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Cultural Aspects of the Link between Cameroon and Italy

Globalization means different things to different people. Some say it is the movement of people, language, ideas, and products around the world. Others see it as the dominance of multinational corporations and the destruction of cultural identities. This paper uses the concept of Globalisation as a process, as the closer integration of the countries and people of the world (Stiglitz-2002), while understanding it also as an exchange between persons. Broadly speaking, in common sense terms Cameroon is an African country and Italy a western one. The former has been colonized in the past by France, Germany and England. However, Cameroon has never been colonised by Italy. Nevertheless, Italian culture has become pervasive in Cameroon in the last few years. This began occurring with the 1990 football World Cup played that year in Italy, and gathered pace with an increase of interest in the study of Italian language and culture. Everything coming from Italy seems to be successfully received in Cameroon. Many people now have the opportunity to see the RAI (Italian television) at home. Italian food is another area that has a lot of influence. There is popular trend now especially among the young, to go for a pizza with friends. This is strange for a country such as Cameroon with a strong traditional food culture. But it is seen as a sign of modern society. In my paper we shall see how and why the Italian food has generated so much interest. Another field where there has been a lot of Italian influence is fashion. People like Italian fashions and can afford them at a low cost.

Starting from an interrogation of how the two countries reached out to link to each other, this paper will examine the above phenomena in order to ask whether Italian culture genuinely influenced Cameroon from 1990 to 2009 using the concept of culture as developed by Tabellini. Furthermore, does Italian culture affect Cameroonian economic outcomes? We will also examine how Italian culture might affect differing popular perceptions in Cameroon today.