang.org/>).

Although Cameroon Anglophone literature can boast of these platforms, it still needs more of such publishing channels to ensure its sustainable dissemination. While some have flourished others such as The Mould, The Mongo Review and Pala-Pala that used to be vibrant have instead

become inexistent. Even the KIF/Miraclaire monthly poetry reading (café) that blossomed a few years back is nowhere to be found. Labang (2012) views that in this present digital era where open access, open education and open data are overwhelmingly gaining grounds, this problem becomes much acute. He believes that in this era, more than ever before, every minority literature needs more journals, reviews, newsletters, blogs and notebooks dedicated to the publishing of any written about this literature. Confirming to Labang's judgment, this study observes that despite the online presence of few Anglophones Cameroonian books, the implication of an increasing presence of print books in Cameroonian markets show that the extent of digitalization in this country is still on the downside and some book readers in Cameroon are still conversant with the old traditional method of reading (likes reading hard copies) and publishers still hold on to paperback books. Some respondents concluded that;

The focus is still on the paperback... Audio, e-Book is something under development for most publishers. We will develop a website in that aspect so that all our books will be listed on it as well as the prices and the contacts so that if anyone can select a book and then contact us. We will get it delivered wherever that individual is. There are also some young Cameroonians who came and talked to us about online shopping like amazon. (Male aged 51, Interviewed February 16, 2022)

Whether e-Books are better than printed books have been a long-standing debate. In today's society although e-Books have become the pillar of the publishing industry, they have not completely overtaken print as predicted by some analysts and scholars. Let's take a look at e-Books versus printed books and compare the critical factors that make people choose one over the other. While there may be several advantages of going digital, some people find reading online daunting. In Cameroon most times people still prefer to print out and transform e-Books into paperback books before reading them for convenience's sake. Plus, there have also been some signs of e-Book readers switching back to print. In Cameroon, reading of print books is still trending unlike other book formats like audio and e-Books with use of technological gadgets.

One of the primary reasons behind the [popularity of e-Books](#) is their portability. Unlike printed books, e-Books are lightweight and easy to carry. You can carry an entire library of thousands of books in a single device. The books are easy to access too. All the user needs are a good internet connection, and he or she can download any book they like within minutes. Readers can carry them anywhere and even enjoy reading anytime, as long as they keep their devices charged. On the other hand, readers can carry only a handful of printed books at a time. However, since printed books require no electrical power, readers won't have to worry about charging them time and again.

Users of print books argue that it's much easier to work around printed books. As readers can easily dog-ear pages, highlight passages, or write notes. It is also easier to keep track of pages in physical books since they never change. Besides, some people feel that the ability to hold books or turn pages with fingers provides a more fulfilling reading experience. However, with the advancement of technology, many features have been introduced into e-Books to provide users with a wholesome reading experience. Readers can now add bookmarks, highlights, and notes to

digital books as well. Plus, many e-Books have an inbuilt dictionary so readers can quickly look up difficult words without getting distracted. Not to forget the search feature that enables readers to track a single word or phrase from thousands of pages. Such functionalities make e-Books better suited for the fast-paced modern world.

One important feature of the e-Books is that they never get out of stock. Also, there is no waiting time when a consumer buys an e-Books. This is in contrast to printed books, where the timeline from buying books online to getting them delivered and finally being able to read them is often long and tenacious.

With e-Books, on the other hand, you can download and read them as soon as you purchase them. Users can also print eTextbooks if they want to keep a hard copy of the same. Printed books have a set layout that cannot be altered. But the same is not the case with e-Books. Users can change the font size and line spacing and adjust the format from landscape to portrait or vice versa.

Some e-Books even allow users to change the font style and colour instead of sticking to the [default format](#). Another factor contributing to e-Books' enormous increase in popularity is their flowability. In some circumstances, the ease of learning offered by electronic books can surpass that of conventional literature. For instance, readers who are visually impaired or those who have dyslexia and other learning disabilities can profit from the interactive elements offered by e-Books. They can choose a layout that is comfortable for them and enlarge the font. It's also simpler to incorporate audio with e-Books. You can listen to written words and finish a book even while performing other tasks thanks to the new read-aloud features in the majority of e-Books. However, not everyone is computer literate. Some people might find the features of e-Books difficult to use and prefer the simplicity that printed books provide. This is usually the case with the older generations. Even with youngsters, the potential distractions of links and advertisements in e-Books may affect them.

E-books do not support prolonged reading as spending too much time on screen can easily strain reader's eyes. So, reading a book on a digital device requires readers to take frequent breaks. Mostly the older generations and even some youths in Cameroon for this reason deter away from e-Books. Even with the anti-glare technology, users can still experience visual fatigue after long reading sessions. The same is never the issue with printed books. With good lighting, users can read printed books as long as they like without harming their eyes. These aspects seem to discourage some authors to publish online because they are skeptical of some these disadvantages that come with e-Books. The case is different in the western world and some African countries where most users prefer digital books. Even though audio books equally have fewer purchase but the percentage of people who use it there is more than we have in Cameroon. They purchase them to listen to especially while driving or carrying on house chores.

Beneficially, e-Books seem more environment-friendly than printed books. However, the analysis is much more complicated. The environmental impact of printed books and e-Books depends greatly on reading habits. E-Readers consume more carbon to produce than printed books. So, buying an e-Reader will only make environmental sense if the user is an avid reader. Also, they are difficult to recycle. If book lovers or users prefer physical books, they can go for used

textbooks or borrow one from a library to reduce carbon footprint. Besides, printed books can easily be recycled.

Sharing books with family and friends is much easier with printed books. Consumers can physically hand them over once they finished reading. Some people even sell used books or donate them to the library. This way, more than one person can benefit from a single purchase. However, with e-Books purchased online, the usage is generally restricted to only one account. So users may miss the joy of sharing their favourite books with their loved ones.

Some e-Books are cheaper than physical books since no printing cost is associated with them. So if consumers prefer purchasing books rather than borrowing, they could save lot of money by going digital. E-Readers can also get access to many free e-Books available online. However, they initially have to invest in a good reading gadget to access all the e-Books. Both e-Books and printed books have their advantages and disadvantages, though **e-Books can be more convenient** in many respects. So, the ultimate verdict of which option is better depending on the personal preference of each individual.

I am trying to develop some e-learning materials which we will put online on Amazon. Some publishers in Cameroon are dealing with e-Books but very few with audio-books. Recently I saw one of my students promoting books written in local language he has recorded in audio forms. But in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya there are many audio book publishers (Male aged 54, Interviewed on March 3, 2022)

This proves that with the digital economy and communication, some people have gone into e-Book business, although some may see it as just added value. The question still remains as to what proportion of the population is into digitization of books in Cameroon. Findings have indicated that a few percentages of publishers and authors do publish e-Books in Cameroon. Some unscrupulous individuals in the black market also take advantage of digitalization and publish writers and publishers works on the websites without their knowledge. Some respondents attested to on pirated copies on the web;

As I sit here, my books are being sold on Amazon when I didn't put them on Amazon? Google and you will see them for example 'Breaking the Barracks' is being sold on Amazon. Whosoever put it there, I don't know and they are making money from it. The only thing I benefit there is that my name is going around and getting fame and popularity but I don't see the money. So those are the challenges that comes with it but however we have a lot more people who are aware about what 'Books' means in the development of the mind and society (Male aged 56, Interviewed on February 8, 2022)

This study shares the opinion that some of the authors and publishers do not quite have the knowledge and awareness of the digital world as well as understanding of the benefits that come with digital technology. Once an author's book is published on Amazon under his or her names, no one can play piracy with it. It will forever remain his or her book. They have all legal rights to

pursue a case and win it. Also, they can remove their books anytime they want, update it and republish it at their convenience. There are no restrictions on how many times an author wants to republish. Books can be printed on demand (POD). Consumers can order one copy, ten copies or even five hundred copies and more depending on their need and the copies will be delivered promptly. There is rarely a delay in the expected delivery date. The shipping rates are moderate and the qualities of their books are impeccable. Also, it is easy for authors to promote their works as Amazon or other platforms give them many promotion opportunities to ease marketing of their books. Once their links are shared, they can ask their followers and purchasers to make comments and leave reviews of each book bought. This will help to attract more readers and buyers.

Interview with a book distributor revealed the plans of his former boss which failed because a digital novice took over position. This study believes these are some of the issues taking this country backward instead of moving forward as some of those individuals in higher positions do not understand how the current world operates and most of them are visionless.

We had a project of having an e-Book library because it is a university base and so we saw the need of the e-Books. We started uploading the books because 80% accepted but unfortunately towards the end, the general manager was removed and the new general manager, who came in, did not continue with the project and so the project was never implemented. So, if the old general manager was there, we would have the e-Books library. Each manager has his or her own vision and generally in Africa there is a problem because when somebody is there carrying a project it seems as if when he or she is out the next person does not want to continue and erases whatever is there in which the demand for the e-Book was there (Male aged 39, interviewed on February 2, 2022)

In a nut shell this is to say that Cameroon still has a long way to go in terms of digital technology because we need to start from the base where the book readership lies. A lot of persuasion needs to be done. Sometimes digital versions are cheaper than the hard copies and people find it easier to find books on kindle reader. It is so much easier and much more portable moving along with 100 books in a digital device than carrying them physically. Whatever the case, the paperback books are the ones dominating in Cameroon. However, the compilation and publication of the different formats of stories from Cameroon by these publishers and writers remains a giant step in the direction of placing Cameroon literature in English at the world stage of literary prowess. This will also inform most people around the world about the true bilingual nature of Cameroonians and not just only as French speaking country and it will also get readers immense in Cameroon's socio-politico-cultural world.

4.2.3 Increasing Government and International Agencies' Actions

Cameroonian government has been making applaud able efforts towards the development of the book industry. Through a national literary competition for young English- and French-speaking authors, the Ministry of Arts and Culture supports two literary genres: poetry and short stories. This contest occurs every year. Its objectives are to promote innovation and honour literary

excellence. Teenagers and younger children in Cameroon's secondary schools have been learning their national languages for a while. It is crucial to make available to them the vernacular literature that exists in Cameroon, notwithstanding its current lack of abundance. We can cite "Qui est dans la lune?" by Angèle Kingué, which was translated into Bassa, Douala, and Bamiléké. "Le Chasseur et le Porc-Épic" by François Essindi was also translated into Bulu, to name a few. This might even inspire more parents to register their kids for library programs.

There are 249 titles in the vernacular languages of the Cameroon National Bibliography 2000-2010 that might be of interest to young people. They cover topics like catechism, AIDS prevention, epics, narrative, short stories, grammar, and vocabulary. Fandio (2004) the end of the 1980s and especially the 1990s saw the emergence of professional publishers like Buma Kor, Patron Publishing House, Cosmos Educational Publishers, etc. that make publishing a real profession whose activities were supported by government through literary press programs. Radio programs such as Literary Half Hour from the national state radio station Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) not only present the works of English-speaking Cameroonian authors, but also very regularly invite these same authors, publishers and sometimes theatre actors to discuss their art works or the performances of others.

The government joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International World Book Day which is celebrated annually on every April 23rd. [World Book and Copyright Day](#) is a celebration to promote the enjoyment of books and reading. 23rd April is a symbolic date in world literature.

Books are indeed vital vehicles to access, transmit and promote education, science, culture and information worldwide. By championing books and copyright, UNESCO stands up for creativity, diversity and equal access to knowledge, with the work across the board from the Creative Cities of Literature Network to promoting literacy and mobile learning and advancing Open Access to scientific knowledge and educational resources. With the active involvement of all stakeholders: authors, publishers, teachers, librarians, public and private institutions, humanitarian NGOs and the mass media, and all those who feel motivated to work together in this world celebration of books and authors, World Book and Copyright Day has become a platform to rally together millions of people all around the world.

It is the date on which several prominent authors, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died. This date was a natural choice for UNESCO's General Conference, held in Paris in 1995, to pay a world-wide tribute to books and authors on this date, encouraging everyone to access books.

Celebrations take place all over the world to recognize the scope of books, a link between the past and the future, a bridge between generations and across cultures. On this occasion, UNESCO and the international organizations representing the three major sectors of the book industry; publishers, booksellers and libraries, select the [World Book Capital](#) for a year to maintain, through its own initiatives, the impetus of the Day's celebrations.

In the case of Cameroon, the director for UNESCO annually sends a letter to the Minister of Arts and Culture indicating the theme of every year's celebration. The 2022 edition was themed:

"Making it 'Your' World Book Day." UNESCO's theme for 2023 was *"Indigenous Languages"*. Last year 2022 saw the start of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) and it has been a UN priority to uphold and promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism. Indigenous and local languages feature as part of the World Book Capital Network Charter, and the Charter recognizes a less rigid concept of 'books', i.e., acknowledging various forms of literature (including oral traditions). Each year it is commemorated because it stands as a platform for discovering new talents in writing and in the publishing scene as a whole. During this year's celebration in the "Book Evening" event in Yaoundé organised by the Anglophone Cameroon Writers Association, writers and publishers were encouraged to keep working towards inculcating the culture of reading amongst Cameroonians, amidst the challenges along the way. The event which brought together writers, publishers, researchers and members of the national booklist commission amongst others was forum for intellectual exchanges on the way forward for the book industry.

Cameroon also organises book conferences and fairs with the principal goal aiming at giving visibility to the book industry. The Salon International de l'industrie du Livre de Yaoundé (SIILY) translated in English language as Yaoundé International Book Fair, lastly took place on 9th to the 12th of March 2023 Themed: "The Book Industry, a Lever for Growth." This shows that the government is aware of the fact that the book industry is a lever for development. During such conferences and fairs, stakeholder such as writers, publishers, booksellers, printing houses all come together to deliberate and show case and exhibit their works. M'wina is one of those captivating book sellers that specialises only in the sales of African Children's Books and Toys. They are using books and toys to build a generation of African children with positive African cultural identity. They believe that Africans in general have been so much exposed to western cultures to the extent where Africans no longer trust their own cultural values. It's in this regard that they are using books to teach about heroes and ignite self-confidence in children. They don't just sell books, but they sell a model of society which has to do with values, and they have books written in over twenty African and Cameroonian languages. They showcase Cameroonian books written in English, French, Batanga, Douala, Bassa, Ngemba, Ewondo and others. M'wina also organises activities on sensitisation on the importance of reading for pleasure. They have M'wina club which is a monthly activity for children to read pleasurably and play African games because they believe all African games are educative and all these put together helps African children to be able to understand their emotions and express them. They also organise Salon du Livre African pour Enfants de Yaoundé (SALAFEY) translated in English language as African Children Book Fair of Yaoundé.

The state has also promulgated laws that commissions that all those involve in artistic and cultural works must come together and form federations for the betterment and development of the industry. This has gone a long way to resolve certain issues as it is much easier to identify problems and apply solutions. Buma (2022) shares similar view that the book sector needs to be organized in functional professional book associations. It is the existence of these book associations that form the constituency of an organized book sector. The appreciation of the structural-functionalist theory in this study stems from this view that book industry consists of a value chain which has structures with interacting parts which must function accordingly in order to succeed. From Parsons (1961) view, all parts must work together to maintain stability, a state

called 'dynamic equilibrium'. Following his view, book industry is considered as structures within social system which functions to play a vital role in four basic prerequisites: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. The function of any part of the social system is understood as its contribution to meeting the functional prerequisites. Buma (2022) opines that without the existence of viable, functional associations of writers, editors and publishers, graphics and allied artists, booksellers and distributors, librarians, readers as well as book merchants and stationers, we cannot talk of a book sector in Cameroon. When these associations are formed and they elect their constituent boards, they proceed to the next stage which is the coming together of all the executive boards of the respective associations to form what is known as the publishers' council. Members of the publishers' council elect their own board members and form their own executive board comprising of the president, secretary and treasurer.

It is the executive president of the publishers' council in a given country that has the mandate to speak on behalf of an organized book sector. Outside this president, no one can have the right to talk on behalf of any of the associations, individually or collectively. That is why we say that the book associations are the constituency of the book sector. It is important to note this because this is the sector that drives the cultivation of reading habits and the provision of suitable books at any age. When these federations are created it will be easier to identify their leaders for instance if you need to talk to writers, publishers, book distributors and more, it will be easy to identify their presidents or leaders. If any federation has a problem the government can easily work with them and solve those problems. People don't yet know that forming federations and associations can fetch more money within the book chain. Nsah (2019) had earlier mentioned that as a minority literature, Cameroon Anglophone Literature needs writers' associations, literary interest groups in general, genre associations/clubs and literary pressure groups to carve out avenues for its propaganda. It also needs awards and prizes, honours and rewards. It needs conferences, symposia reading, writers' meetings, cafes, discussions and workshops.

Government has been supporting those who have been organising workshops on books but this effort stopped due to the covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Government has been encouraging especially publishers to travel abroad and create and join into partnership with foreign experienced publishers. Government has encouraged stakeholders within the industry to form more associations so that through that their problems, difficulties and challenges can be better identified and handled. Using this structuration process, by so doing there will be shared problems and solutions on writing, publishing, distribution and also conservation of books will be known. All of these will help the government to have feasibility and visibility to better understand and use strategic ways of promoting the book industry.

One of the measures that government is using is in the training of its own personnel. The Ministry of Arts and Culture is participating strongly in the strategic development program for the nation. The state is gradually shifting from not just being an entertainment kind of ministry to the productive industry. The government is also strongly considering that digitalisation is a must in all aspects of the society. Much is being done at the level of the national archives. It has already begun at level of the archives though it is a gradual process but it will be on-going in different regions where you have the regional archives.

There was a team that was sent here to make an evaluation of these particular archives to ensure that in years to come the digitalization process can even be envisaged (Female aged 35, Interviewed on April 12, 2022)

The government has had large impact on publishing and the book trade in general. Government regulation in the book industry is often to protect children from inappropriate content or to restrict access to certain information. The government also influences publishing through its funding the very few libraries and museums and other cultural institutions that are important for the dissemination of knowledge and ideas. Government has allocated much budget into the creative-culture industry so as to motivate its actors. But most actors' belief that few billions allocated is not enough. Some respondents reiterated that;

I have never ever seen a budget allocated here in this library that is why books here are so old and nothing has been renovated since inception. It is not even conducive to read here. So, I think if the money was much, I will see my own share here. Except that there are bottle necks but the government knows I am here and they should know what to do, or do I really need to follow-up for something that should be given to me? (Female aged 50, Interviewed on February 10, 2022)

This indicates that the state funds do not often get to the rightly designated places of the society. Proper follow-up is not done to ensure that funds get to where they are budgeted for. They probably end up in the bank accounts of a few individuals while those sectors suffer and remain stagnant. It is as a result of such malpractices that Kor (2022) reiterates that Cameroon needs a para-government institution or an autonomous structure that has within its body as bone-fide members representatives of all government ministries that deal with book matters to come together and meet with representatives of professional book associations or the publishers' council on equal terms in what is called the National Book Development Council (NBDC). According to him, these are the people who jointly should produce the draft copy of a book policy which will be presented in parliament before it will be enacted into law. One of the parties, say the government, cannot do it alone without agreement or concerting with the other party; because the book policy is essentially an operational guideline for book professionals on the one hand, and the government on the other hand. Whenever this body exists, it replaces or abrogates the existence of a publishers' council because this is the ideal institution backed by government, which speaks authoritatively for the book community (including government ministries) in any country where it exists. Where this body exists, i.e., the National Book Development Council (NBDC) it is its place to propose a draft copy of a national book policy to be adopted by parliament or be passed by decree.

However, where the national book policy comes before the existence of the National Book Development Council (NBDC), the council will be charged with the powers to execute the national book policy on behalf of the government for the collective good of the nation, which is to say that, ideally, no one ministerial department of government should be in charge of the National Book Development Council. In other words, we are saying that the National Book Development Council becomes the arm of the government to execute the book policy. That's why such a body

is placed directly under the Presidency of most countries where it exists or in our case under the Prime Minister's Office. An important idea we get in rightfully establishing a National Book Development Council (NBDC) is that it will permit a nation to come up with a comprehensive national book policy, which will take into consideration books for educational purposes as well as books to 'enhance' cultural reading habits. The overall idea, therefore, is that the National Book Development Council is the go-between all government ministries and the book professions, which is effective administratively and otherwise to enable the book sector to attain its objectives and be performant in its development and sustenance. This study together with Buma Kor's plea is that the government should revive this center to play the original role just like CREPLA for Africa. If it plays its part, most of what have been said above will naturally find its place because UNESCO set up this Centre in collaboration with the government of Cameroon for just this purpose.

Growth in Authorship

The director of books in Cameroon in MINAC, Edmond VII (2023) estimated in his study that there are more than 1800 authors of books in Cameroon, whether they are authors, illustrators, or translators listed in the National Register of Owners of Rights. However, to date, only about one hundred of them receive the majority of the income from the rights recognized under the umbrella of literary and artistic property. The majority of the other people work in a different profession.

Anglophone Cameroon is equally witnessing an increasing number of young writers getting in to the publishing scene most of which are inspired by the happenings and realities around the world, Africa and Cameroon more specifically. Most of these writers belong to the English-Speaking African Writers Association which is a group made up of contemporary African writers who share their passion of creative writing on contemporary African realities. Some of these young writers have been using social media outlets and other conventional media organs to get more people in reading their stories. Some of them claim their motive is not only on making money at the moment but on getting constructive feedback from critics and reviewers the world over. Currently one of the challenges these young writers are facing is getting their stories to as many readers as possible and the poor Cameroonian reading culture which sometimes leaves them wondering if their stories will ever be read.

Before the digital age, the few publishers who existed in Cameroon made life difficult for so many talented authors to get their works published and distributed to bookstores and libraries. The challenges these young authors experienced were limited finances, absence of connections and social networks and relatively complex publishing house policies. Publishers were mostly concern and interested in publishing textbooks for students, comic books for children and political books for politicians. They denied the opportunity for many talented authors to share their stories, knowledge and experiences through their wild and creative imaginations. These traditional publishers made book authoring a no-go-zone for unskilled writers. They were the ones who decided if an author's book meets their publishing standards before they accept the manuscripts. That's no longer the case today as writers no longer need the permission of a traditional publisher to publish their works. There are many soft wares and publishing platforms that have replaced the middle men in the traditional publishing industry. Anyone can self-publish

their own books now. Authors can now write their books, find their own editor and proofreader, source for designers on Fiverr and publish on Amazon Kindle Direct and other platforms publishing for free and sometimes off charge.

With this new development in the book industry, it is possible for an author to write and publish within sixty days which has never been the case before now. This development has led to an increasing number of authors in the Anglophone Cameroon sector and beyond. Findings reveal that there are good numbers of writers in Cameroon currently as compared to the past. Ashutantang in (Otosirizee, Open Country Mag, 2021 para. 33) states;

Gone are the days when the literary critic Steve Arnold explained that in spite of existence, Anglophone Cameroon writing was conscious of itself only in fragments, having been isolated from the mainstream literature on the continent, and even within unique historical circumstances. (Otosirizee, Open Country Mag, 2021 para. 33)

Anglophone Cameroonian literature is now in conversation with mainstream African literature and this trend will continue thanks in part to a new generation of these young writers who are harnessing the power of digital media, and to publishing houses such as Spears Books, Bakwa Books and Langa Publishers. Some respondents mentioned that;

A lot of Cameroonians are writing, I speak especially for Anglophone Cameroonian but I know it is the same thing across even with Francophone. If you watch on T.V. and listen to radio you will see that the number of adverts on book launching is phenomenal which wasn't the case before because it never used to be. I can proudly say so because I am the father of book launches in Cameroon. (Male aged 56, Interviewed on February 8, 2022)

Currently there are several Anglophone Cameroonian blogs on social media which promotes local writers and writing just to mention, Writers Space Africa – Cameroon (WSA-C) is an online forum which aims at empowering and helping Cameroonian writers with necessary writing skills through workshops, master classes and writing competitions on poetry, storytelling and drama in the Cameroon Cultural Center in Buea all on a bit to promote Anglophone Cameroon writings. Cameroonians have actively been participating in the African Writers Conference. The last edition took place in Douala-Cameroon with great number of writers and aspiring writers. Still in the Cameroonian scene the Young English Cameroonian Writers Awards (YECWA) celebrates young writers from Cameroon. Its last edition was themed; “Heritage”. It was another successful event that pulled meritorious and acknowledged writers and acted as an encouragement to upcoming writers. On May 18, 2023, the very first edition of the Grand Prix Littéraire du Mont Cameroon (Literary Grand Prie of Mont Cameroon) was held in the hall of the National Museum of Yaoundé. Organized by the Association of Poets and Writers of Cameroon (APEC), this ceremony aimed to award literary prizes and honorary distinctions to authors and publishers who honour Cameroonian literature. Buma Kor Publishers received a participation prize for presenting a winning author; Thérèse Manga, with the novel Under My Roof.

On the international scene, Imbolo Mbue a writer from Limbe, Cameroon literally walked to fame in the late 2014 after a one million dollar advance for her debut manuscript Behold the Dreamers. Howard Meh-Buh Maximus won a Morland Scholarship, affording him an 18 thousand Euros to develop a story of four friends in an acappella choir whose lives are upended by the “Anglophone Crisis”, the wave of violence also known as the “Ambazonian Conflict” that has swept Cameroons English speaking regions for over five years now (Open CountryMag 2021, para. 6).

In 2017, Bakwa published a social media campaign titled “100 Days of Cameroonian Literature” sharing a book per day. In 2019, he set up a publishing arm called “Bakwa Books” which has released a series of books: Anthologies of Passion and Ink: New Voices from Cameroon and Your Feet Will Lead You Where Your Heart Is, and some magazine issues like Bakwa 09: Taxi Drivers Who Drive Us No Where and Other Travel Stories and Bakwa 10: Family Politricks, and Johnnie MacViban's novel Twilight of Crooks. Last year, the first Bakwa Literary Festival was held on Instagram Live. This year the magazine will celebrate its 11th anniversary. Cameroon also has a host of others like Julius M. Angwah, Douglas Atingale, Louisa Lum and Nkiacha Atemnkeng. Those are some of the successes registered digitally and traditionally.

In order to flourish within the writing scene, it is advice able that writers know the tips of a well written book because that alone will tell if their books can be publishable or not. As traditional publishers normally have a fixed number of books in mind that they hope to publish during a particular time-frame, it could be quarterly, annually, biannually, the numbers are usually very genre-specific and budget is assigned accordingly. The editor working through the manuscript keeps in mind this number when selecting the books for example if a publishing house only publishes two poetry books a year while eight romance books are published. They might be nitpicking when it comes to poetry manuscripts.

Publishers are faced with numerous manuscripts from different writers. The quality and scope of the manuscript is judged. Manuscripts that do not adhere to submission guidelines are automatically rejected. Simply put, it is highly difficult for publishers to go through every single manuscript that gets submitted especially within the time frame that is usually given. At best a manuscript will be subject to a brief skim for a couple of minutes before an editor decides whether it is worth it or not. Given the short time frame they work under, writers need to make sure that their books are appealing at first glance and create an impact with the editor. For those fortunate writers whose manuscripts are read, they have to make sure that the manuscript is thoroughly edited and completely devoid of errors. Editors don't like to see errors in a manuscript and they make their mind up very quickly about the author's professionalism if they find errors. Editors see how well-written a book is and how marketable and relevant it is and they question if people would want to buy it? There is usually a balance maintained between commercially viable and books that are more literary and grammar also matters. Editors want to see if the book is successfully accomplishing what it is set out to do. It actually really does help if the author is an established individual, professional or already has an engaged audience that would like to read writers works. The first few pages of the manuscript should also be strong, impactful and convey a writing style. Chances are that after a quick glance of the first few pages a decision will be made whether or not to pursue the book further, so writers should make the most of it.

This explains why within the Cameroon Anglophone literature sectors some writer's belief they suffer from labels of inferiority complex, minority and marginalization when their works are rejected. If despite presenting the best version of a manuscript, and as a writer you do not get feedback of acceptance or get rejected, never lose hope just note that some of the bestselling authors around the world have all faced multiple rejections from publishers. Labang (2012) calls this form of marginality identified within Cameroon Anglophone literature as authorial marginality. Sociologically Bourdieu calls this rivalry in academics. He explains that such fields are characterised by struggles, competition, monopoly and authority. People want to gain fame, reputation, position and popularity. But they fail to understand that such achievements can only be achieved collectively and not in isolation. Thus, for the book industry to boost and be effective, there is need for collective action. It suffices to note here that authorial marginality is a global phenomenon in literature and art. For Labang (2012), "academic gangsterism" cripples Cameroon literature and it is an "attitude which presupposes that you belong to the academia to have your work read and interpreted by a scholar. This is the belief some writers have.

The increasing number of authors has led to what is known as "Academic Gangsterism" as coined by Labang (2012). This attitude and its rather unconscious proponents have often side-lined, forgotten, neglected and marginalized works simply because their authors do not belong to the academia or are not friends/acquaintances of academic scholars. Scholars who display this attitude "have either turned to academic gangsterism or have given up the supreme task they took or have simply remained parochial. Nsah (2019 *Clijec Mag*, April 19, para. 1) further describes it as "power signs which massacre desire", specifying that "academic gangsterism" massacres the desires of the writer who does not belong to the academia, as well as massacres the desires of readers who look to academic scholars to recommend beautiful works to them for consumption.

Growing Market for Book Consumption

Empirical findings reveal that there is a growing market for book consumption such that Cameroonians can now produce high end literary works and consume such works produced by their peers at home and abroad. Bakwa Book/Magazine is an online Cameroonian based non-profit independent publishing and translation house founded by Dzekashu MacViban. Its objective is to provide a much-needed platform for literary and cultural expression, nurturing of, and networking between emerging writers. On Bakwa Books website we have creative works such as *Twilight of Crooks* by Jonnie MacViban, *Your Feet Will Lead You Where Your Heart Is* by Dzekashu MacViban, *Limbe To Lagos* by Dami Ajayi, Emmanuel Iduma and Dzekashu MacViban, *Batey Besong Collected Plays*, *Behold The Dreamers* by Imbolo Mbue, *House Boy* by Ferdinand Oyono and others.

MacViban (2014) outlines that a number of conferences and journals have been seminal to the evolution and dissemination of Anglophone Cameroonian writing, notably, a conference at the Goethe-Institute, Yaoundé, in 1993, whose proceedings were published that same year by *Bayreuth African Studies* 30, in collaboration with WEKA NO. 1, followed by another hosted by the University of Buea in 1994, whose proceedings were published in a special issue of *Epsa Moto* in 1996, and the "3L" conference in 1999 at the University of Yaoundé 1, as well as a number of conferences by Anglophone Cameroon Writers Association (AWCA). Reviewing

Cameroonian literature on traditional and digital publishing, it is apparent that there are less comprehensive studies on the subject. The only journals and magazines with regard to Anglophone Literature are ABBIA, The Mould, WEKA, PalaPala, the Ngoh Nkuoh Review and EPASA Moto. Bakwa magazine is the only online magazine dedicated to Anglophone Cameroon Literature and writing from other parts of the world.

Nsah (2019) affirms that there have been some promising partnerships including selling books via Amazon and other online bookstores as well as Langaa RPCIG's marketing partnership with African Books Collective (ABC) in the UK and Michigan State University in the USA. Such initiatives can create a larger space for Cameroonian literature on the international literary landscape and undo the tags of marginality and invisibility attached to this rich literature (Nsah, 2012, para.14). All this has become essential in the literary landscape. Creative writers must first of all find their niche in writing and super master it. They could either be novelist of a short story writer or a creative writer. Short stories can be given free without printing rights till people become familiar with the writer. Reviews can be gotten from friends, family, fellow writers and others. Writers should bear in mind that they are not writing for money but for the passion so that their works can be affordable.

There has been an increasing market for book consumption through increasing number of direct sales through digital and traditional methods. Digitally with e-Books, currently having a fan base is everything on the various social media platforms. Many writers have experienced success with direct sales through their blogs and websites. Marketing books can be an important part of building an audience and finding success as a writer. The trend now is to grow even bigger audience as writers with fan bases on multiple social media platforms could benefit the most. Many experienced authors are considering expanding their brands with the help of fan following. They believe it will help them venture into the wider world of direct sales. Direct sales are becoming more common as new platform system emerge such as ProLaunch, Shopify, BookHub and BookFunnel with others. Using platforms, networking sites and custom tools can help authors reach more readers globally.

Marketing creative works can be challenging but rewarding process especially by trying new strategies and being super creative can help in reaching new readers and grow the audience. A few creative ways to market creative works will include building an online presence. Just like Bakwa, Langaa and others are doing, there is need for more websites or blogs to show case writings and connect with readers around the world. Actors can also make use of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram to share and engage an audience. Actors can also join writing, publishing communities where they can connect with other writers and share their works in order to get feedback, find support and build networks. Actors can also consider hosting events, competitions to promote their works and engage with readers or consumers in person. This can be a great way to build buzz and pull traffic in the writing community. Actors can also collaborate or create partnerships with other actors so as to create collaborative projects or cross promote each other's work. This can also enable actors reach a wider audience both home and abroad as well as connect and meet with other professionals of other book industries. They should also consider starting news letters to share their works and updates with audience, do give-aways to attract more audience. This can be a great way to build relationship with readers and keep them

engaged. Despite the success and advantages that comes with such online platforms, doubts still exists as to copyright protection of these intellectual properties. These ideas pretty much sound great and work effectively but how do some of these platforms guarantee that the submitted works won't be stolen and published under the guise of others in a world where multitudes of talented people have been robbed of proceeds of their works through projects that purported to be out to assist them. The internet is a gold mine of knowledge and information but at the same time it is also full of misinformation and disinformation.

Libraries and Cultural Institutions

Library and other cultural institutions play a vital role in book development. Exploring the various institutions in the study areas we had the following.

Yaoundé: The national library was established in 1966 in Yaoundé. The national archives service has two branches one in Yaoundé and the other branch in Buea where documents on colonial history and administration are kept. It is in charge of library services in the Ministry of Culture and enforces the legal deposit law. It is the repository for published and unpublished works of national interest. It also acts as a legal depository. Yaoundé is also home to Cameroon ABADCAM a political umbrella association for librarians, archivists, documetalist and museographers in Cameroon. Cameroon, aware of these issues, had initiated a project in the 1990s to bring the population closer to books and libraries. The book and reading department have a bookmobile that serves the suburbs and sometimes the localities around Yaoundé. We can also cite the Library Lucioles and CLAC in Yaoundé, and also the French Cultural Centre's media library.

Goethe Institute (German Cultural Center) Library situated in Yaoundé at Avenue John F. Kennedy, promotes cultural exchange between Germany and Cameroon. It has a library and also organises training seminars and workshops on low-cost publishing for Cameroonians. The University of Yaoundé II (Advance School of Mass Communication-ASMAC) offers courses in Librarianship and Information Studies.

Buea: The University of Buea offers courses in Publishing and the Book Trade as part of the Bachelor of Science degree programme in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. The University of Buea also has OPAC for the institution only which acts as key to the stock of the library with many materials on information resources. But the shortcoming about it is that, it is not up to date. It has not been updated for the past three years, so most of information resources are on the shelves than they are on the OPAC. It is also limited by poor internet connections. The University has a yearly acquisition of resources which are recommended by the staff and students as core text books, so if there is any Anglophone literature that the lecturers deem fit for teaching and research, they recommend and the library purchases. Also, local literatures which are gifted or donated to the university are processed and placed on the shelves. Purchasing information resources for the library has been very challenging as a result the university has received more of donations than purchase for the past three years. Averagely about thirty books are gifted or donated to the university annually.

The University of Buea also offers a lot of information services like readers services of charging and discharging meaning that they give out information resources to students on borrow. There is also the CURELF Library at Former Alliance Franco Camerounaise. The university also run online serials like journals, newspapers and other publications that come out weekly, monthly or yearly. The university also has a coded website which it gives students for research. There are also the reference and referral services for quick information. The University of Buea has plans of developing a book publication and printing house as it was discussed during their last senate meeting in February 2023.

There is also the American Cultural Centre Library also known as The American Corner established by the American Embassy supported by the American governments cultural and information policies in Cameroon. It is stocked American literature, has travel opportunities and other information about the United States. It is well stocked with current materials and provides internet access for campus users.

The University also has a Reserved Collection Service where scarce core textbooks and core information resources are kept, that are mainly used for teaching and research. These types of books are not borrowed as they are only meant for consultation at the library. It also has a repository of thesis, dissertations and other publications that have been published in the university. The University of Buea has created new department of library sciences, archival and information services which will go operational this October 2023/2024 academic year.

The National Archives Library in Buea also acts as the archives of colonial German Kamerun, Southern Cameroon under British Trusteeship and the West Cameroon Government. It works in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture in formulating policies. There is also the Pan-African Institute for Development-West African Library (PAID-WA).

The Cameroon Educational Resources Committee (CEREC) is an NGO in Buea that promotes book development by getting books from donors outside Cameroon and making them available to them at very cheap prices. CEREC also publishes educational materials and provides educational resources as well as on the spot library consultation for research. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung – based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, is an international German NGO that participates in development in Cameroon through studies, seminars, funding of projects in the area of law, communication, gender issues, press freedom, democratization, human rights etc. publishes research findings of Cameroonian experts and consultants in both French and English.

The Library of Imperial Academy of Arts and Science IMPASS Tiko have a well-equipped library constituting both arts and science, and also contain books on general knowledge as well as creative works. The library is managed and controlled by an experienced librarian.

The International Museum and Library houses numerous cultural items. Italian sponsorship enabled the establishment of a series of cultural heritage museums in north and northwest Cameroon. All the above agencies directly or indirectly influence the book chain in Cameroon. Though the National Library of Cameroon and its regional branches are yet to be created, there is a central service in the Ministry of Arts and Culture in charge of national library and public

reading. A principle of the Cameroonian code of law guides that six copies of all published works of art-printed, graphic and photographic are to be deposited at the national library on the day that they are first made available to the public. Public, school and university libraries as well as national archives also play a vital role in the book chain in Cameroon. Public libraries are established and operated by municipal authorities, under the auspices of the Ministry of Arts and Culture and are controlled and monitored through the various provincial pilot libraries which are expected to become regional branches of the national library.

There is also the public reading project which is aimed at developing public reading structures like public libraries and the training of library workers through short courses, seminars and workshops. It is funded by the French Cooperation Mission Cameroon in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture at the National Library. Public Libraries include; the Alliance Franco-Camerounaise Library Bamenda. They aim at promoting French and Francophone Culture but it also stocks books in English for its users because it is found in predominantly English-speaking regions.

The British Council Library and Bamenda Urban Council are public libraries jointly run by British Council in Cameroon and the Bamenda Urban Council. They have a well-stocked library opened to the general public. In Bamenda it is at Commercial Avenue and the other in Yaoundé. It renders services to all age groups in the society including children. It also provides training for information technology and organises workshops and services for information personnel. It distributes books to all kinds of libraries and also encourages publishing through book fairs and exhibitions. The British Council has online library consisting of e-Books, audio books, award winning movies. Digital membership gives users access to magazines and newspapers, comics and graphic novels from around the world, learning resources to develop skills and access to exclusive content from partners.

The Universities of Buea and Bamenda libraries stock in all areas of programmes by the universities. They also have a budding collection of Cameroonian publications or literature published by Cameroonians and foreigners about Cameroon. It is open to the university community and authorised users from the general public

Other organisations related with books include; The Book Development Councils which promotes and preserves creativity in Cameroon, encourages a positive reading culture, aims at building a creative world of intellectual self-reliance through book launches, book and art fairs, workshops and seminars. It is a member of the Cameroon Publishers Association and other development associations and NGOs.

Computerization of Books in Cameroon

The researcher took interest to investigate the extent of digitalization of books in Cameroon. Digitalization of books is basically the emergence of e-Books which has to do with conversion of books from analogue to digital i.e., book in digital format on the internet. E-Books file format extensions include EPUBS, PDF, MOBI, AZW, RTF and IBA. There are over 60 file formats but the most commonly used are those mentioned above. Globally, they are becoming quite popular

these days as reading, distribution and sales of books have been made easier. Epstein (2008) compares how the evolution of the book publishing industry in this day and age to how the music industry has been impacted by digitalization. Kotarba (2017) states that digitalization is about adjusting to the brand-new needs of society. He contends that digitalization often referred to as the third revolution is fueled by a strong belief in obtaining superior performance and creating competitive advantage.

This argument is similar to one stated by one of our informants, who claims that because self-publishing a book has gotten so much simpler thanks to digitalization, more people are now able to do so. However, a different informant contends that this significant advancement could increase the danger of making it too simple to publish a book, which would lead to a supply of books that is much more than the demand, causing many excellent works to go unrecognized and just disappear. Digitalization has also made the process of writing a book easier, which has given new authors who might not have otherwise had the chance to publish their work a market.

In addition, Kotarba (2017) expressed that the process of digitalization has opened up and produced new dimensions of the profit and loss statement since it has targeted and exploited a new generation of clients with distinct needs. Since digitalization has created new business models for publishers in addition to opening up new avenues for conducting business, this is consistent with our empirical findings. It has also taken advantage of excellent commercial prospects to create and offer new services that will help the market in a variety of ways. One excellent example of a newly launched service that positively influenced the business was Amazon's new offering, Kindle Direct Publishing. They have cleared some hurdles for readers to read anywhere and at any time without necessarily carrying large thick fat novels or other genres. Books can be downloaded through cell phones, laptops, or even kindle without necessarily an individual going personally to buy them. They save space, an individual can carry a lot of e-Books just in one cell phone. They are less costly to some extent. Books are easily available to all. People no longer have to visit one bookshop or the other hunting for books. Some of the books are downloaded for free, others at nominal and exorbitant costs. However, audio, print or e-Books preference depends on individual preference. Generally, they all help in spreading awareness and increasing literacy. The findings below throw more light on digitalization in Cameroon.

Table 2: Participants' Views on the Extent of Digitalization of Books in Cameroon

Indicators	Very great extent	Great extent	Some extent	Lesser extent	No extent at all
Rising reading of books via smartphones	38 (15.5%)	29 (11.8%)	41 (16.7%)	16 (6.5%)	121 (49.4%)
It has taken Cameroonian books to international platforms e.g., Amazon	61 (24.9%)	71 (29.0%)	56 (22.9%)	32 (13.1%)	25 (10.2%)
Wide range of e-libraries in Cameroon	23 (9.4%)	39 (15.9%)	75 (30.6%)	45 (18.4%)	63 (25.7%)
Technology influences growth of eBooks market in Cameroon	21 (8.6%)	43 (17.6%)	67 (27.3%)	62 (25.3%)	53 (21.2%)

Government committed to introduce the latest hardware, software, and educational content	27 (11.0%)	49 (20.0%)	76 (31.0%)	40 (16.3%)	53 (21.6%)
eBooks best alternative low-cost to traditional distribution methods and enable access to variety of books	27 (11.0%)	53 (21.6%)	68 (27.8%)	47 (19.2%)	50 (20.5%)
Increase penetration of mobile devices	56 (22.8%)	84 (34.3%)	68 (27.8%)	26 (10.6%)	11 (4.5%)
Decreasing cost of eBooks	60 (24.5%)	71 (29.0%)	44 (18.0%)	17 (6.9%)	53 (21.9%)

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 2 above presents findings on the extent of digitalization of books in Cameroon. Based on the findings, below one quarter of respondents indicated that to a very great extent, there is rising reading of books via smart phones in Cameroon. Only 29(11.8%) of them agreed with this claim to a great extent, 41(16.7%) respondents held this is true to some extent but 16(6.5%) said it's true to a lesser extent while nearly half 121(49.4%) of them maintained that this is not true.

In addition, the findings indicate that below one third 61(24.9%) of respondents strongly held that digitalization has taken Cameroonian books to international market space. Nearly one third 71(29%) of them agreed with this claim to a great extent, 56(22.9%) others maintained it's true to some extent, 32(13.1%) of them said is true only to a lesser extent while 25(10.2%) claimed digitalization has not exposed Cameroonian books to the wider world market space like Amazon.

Also, only 23(9.4%) of respondent strongly held that there is availability of e-libraries in Cameroon, 39(15.9%) affirmed this to be true, 75(30.6%) others indicated it is true to some extent, 45(18.4%) held its true only to a lesser extent while about one quarter 63(25.7%) of respondents could not attest that there is availability of e-libraries in Cameroon.

More so, an insignificant proportion of 21(8.6%) respondents indicated that to a very great extent technology pose an influence on the growth of e-Book market in Cameroon, 43(17.6%) of respondents agreed with this to a great extent, 67(27.3%) of them agreed with this to some extent, 62(25.3%) indicated its true to a less extent but 53(21.2%) claimed this is not true at all.

In continuation, below one quarter 27(11%) of respondents strongly admitted that the government of Cameroon is committed to introducing the latest hardware, software and educational content to enhance readers experience of e-Books in the country. This was also affirmed by 49(20%) of respondents, about one third 76(31%) of respondents indicated this is true only to some extent, 40(16.3%) agreed with this only to a lesser extent meanwhile 53(21.6%) others could not agree at all.

Furthermore, an insignificant proportion of respondents claimed that the digitalization (e-Books) is best alternative low-cost to traditional distribution method and enable access to a wide variety of books. This was supported by 53(21.6%) of the respondents, over one quarter 68(27.8%) of

them agreed with this only to some extent, but 47(19.2%) others indicated it's true only to a small extent while 50(20.5%) could not agree with this point at all.

More so, less than one quarter 56(22.8%) of respondents strongly held that digitalization has led to increase penetration of mobile devices. Over one third 84(34.3%) of respondents agreed with this, above one quarter 68(27.8%) others admitted this to be true only to some extent meanwhile 26(10.6%) of them indicated it is true only to a lesser extent, and 11(4.5%) others claimed it is not true at all.

Lastly for this section, nearly one quarter 60(24.5%) of respondents affirmed to a very great extent that there is decreasing cost of eBooks, close to one third 71(29%) of them also agreed with this point, below one quarter 44(18%) others agreed with this only to a limited extent. In contrast, as few as 17(6.9%) of respondents held this is true only to a small extent while 53(21.9%) others could not agree that there is decreasing cost of e-Books.

The findings to this effect demonstrate that only about one quarter of participants perceived that there is raising reading of books on smart phones and other technological devices with over half disassociating from this view. The implication is that even though the 21st century is described as the "digital era", it seems not to have significantly affected the reading of books on smart phones in the context of Cameroon. This does not in any way suggest that books written by Cameroonians are not published online but that some Cameroonians seldom practice the art of reading books on smart phones and other technological devices.

Findings could also be illustrating the poor reading culture of Cameroonians unlike the perception that Cameroonians mostly read print books. The government of Cameroon had long concluded that Cameroonians in general have a poor reading culture. This explains why the former Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, Philemon Yang during a cabinet meeting in Yaoundé, instructed that the Ministers of Culture and Education work together to promote the reading culture and indigenous publishing, in Cameroon (Alemji, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that digitalization has taken Cameroonian publications to international platforms like Amazon. More so, the study noted that there is increased penetration of mobile devices in the Cameroonian book sector. This is a significant step for the Cameroonian book industry as this has the potential to enable foreign consumers to buy and read Cameroonian made books. This researcher has seen Cameroonian books on Amazon like that of prominent writers like George Ngwane "The Cameroon Condition", Imbolo Mbue "Behold The Dreamers" and "How Beautiful we are" in which they dealt with subjects about politics, environment, mortality, religion and generation culture family. In the month of February 2022, Imbolo Mbue has featured amongst top ten most popular in-demand books in America's Libraries as well as so many other awards. She was also long listed for the 2022 PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction, America's most prestigious peer-juried literary prize. PEN/Faulkner the Award Committee Chair Louis, Bayard also acknowledges that 'in this time of trouble, literature remains one of our best tools for making sense off things'. This study sees this as a source of inspiration and revenue to the country and this can impact the country in many ways. For example, tourists can now read

about Cameroon via online purchased books, know about the beauty of the country, its culture, and embark on touristic trips which traditionally bring in revenue to the state of Cameroon.

Only a less significant proportion of respondents affirmed that digitalization has led to the availability of e-libraries in Cameroon as against nearly half of the study's population who could not ascertain that there is wide range of e-libraries in Cameroon. Similarly, there is little evidence that technology influences the growth of e-Books market in Cameroon and to support that e-Book are less costly than traditional distribution methods. From this, it can be observed that the e-Books landscape of Cameroon is still in its infancy despite the huge technological innovations happening in this 21st century. E-Books seem to have no relevance to Cameroonians. The tendency in Cameroon is that people don't buy e-Books. Students prefer buying paperback books because e-Books are quite costly especially those full of knowledge. This is the reason why we are convinced that books published outside Cameroon are not for the Cameroonian society because majority of Cameroonians back home can't afford such books. This is not healthy for the book industry of the country as produced books may not be exposed to the wider market. This would further mean that writers, publishers and all stakeholders in the book distribution chain would generate very little from their endeavors.

The self-publishing sector has not been exploited by many Anglophone Cameroonian authors. They fail to understand that there is more to self-publishing than just writing and printing a book for sale. Some people think to publish a book is to attribute an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) to a book cover or simply to write a well edited book and launch it.

However, for Cameroonian authors contemplating what publishing options to choose, this study recommends publishing with StreetLib Cameroon due to the benefits that comes with it such as long-term investment, cost-effective, complete control of works and targeted audience. StreetLib is an Italian based online publishing portal for authors in Cameroon to distribute e-Books across the world with no upfront cost. It is a global gateway distributor of digital books, based in Italy and serving authors and publishers worldwide. Established in 2006, StreetLib has the widest international reach of any digital distributor. Authors and publishers can make their books digitally available to readers in almost every country in the world, and get paid for every sale. There are no upfront fees, StreetLib simply deducts a 10% commission from net and pays you the rest. Books can be uploaded in any language, English, French and even including Cameroonian native languages like Fulfulde, Ewondo and others which can be distributed to e-Books sellers and digital libraries around the world including the most popular retail platforms such as Amazon KDP, Google Play, Kobo and Apple. Books can also be sold on StreetLib international store with the language in question. StreetLib currently hosts over a quarter of a million e-Books.

A distributor of Cameroonian comic scenes and books is Artefacts Sarl which is a platform developed by young programmers passionate about comics. It is a company specialized in the fields of graphic design, web and mobile development and computer engineering. This platform solves the major problem of African comics which is distribution. Cameroonian as well as African writers and publishers can publish their works on this site making their works available for free or sell them and receive up to 50% of the price.

Zebra Comics Inc. is also an agency of comic authors and artist from Cameroon. Its Objective is to tell African stories through comics so as to build the reading culture in Cameroon and to promote Africa through its stories and to provide jobs for writer, artists and other professionals who work in the field.

Conclusion

Over all, this study established that the current trends of the book industry in Cameroon is a composition of motivational, religious, academic, political as well as romance books. Furthermore, the book industry is perceived to be producing more of motivational books. More so, print books are said to dominate the quantity of books produced in Cameroon but there are some substantial strives to publish books both in the print, e-Books, and audio forms. Basically, the findings suggest that even though we live in the 21st century also known largely as the digital era, the Cameroonian book industry is far from reaching a substantial extent of digitalization. More so, Cameroonians who are noted to have a poor reading culture have not quite embrace digital reading.

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