



AN EXAMINATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE AS A VEHICLE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the results of a study on traditional culture as a vehicle for tourism development in Zimbabwe. Traditional culture represents people's way of living as an identity symbol to distinguish themselves from other cultures. This study used a qualitative research design for the collection of empirical data from the desk research sources, following the framework of research objectives and questions. Four elements of culture that influence tourism development were adopted in this study and these are; art, beliefs and values, law and politics and religion. The findings include the documentation of Zimbabwe cultural forms that are represented by the different ethnicities. Furthermore, it was also found that there are already existing cultural villages in Zimbabwe that are benefiting from cultural tourism hence the need to maximize on this type of tourism. It was concluded that, culture is one of the niche features that can be effectively used to promote the development of tourism in both rural and urban destinations. Moreso, cultural tourism takes various forms such as culinary tourism, arts and festivals tourism, historic tourism, religious tourism among others that are basic to every visitor. It is recommended that the private and public sectors should work closely as partners to preserve the cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations, through instilling cultural values among the locals and visitors. It is further recommended that local communities should be fully involved and effectively participate in community-based tourism in the area to make cultural tourism viable and to improve the communities' socio- economic well-being.

Key words

Traditional culture, tourism development, sustainability and community well-being

Introduction

This study seeks to examine how culture can be used as a vehicle for tourism development in Zimbabwe. Culture is the social heritage of the humans that is transmitted to the future generation mainly through language. This heritage is expressed in the various elements such as customs, laws, dress, architectural style, social standards, and traditions. Culture is also defined as the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time. Culture is traditional, meaning that, it is based on a way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family, society, etc., for a long time according to the Britannica Dictionary.

Lutomia and Bello-Bravo (2017), defines traditional culture as a set of information, practices and experiences transmitted through traditional means from generation to generation in a society. Culture is unique as it depicts societal identity that can be attractive to other people. This attribute of culture qualifies it to be an attraction for tourism.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism is movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and many others. Cultural tourism has been also defined as 'the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. Tourism development refers to the creation and maintenance of a tourism industry within a particular location. Tourism is the movement of people from their source markets to a destination for various reasons such as religion, education, leisure, health, business, culture and many others.

Since culture has been adopted as a form of tourism worldwide, this study has been motivated by the need to ascertain the extent to which culture can be used to influence the development of the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. In addition, it is also the aim of this study to assess the impact of tourism on the Gross National Product (GDP) to establish its contribution to the national economy. Meanwhile Zimbabwe practice cultural tourism, both in rural and urban destinations, the researcher needs to find out the extent to which these places have been developed due to the tourism activities.

Background

Culture is a combination of various societal values, norms, customs, traditions, beliefs, myths among others that are passed from one generation to the next. All these make up a heritage that includes the tangible cultural assets like literature, tools, clothing, food, artwork, and archeological discoveries, along with intangible assets such as oral histories and legends, festivals, religious rites, songs, performing arts, social practices, knowledge and skills.

Tourism and culture complement each other. According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2009), the main factors linking tourism and culture to competitiveness and attractiveness include the ability of culture to provide distinctiveness for tourism, the ability of tourism to support tangible and intangible culture, the role of regional stakeholders, the leadership qualities of public sector stakeholders and administrative arrangements for tourism and culture. Tourism encourages locals to share their culture with others, as it is an integral part of their identity. Solima and Minguzzi (2014) believe that, the development of tourism has been traditionally related to the development of culture. The unique cultural resources of a territory serve as a basis for the cultural supply required by the local community, as well as contributing to increased tourism attractiveness.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2017), defines cultural tourism as a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.

According to Childs (2023), “culture and heritage tourism plays a critical role in building the visitor economy and goes even beyond that. A recent survey showed that over 50% of respondents polled agreed that history and culture are strong influences on their choice of holiday destination”.

Child (2023), claims that, statistics indicate that culture and heritage tourism continues to grow rapidly, especially in Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) regions where the direct global value of culture and heritage tourism is estimated to be well over \$1 billion dollars, with that of the Asia Pacific region being approximately \$327 million and more than 50 million jobs in APEC countries.

From the claims of Childs (2023) above, one can believe that, culture and heritage tourism tend to attract high-yield tourists. Culture and heritage tourists often stay longer and spend a lot more money in general than other tourists do. In one study, according to Childs (2023), showed that a culture and heritage tourist spent as much as 38% higher per day and they stayed 22% longer overall compared to other kinds of travelers.

From the above background to this study, one can decipher that it is the link between culture and tourism that determines the competitiveness and attractiveness of a destination but there is need to ascertain the extent to which this intervention contributes to the well-being of such places. Cultural tourism is one of the stable forms of tourism that will never die as long as people live in the society. Investing in such type of tourism is noble for national economic development.

In this study, culture refers to a group's way of life over a certain period of life while traditions are the means in which these ways are passed from a generation to the next through either oral forms or practices.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the cultural elements that are mostly used for tourism activities;
2. To measure the socio-economic contributions of cultural tourism in Zimbabwe; and
3. To provide recommendations on the sustainable use of culture.

Literature Review

According to the Tourism Teacher (2023), cultural tourism is a big business as some people seek to embark on their travels with the sole intention of having a 'cultural' experience, whereas others may experience culture as a byproduct of their trip. Cultural tourism is the act of visiting particular destinations in order to experience and learn about a particular culture. The visit can include many activities, such as attending events and festivals, visiting museums and tasting the local food and drinks. Cultural tourism can be an unintentional part of the tourism experience, whereby cultural immersion (with the local people, their language, customs, cuisine etc.) is an inevitable part of a person's holiday. Whether one likes it or not, everyone experiences cultural tourism through mingling with the local people and taking food and drink when you visit a destination because this is a necessity and unavoidable. Tourism provides endless opportunities to learn about the way other people live, about their society and their traditions.

Malik (2020) defines a cultural tourism destination is a geographical region that comprises of manmade resources, natural resources interconnected with events of historical nature, community activities and individual aspects. Cultural tourism destinations are prominent cities, villages, towns and resorts which are recognized and well known for maintaining their history, authentication and heritage of that particular destination or culture of that particular region or country. The viability of these destinations relies on the quality of attractions and services on offer and their accessibility.

Cultural tourists are categorized differently depending on their motives and expectations at a destination. In attempt to understand the scope of cultural tourism, scholars like Mckercher (2002) differentiated tourists according to whether they were culturally interested, motivated or inspired. Cultural tourists fall under five levels such as casual cultural tourists, incidental cultural tourists, purposeful cultural tourists, serendipitous cultural tourists, and sightseeing cultural tourists.

The casual cultural tourist views cultural tourism as a weak motive for travel and the resulting experience is shallow. The incidental cultural tourist does not travel for cultural reasons, but nonetheless participates in some activities and

has shallow experiences. This cultural tourist plays a small or no role in the decision to travel and enjoys an insignificant cultural experience, whilst visiting attractions that are within easy reach and heritage theme parks.

Purposeful cultural tourists are those who indicate that the main reason to visit a destination is to learn and experience its culture. This tourist enjoys learning experiences that challenge them intellectually and visit history museums, art galleries, temples and heritage sites that are less known. The sightseeing cultural tourists indicate less interest in experiencing and more concerned with the visiting cultural landmarks. The serendipitous cultural tourist does not travel for cultural reasons but who, after participating, ends up having a deep cultural experience.

Mckercher and Du Cros (2002), added other classes of culture tourists such as the tour-amateur cultural tourist who is akin with the sightseeing cultural tourist above and they often travel long distances, visit remote areas, enjoy tours and wandering through the streets. The occasional cultural tourist plays a moderate role in the decision of travelling and enjoys an insignificant cultural experience, their preferred activities are visiting attractions and temples that are easy to reach and to explore, although not to the extent that the tour-amateur cultural tourist does. The last segment is the accidental cultural tourist, who plays a small or no role in the decision to travel but enjoys a deep cultural experience. This tourist type is diverse and as such has no preferred activities attributed to it.

Cultural tourism plays a significant role in the national GDP though the statistics are not specific as to the type of tourism activity. Muzapu and Sibanda (2016), posit that the tourism industry is one of the most important service industries in Zimbabwe accounting for 8- 10% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Mid-term Fiscal Policy, 2015).

Kamer (2023) reports that, contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in Zimbabwe from 2019 to 2021 (in million U.S. dollars) were as follows:

Characteristic	Contribution to GDP
2021	5.2%
2020	4.2%
2019	6.5%

Investing in cultural tourism is a noble idea as this adds up to the overall tourism contribution to the national GDP and socio-economic develop of the targeted destinations. To this effect, Zimbabwe has come up with several cultural tourism activities and attractions that include cultural villages, festivals, museums tours, historical sites tours, annual tourism events and many others.

Cultural attractions allow travelers to experience mankind's physical and intellectual creations. Culture and heritage tourism usually utilize cultural heritage attractions such as historic buildings archaeological sites, state, local, or

national parks, art galleries or museums; concerts, musicals, ethnic or ecological heritage sites. Culture in its broadest sense is everything made by humans; however, some achievements make greater impressions than others. The UNESCO World Heritage list contains some of these sites, together with natural attractions. Culture is a combination of the traditional tangible objects and the intangible culture that can be orally expressed or practiced by societies.

Methodology

This study used mainly descriptive qualitative research through the use of secondary data from desk research that has been analyzed to address the study objectives.

Facts and Realities about Zimbabwean Culture

Nina (2017) describes Zimbabwe (formerly known as Rhodesia and southern Rhodesia) as a country in southern Africa, bordering South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana. History posits that the indigenous people of Zimbabwe trace back to Bantu origins and are believed to have populated the land for more than ten centuries. The Shona and Ndebele people are the two biggest ethnicities. The Shona forms the majority of the population with approximately 80%. They traditionally have a strong regional clan structure, with six main groups: the Manyika, the Ndau, the Zezuru, the Karanga, the Korekore and the Rozvi. These groups are formed on the basis of linguistic and cultural similarities. The Ndebele comprise roughly 14% of the population and have two main tribal groups: the Ndebele and Kalanga. Smaller ethnic groups include the Venda, the Batonga/Balonka and the Shangani/Shangane people. Some white Zimbabweans (mainly of British origin) remain in the country and there are also some Asian communities in the cities. However, both these groups make up less than 1% of the population. Most white Zimbabweans migrated when the country achieved independence from British rule. This population structure and statistics already bring cultural diversity that makes Zimbabwe unique.

Before the British colonization era (1890-1980), the country had a great diversity of languages, communities, beliefs and customs that gave dominance of the traditional culture of Zimbabwe. However, this has significantly changed due to the influence of British colonization, technology and contemporary social pressures among other factors. While some Zimbabweans in rural areas continue to practice and maintain traditional customs and beliefs, they represent a relatively small segment of the population. Today, for many Zimbabweans the value of the British education system, Christianity and economic prosperity have taken priority over certain cultural practices. The effects of colonization remain imprinted on aspects of society that are visible in the widespread use of English, the adoption of Christianity and associated Christian family values.

However, though some changes have taken place, social etiquette and identity are still deeply informed by the traditional social structures and conventions of tribal groups in Zimbabwe. Most Zimbabweans maintain deep respect

for and connection to their ancestors and heritage, despite urban migration and globalization. Zimbabwean tribes and communities are traditionally collectivistic as people tend to put their group or family's interests before their own, receiving support, protection and a sense of belonging in return. Zimbabweans generally identify themselves by their region of birth when getting acquainted with someone, as this implies their linguistic background and, in some cases, their social attitudes and politics.

Zimbabweans generally have an innate awareness of their ancestors that follows them throughout their life and keeps them grounded. Traditionally, it was believed that their spirits could be communicated with to provide guidance. These spirits were deeply revered and worshipped before the introduction of Christianity by the British colonizers. However, some Zimbabweans living mostly in rural areas (including Christians) have continued to recognize the original tradition of belief in the ancestral spiritual realm as one's heritage remains crucial to Zimbabweans' concept of personal identity.

Zimbabwean culture has a long tradition of storytelling and folklore that provides each generation with a sense of connection to their history and ancestors. These stories also provide communities with a unified understanding of their group's origins as portrayed in their totem (*mutupo* in Shona) that represents their heritage, bloodline, origin and identity. Totems are usually animals (e.g., a zebra or buffalo); however, they can also be objects (e.g., a leg, heart). The totems are passed down through the father's lineage the way a surname is carried through a family in the English-speaking West. In this way, two people with the same totem can be forbidden from marrying as it is seen in a similar light to incest.

There is a great emphasis on communal gathering within tribes, where people share stories, music, songs and dance. Music and dance are also central to Zimbabwean culture as the traditional sounds, rhythms and instruments are distinctive and showcase the color, creativity, spirit and joy of the Zimbabwean people.

There are many other rituals and ceremonial practices in Zimbabwe. Some are specific to certain tribes whilst others are more widely practiced. Many relate to celebrating milestones in people's lives, such as marriage, the installation of chiefs or the circumcision ceremony that marks a boy's transition to manhood. Traditional ceremonies, festivals and rituals also usually involve contacting the spirit world and making offerings as a form of worship.

Zimbabweans are often observed as being very warm, welcoming and engaging since they are quite formal and non-confrontational, hence, they may be overly accommodating of other people's opinions. This is partly attributed to their strong cultural value placed upon considerate behaviour, manners and politeness. Every distinct social and ethnic group in Zimbabwe has a particular model for what they consider to be correct and polite decorum. For example, the largest group, the Shona, refer to one's knowledge and compliance with socially acceptable behaviour as '*tsika*'. *Tsika* is the virtuous, polite and moral way of behaving in accordance with Shona cultural standards that range from being respectful to elders, obedience to parents and figures of authority, as well as observing cultural

customs and the social structures in place. The Shona see *tsika* as something one learns and develops in adolescence to eventually foster self-control. Someone who has been taught and raised well to have good manners is said to have '*hunhu*' (in Shona) or '*ubuntu*' (in Ndebele) that can be translated in the essence of humanity/humaneness in English.

The above description of gives highlights of the Zimbabweans' traditional culture that distinguishes it from other nations.

Discussion

Cernat and Gourdon (2007) posit that "Given its cross-sectoral nature, tourism can only grow sustainably if it is integrated into the country's overall economic, social and physical planning policies." The tourism industry, therefore, needs to be developed further to be attractive and competitive in the international market.

Muzapu and Sibanda (2016), propose that, the industry can survive if it is managed sustainably through practicing the following principles:

- a) minimizing the impact of tourism activity on the environment in order to acquire ecological sustainability, by contributing to maintaining and enhancement of conservation through the return of a part of the revenues towards the protected area. It means practices that do not have a negative impact on the environment but contribute to its development.
- b) minimizing the negative impact of tourism activity on the local community and its members so as to obtain social sustainability. It goes by a system that does not upset and disturb the daily life of the population at the tourist destination.
- c) minimizing the negative impact of tourism activity on the culture/traditions/customs of the local communities so as to obtain cultural sustainability. Developing tourism capable of determining the authenticity and individuality of local cultures to be preserved, and avoid their saturation with 'external' cultural influences.

Cultural tourism contributes a lot to the society and the economy of the nations. One of the significant advantages of cultural tourism is that it allows travelers to meet locals and build bonds with people from different cultures, increasing tolerance. The Arts Development Company (2023) acknowledges that, the tourism and cultural sectors have much in common as they can create positive memories for an 'audience'. They are both visitor-facing with much to gain through good customer care. Without culture, tourism destinations would not have a reason for visitors to visit. Without tourism, cultural organizations would not have a constant flow of audiences and visitors.

Cultural tourism, through arts, culture and heritage bring benefits such as placemaking, attracting visitors, creating lasting memories and economic impact.

Placemaking refers to cultural tourism bringing a positive economic and social impact as a place can have a 'brand', that enhances its image and makes it easier to market. People travel expecting the 'brand', the perception, traditions and places, that they have been 'sold'. Visitors whose expectations are met will spend more in local businesses, because they want to take advantage of the local experience and create memories. Cultural tourists participate in tourism either actively like the casual and sightseeing cultural tourists who most of the times can be involved in this type of tourism by default without prior plans but end up enjoying. These are different from the purposive cultural tourists who plan to participate and actively experience a new culture.

Economically, cultural tourism creates employment opportunities for the local people in various capacities. Some communities can be employed as storytellers, tour guides, artistic performers and other activities. There are more economic benefits from cultural tourism; for example, according to the Cultural Tourism Toolkit, in 2017, figures from VisitBritain have revealed that almost 400,000 tourists came to Dorset in 2017, contributing more than £226m to the local economy.

There are also health and well-being advantages as those with physical impairments or illnesses express themselves through art. Older people want to keep active mentally and physically through artistic activities. Young people seek new experiences to widen their understanding of the world. Arts, heritage and cultural organizations are in a good place to provide opportunities for these, particularly if they partner with tourism organizations that also want to offer opportunities and grow. Therefore, packaging different artistic activities with accommodation and food is a good example of a cultural tourism offer for a small business. It is important that cultural organizations promote themselves to international visitors.

The selected elements of culture that impact the tourism professional are the following:

1. Art- an expression of the creative ideas and imagination, and the artist can choose a medium to express their craft. Artists can translate their imagination and ideas into something tangible, and these are valued by other people as they appreciate and comprehend meaning from the works of the artists.
2. Beliefs and Values - people choose their source of inspiration and it can be based on beliefs and values that are shared by many people in the group. As these beliefs and values are adopted by many followers, they are passed down to the succeeding generations.
3. Law and politics-is the constitutive approach which looks at the law as a part of the constitution of a culture, thus, the constitution of people's minds, practices, and social relations. It also sees the law that the courts create and apply as a distinct cultural system wherein its constituents comply with.

4. Religion - continuously offers a kind of philosophy that establishes a moral compass for anyone who seeks the truth. It is commonly practiced by a group of people. Religion is a very strong source of cultural influence in many countries. It has permeated every facet of daily living, including the way people venerate, eat, dress, sleep, and work.

Zimbabwe, is already benefiting from cultural villages such as Korekore in Makonde district of Mashonaland west province, KoMpsi in Victoria Falls, Chesvingo in Masvingo, Mtshabezi in Umzingwane and C. J. Rhodes in Matobo. The different cultures of Zimbabwe are being showcased and communities are benefiting. Doing this will be an awareness campaign that will help to improve understanding of other cultures, promote tolerance, peace and reconciliation within and across communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Quality cultural tourism is required for the destinations to be competitive and attractive. Ritchie and Crouch (2003: 148), as quoted by Muzapu and Sibanda (2016) affirm that an effective tourism policy would seek to provide high-quality visitors' experience to the destination, while ensuring that the destination is not compromised in terms of its social, environmental and cultural integrity. Cultural tourism is diverse as it offers various forms of attractions that range from tangible historical structures and traditional practices. Tourism improves the life quality of locals at a destination with the improvements in infrastructure, improvements in intercultural understanding and the importance of local cultures, heritages and traditions.

It is recommended that Zimbabwe needs to improve on the accessibility of the cultural tourism sites through road rehabilitation. Moreso, there must be continuous human capital trainings for the local communities to prepare them to receive visitors.

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