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A CASE FOR INNOVATIVE PACKAGING IN ZIMBABWE TOURISM PRODUCT REBRANDING

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Research Article

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Abstract: This essay analyzes the cutting-edge packages that Zimbabwe's tourism sector might use to better serve 21st-century travelers. Researchers have hinted that today's visitors are more interested in the people of the place they are visiting, and they are favoring more culturally relevant tourism items. The Victoria Falls, a popular tourist destination and one of the seven wonders of the world, wildlife or safaris, monuments like the Great Zimbabwe monument, and other traditional tourism items like boating and sailing were among Zimbabwe's traditional tourism offerings. These goods restrict visitors' ability to engage with Zimbabwean culture and are less immersive in character. New packaged tourist models for Zimbabwe are proposed, and potential opportunities and difficulties are examined.

Keywords*:* Zimbabwean cultural tourism, live-in tourism, packaging, sustainability, and innovation

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Wildlife, historical sites like Victoria Falls and the Great Zimbabwe ruins, as well as other conventional tourism offerings like boating and sailing, have historically been Zimbabwe's main tourist attractions (Manwa, 2003). In general, Zimbabwe's tourist industry has been largely dependent on its natural and cultural endowments. Travel restrictions given to travelers in their own countries caused a sharp decline in tourist visits during the 2000 political upheavals (Mkono, 2010). Following the signing of a Global major Agreement by Zimbabwe's major parties in 2009, tourism began to pick up steam. However, drawing in more affluent travelers is a problem for the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), which is the main marketing organization promoting Zimbabwe as a travel destination. The shifting preferences and expectations of tourists exacerbate this. The authors agree that travelers today want closer links with the local populations in the nations they visit. In order to attract this new kind of traveler, destinations are developing more innovative ways to package their tourism offerings. In light of this, this study suggests fresh and creative ways to package Zimbabwe's tourist offerings.

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

This article's goal is to provide fresh, creative approaches to packaging and advertising travel to Zimbabwe.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwean tourism has relied on what Mieczkowski (1995:

459) referred to as mass tourism. Mass tourism is defined as traditional, large-scale travel that involves organized tour groups that concentrate on animals, historical sites, beauty, and other natural resources. This conventional strategy is no longer viable. considering the shifting preferences and demands of travelers. The packaging of Zimbabwe's tourist offerings needs to change. In order to promote Zimbabwe as a travel destination, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) has identified the need of rebranding the tourism offering (ZTA, 2012).

TRADITIONAL PACKAGING OF ZIMBABWE TOURISM PRODUCTS

Zimbabwean tourism has depended on what Mieczkowski (1995: 459) called "mass tourism" since obtaining independence in 1980. Traditional, large-scale travel including planned tour groups that focus on wildlife, historical sites, beauty, and other natural resources is known as mass tourism. This traditional approach is no longer effective. taking into account passengers' changing needs and preferences. Zimbabwe's tourism offers need to be packaged differently. The Zimbabwe tourist Authority (ZTA) has determined that rebranding the tourist offering is necessary to market Zimbabwe as a vacation destination (ZTA, 2012).

CHALLENGES WITH THE TRADITIONAL APPROACHES IN ZIMBABWE

The essentially nature-based, conventional/traditional packaging of tourist items presents a variety of difficulties, some of which are as follows:

1. Due to their negative effects on the environment, nature-based traditional tourist packages are not sustainable (Manwa, 2003 and Mkono, 2010).
2. Despite their historical success, traditional travel packages are vulnerable to political unrest. Due to Zimbabwe's political unrest over the past ten years, the majority of traditional markets in Europe and America, including France, Germany, and Britain, have issued travel advisories to their citizens, characterizing Zimbabwe as a dangerous place to visit. Insurance companies would not pay for trips to Zimbabwe in light of this. Tourist arrivals significantly decreased as a consequence (Mkono, 2010). The global market becomes unstable as a result.
3. Zimbabwe may rely on internal tourism, but this alternative is not economically feasible due to the low income levels of most Zimbabweans.
4. It is simple to replace the conventional nature-based travel packages (Mkono, 2010).Neighboring nations including South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique are rich in wildlife. The main draw, Victoria Falls, is promoted in nearby nations like South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia, and travel companies only provide day excursions there. Zimbabwe has lost revenue as a result.

from tourism, with visitors visiting Zimbabwe for the day rather than staying overnight.

5. When private operators, who are often unregistered, provide trips and get payment outside the nation, there are leaks in tourism-related revenue. When visitors arrive in Zimbabwe, they are taken on private game reserves or traditional safaris that bring in no money for the government, not even in the form of taxes.

The aforementioned issues need a paradigm change in the conventional packaging of tourism-related

goods. Alternative packages that are more sustainable, eco-friendly, difficult to replace, and sensitive to the tastes and preferences of modern tourists must be created.

ALTERNATIVE TOURISM PACKAGES

Mieczkowski (1995) suggests a variety of non-traditional, large-scale, nature-based tourist packages. Cultural, educational, and agricultural tourist packages are a few examples of these alternative offerings.

Agricultural tourism is travel on farms that allows farmers to diversify their activities while increasing the value of their produce; educational tourism is travel to other nations for educational objectives (Cabrini, 2002). Cultural tourism, also referred to as heritage tourism, focuses on the rich history of individuals or regions as it is represented and conserved in monuments, historic sites, buildings, and artifacts (Cabrini, 2002).

In contrast to other alternative packages, this report suggests that cultural tourism has higher chances.

CULTURAL TOURISM

According to Cabrini (2005), cultural tourism is travel that centers on the rich history of a people or region as it is depicted and maintained in monuments, historic sites, and culture. According to Kaillor (1995), people go to a nation for its culture rather than its airports, lodging, and recreational amenities. The author continues by noting that an increasing number of tourists are turning into special interest travelers, with the arts, heritage, and/or cultural activities ranking among the top five reasons to travel.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CULTURAL TOURISM

For these reasons, cultural tourism is seen as an excellent substitute for conventional tourism that is centered upon nature.

1. Compared to traditional tourist packages, cultural tourism is more sustainable (Manwa, 2007, Zeppel and Hall, 1992).The authors have shown that cultural tourists may play a significant role in the growth of local communities and spend more than other sorts of visitors. Cultural tourism may play a significant role in promoting national identity and nostalgia in addition to strengthening local communities (Palmer, 1999). According to the authors, one non-replaceable commodity that Zimbabwe might market in an effort to achieve sustainability is cultural tourism.

2. According to Mkono (2010), using a community-based strategy like the CAMPFIRE initiative would promote involvement from rural and local populations. This action will lessen the "tag-of-war" that exists between Zimbabwe's rural residents and those who promote wildlife-based tourism (Manwa, 2003). The destination promoters might use a variety of innovative models.

3. Cultural tourism is environmentally beneficial. It is impossible to overstate how important it is for a destination to develop environmentally friendly goods. The influence of nature-based tourism on the environment has been thoroughly studied by a number of ecology and tourism writers, who came to the

conclusion that the conventional nature-based tourist packages were harmful to the ecosystem. The idea of sustainable tourism is connected to the more general problem of sustainable development by Horob and Long (1996). Additionally, according to Altney and Hussain (2005), sustainable tourism refers to the application of sustainable development concepts to a specific tourist setting. According to Eccles (1995), sustainability has gained popularity in academic tourism circles. The idea of sustainability and the greening of the tourism sector have altered travelers' perceptions of places that provide nature-based products, while places that encourage cultural and visitor engagement are becoming more and more popular.

4. According to Mkono (2010), culture is the only product that can be effectively differentiated for a competitive advantage and cannot be replaced. The author continues by pointing out that Western visitors anticipate genuine experiences that are tailored to their needs and provide excellent service.

5. Consumer preferences and interests in travel packages have evolved. According to Gray (1970), cultural tourism represents a change from mass tourism in the development of visitor behavior. Butler (1990) agrees and notes that visitor preferences have evolved. Travelers are more inclined to choose places that provide eco-friendly goods, such as cultural tourism, than those that offer traditional or conventional nature-based travel packages. Local communities may showcase their culture via cultural tourism (Mkono, 2010).

6. In addition to giving visitors something fresh to look forward to, cultural tourism fosters interaction between visitors and residents.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CULTURAL TOURISM

Zimbabwe may package its cultural tourism offering in a number of creative ways to set it apart from rival packages and generate authenticity to satisfy the tastes and expectations of contemporary visitors. Township tourism, the planned live-in-village tourism, live-in-stone sculpture, pottery-making, and basket-weaving tourism are examples of creative cultural tourist packages. Below is a description of these cutting-edge travel offerings.

Tourism in townships

In the 1990s, township tourism—a different kind of cultural tourism—started to appear in the cities of emerging nations. This kind of tourism basically entails going to the most underprivileged areas of cities to see how the locals live. Calcutta, Mumbai, Delhi, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, and Johannesburg have all successfully implemented township tourism (Ranchander, 2007).

The benefit of township tourism is that the excursions are clearly marketed as having participatory elements and being "authentic." Visitors may engage with locals. The trips are "off-the-beaten path," according to Ranchander (2007). This indicates that this kind of travel is novel and non-replaceable. Because the visitors engage with the locals and get firsthand knowledge of their culture, the excursions are educational in nature. Despite the fact that some writers have disparagingly referred to

township tourism as "poverty tourism," According to Burns and Norell (2007), the main factor influencing township tours' popularity is people's curiosity in the local way of life. Bruns and Norell (2007) corroborate this claim by praising township tourism's distinctiveness. They contend that whereas the majority of tourism-related goods, which are

Though lacking in attractiveness, township tourism transcends the constraints of everyday living and is distinguished by beauty and tranquility. They understand that visitors visit townships for reasons other than the pursuit of beauty and relaxation. Township tourism is mostly driven by culture (Pott 2007:107).

Township tourism, according to the South African Online Travel Guide (2003), is intended to assist visitors in reflecting on past and present human experiences, seeing the "real" people, seeing their day-to-day activities, and experiencing their current advancements and cultural heritage. Education is the core of township tourism. According to Chapman (2003), visitors that engage in township tourism depart with a completely different perspective than when they first came, having learned new things while on a tour of the townships.

The distinctiveness of township tourism might help Zimbabwe because, unlike wildlife-based tourism, which can be replaced by traveling to South Africa or Zambia, no two townships in two separate nations can have precisely the same appearance and culture. If the government and tourist sector completely back Zimbabwe's attempt to introduce township tourism, it is likely to be a huge success, particularly if it is planned to help the impoverished citizens of the townships where tourism is occurring. The establishment of traditional cuisine restaurants and bed and breakfast lodges has benefited the impoverished populations of Soweto and Cape Town in Johannesburg. This gives the product a competitive taste.

According to Latherwick (1999), township tours should be organized and include carefully chosen locations. For instance, the tour could visit a few carefully chosen individuals in their homes, such as a small shack, a room in a hostel, a daycare center where visitors can enjoy a cultural performance, a quick stroll through a number of designated streets under a guide's supervision, a "safe" shebeen, etc. (Ramchander, 2004).

However, the majority of writers think that rural locations are better places to experience culture. According to CNN Travel Guide (2003), township residents cherish their traditions and rituals in spite of industrialization, urbanization, and relocation.

Tourism in live-in villages

Village tourism is a product that allows visitors to stay in rural houses with locals in order to experience their customs, traditions, and culture. According to Mafunzwaini and Hugo (2005), rural tourism is a fresh, exciting, and

a successful tourist offering that is marketed and acknowledged globally. As seen by the cultural village in KwaZulu Natal, live-in cultural villages have been encouraged and successful in South Africa. In this cultural hamlet, visitors may partake in traditional cuisine, sleep in huts built according to custom, and take in traditional music, dancing, and storytelling. The idea of manufactured authenticity is used to limit the potential cultural effects of intimate contact between visitors and residents.

What has been referred to as "home-stays" throughout Asia is a version of village tourism (ref). Home stays are a popular rural tourism offering in Asian nations like Nepal, where visitors stay in actual rural homes and participate in the daily traditional activities. The idea of homestays has made rural residents more economically empowered by reducing poverty. It gives rural people a feeling of pride and cultural identity.

Creative live-in-cultural travel packages

Cultural goods including stone sculptures, baskets, ceramics, and traditional music, sometimes known as ethnic music, may be the focus of live-in tourist packages.

Live-in sculpture made of stone

Stone sculpture is abundant in Zimbabwe. Using certain sculpting workshops for tourist purposes is one potential tourism product. In this concept, visitors pay to attend a stone sculpting workshop and get instruction. Instead than purchasing souvenirs created by skilled sculptors, travelers may create their own mementos and take them home. Many new travelers are searching for this kind of immersive travel. The goal is to provide visitors with an opportunity to interact with people and see the creation of stone sculptors. They would also get a taste of what it's like to live in the houses of the locals. As a result, visitors become more respectful of regional traditions and customs. Additionally, it generates jobs for the several skilled stone sculptors. These seminars may first be held at locations like the National Art Gallery in Harare, but artists in rural areas can also take part by hosting visitors in their homes. Weaving baskets and creating ceramics might be done in the same way.

One of the most significant traditional jobs of Zimbabwean rural women is basket making. Additionally, women have sold ceramics to tourists at markets and art galleries. Basket weavers may also employ a product that is comparable to live-in sculpturing. In light of this example, visitors may take a one- or two-day basket weaving course, create a basket for themselves, and take the completed item home.

Live-in tourism with ethno music

One of the tourism products that is expanding globally is music tourism. World tours by some of the most well-known Zimbabwean ethno-musicians demonstrate how rich Zimbabwe is in ethno-music. Some ethnic groups from Zimbabwe, such as the Ngoma ya Buntibe of Binga Zimbabwe, have visited Austria and other nations, and their performances and music have garnered excellent reviews

(www.mulonga.net/ngomayabuntibe). The live-in ethno-music package allows visitors to spend a day or two with the ethno-musicians, participate in music workshops, learn how to play traditional instruments, and discover the ethno-music's cultural value. Johnson (2002) describes his trip to Bali in order to understand the cultural background of Balenese music. He goes on to say that his time in Bali, where he studied music under a Balenese ethno-musician, highlighted the connection between local and global Bali, which he decided to refer to as "glocal Bali." This is due to the fact that a tourist's perception of a place changes and becomes more globalized after seeing traditional music performed in local cultural situations. According to Johnson (2002), traditional music performances are "quixotic" since they include distinctive cultural aspects. The genuineness of traditional music contributes to lessening the uniformity of the tourism offering and draws in new travelers who are searching for genuine or authentic locations—a kind of "antitourism" that deviates from the standard route of "normal" travel.

Cultural tourism: a hybrid strategy

All of the aforementioned items would be included in a single tour package under a cultural tourism strategy. As a result, tourists would have more options for fun.

Difficulties with substitute models

In live-in cultural tourism packages, considerable consideration must be given to hosting families in order to mitigate any language barriers. Zimbabwe is fortunate in that basic English is understood even in rural places.

To protect the health of visitors who may not be familiar with the local methods for storing food and water, some measures must be taken.

The majority of rural villages base their way of life on the seasons. Organizing live-in tourist packages may be difficult in rural areas due to seasonal programming, particularly farming. Malaria is more common in certain places, particularly in the country's lower regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government commitment in planning and implementation of alternative packages

Butler (1998) cautions that cultural tourism might cause environmental degradation if it is not properly planned. According to Christie and Crompton (2001a), African governments should take the lead in promoting tourism by establishing legal frameworks that guarantee social inclusion, economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability, as well as poverty reduction.

In order to meet the expectations of a live-in visitor, hosting families must be trained.

CONCLUSION

Zimbabwean tourism has always depended on traditional tourist packages that rely on the environment and animals. Numerous scholars have highlighted the negative aspects of nature-based tourism and suggested that a paradigm change is necessary. For a place like Zimbabwe, alternative

tourism, particularly cultural tourism, may be a feasible option, particularly if creative product packaging is used. Innovative packages are feasible, but they need government support by being included into the destination tourist master plan.

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