

Insights into International Tourists' Experiences of, and Satisfaction with, Zimbabwe's Tourism Offerings

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Abstract: This study sought to gain insights into international tourists' experiences of, and satisfaction with, Zimbabwe tourism offerings. The study emanates from the standpoint that, for tourism to enhance its potential to transform economies and livelihoods, the focus for development, in that regard, must be directed towards increasing the number of travellers to destinations, creating memorable experiences, and ensuring that the service quality is satisfactory, based on their expectations and perceptions. The study's objective was achieved through the use of a questionnaire survey, with the data obtained being presented in tables from the highest to the lowest mean scores. The satisfaction of the tourism offerings was negative, in which the highest mean score was Attitude of the personnel/service providers (M=2.73), and the lowest mean score was Road network to/from points of entry, prominent attractions and other amenities (M=1.58). The respondents viewed all the given tourism offerings as top development priority, with the highest mean score being accommodation facilities (M=4.93), and the lowest being theme parks (M=4.77). In addition, the perceptions of the tourism offerings were found to be generally negative, with the highest mean score being a friendly environment for the tourists, and the locals are welcoming and friendly (M=4.44), and the lowest being There is a good road network in Harare that allows for easy access to and from tourism offerings (M=1.86). The study offers insights into an understanding of the development and marketing of tourism offerings, service quality and delivery, as well as of the policy and planning direction for destination managers.

Keywords: Tourist profiles; perceptions; tourism products; experience and satisfaction; Zimbabwe

JEL Classification: Z32

1 Introduction

Tourism is seen as one of the major products of globalisation (Choibamroong, 2017), which is ranked as one of the main economic activities, with the irrefutable power to boost economies and to enhance livelihoods in a number of countries (Biswakarma, 2015). Jurdana and Frleta (2017) advance the understanding that tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry globally, with an increasing

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amount of travel occurring for a number of reasons. With the increased amount of travel growing from 25 million international travellers in 1950 to 1.2 billion in 2015 (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2016), tourism has, arguably, become a major competitive industry, in terms of which tourists' perceptions (Rajesh, 2013) expectations (Holloway, 2004), experiences (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Mohamed, 2008), and satisfaction (Chand et al, 2016; Fayed et al, 2016) have been staged at the centre of the policies, plans and strategies formulated by countries to influence the increased amount of travel to their destinations (Chand et al, 2016). With the growing popularity of tourism as a livelihood for a number of countries, developed and developing alike, tourism product development has increasingly become tourist-centric (Alamgir & Nedelea, 2016; Fayed et al, 2016: 14), with destinations striving to offer increased value to tourists, compared to the competing destinations. Fayed et al (2016) argue that, due to the increased competition among destinations to win a greater market share of tourists than before, understanding the present-day tourists has become a crucial aspect in such regard.

Further, Fayed et al (2016) advance the notion that tourism, with its associated benefits, has become a very competitive industry, in terms of which marketing and developmental efforts are directed towards attracting tourists and meeting their expectations through the provision of pleasurable experiences and the creating of a degree of satisfaction that might influence repeat visits. The above offers a perspective that the tourist is at the centre of an effective service marketing (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), in terms of which tourism planners at destinations must (1) understand who their tourists markets are (Choibamroong, 2017), and (2) increase the service quality to cater for the markets' expectations (Bar et al, 2016), for them to remain competitive (Fayed et al, 2016). Elsewhere in the extant literature, some scholars (see, for example, Fayed et al, 2016, p. 14) have argued that destinations have adopted an approach, in terms of which they aim to satisfy such elements as (1) destination attractiveness, (2) destination competitiveness, (3) tourists' experiences and satisfaction, (4) tourists' loyalty to the destination, and (5) tourists' perceived service quality and destination image. Chand et al (2016, p. 74) argue, however, that, inasmuch as the elements might be satisfied, understanding who the tourists at a destination are remains a complicated activity, as tourist behaviours have become more complex than in the past, regarding choosing a destination and a service. The complexity of doing so poses challenges in understanding the tourists' expectations, which might result in negative experiences, and in the ultimate dissatisfaction of tourists during their visit.

Tourism has long been developed to cater for tourists' needs and expectations (Koutoulas, 2004; Lo, 2017; Pike & Page, 2014; Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2015). However, in as much as there are an increasing number of studies (Fayed et al, 2016; Hosany et al, 2015) that have focused on tourists' experiences and

satisfaction, gaps still exist in determining the experiences and satisfaction in terms of an international tourist perspective, especially in relation to the emerging economies in sub-Saharan Africa, which are increasingly investing in the tourism sector, so as to harness the purported benefits (Rogerson, 2015a). As tourists' experiences and satisfaction are seen as indicators upon which destinations measure their performance levels and competitiveness (Chand & Kumar, 2017; Fayed et al, 2016; Hensley & Sulek, 2007; Mohamed, 2008), the current study's objective was to gain insights into international tourists' experiences and satisfaction within a Zimbabwean tourism product offering context. The aim was to gauge the extent to which the current international tourists' experiences and satisfaction are positive, as well as to propose mechanisms for sustaining the two. Focus on a developing country is essential, given the limited number of studies that have, to date, been conducted on the subject matter. Hence, the study makes a useful contribution to the extant tourism literature on what present-day international tourists perceive to be the current offerings in parts of sub-Saharan Africa

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourists' Experiences and the Profiling of Tourists

When tourists travel, their main expectation is to have memorable experiences, irrespective of the main purpose of travel. Unsurprisingly, there has been growing research interest in understanding why tourists travel to a destination (Tichaawa, 2017; Rogerson, 2015b), why they behave in the way that they do (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), why they buy tourism products (Gabbot & Hogg, 1998), and why they make decisions in the way that they do (Rajesh, 2013). The growing interest emanates from a desire to understand the tourists and their travel patterns in a race to develop a more competitive product offering that enhances the *tourists' experiences*, creates satisfaction, and allows for repeat visits. In the above regard, it becomes crucial to profile tourists, as they are, undoubtedly, key to the development of a more sustainable tourism offering at a destination. Holden (2016) postulates that tourists are the market for tourism offerings, with them being involved in financial transactions with the tourism service providers involved (Koutoulas, 2004; Lo, 2017). Koutoulas (2004) argues that tourism development initiatives worldwide are largely influenced by the tourists' needs and expectations concerned. In the light of the above, the profiling of tourists is argued to be the best way of learning of their needs and expectations (Fagerton, 2017; Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016). In such a case, information like the types of tourist, in terms of their socio-economic and demographic backgrounds, their buying patterns and their decision making, is important to profile if the destination wants to understand the expectations and to influence the positive experiences involved (Fayed et al, 2016).

Earlier works often cited in relevant tourism literature by Kotler (1979) advances four benefits on the profiling of tourists: (1) it gives the destination a better understanding of the different tourist segments' needs and expectations; (2) it allows for the meticulous development, marketing and positioning of tourism offerings to meet the expectations of the right market at the right time; (3) it helps to identify more effective methods of delivering tourism offerings to the tourists (Fayed et al, 2016, p. 15); and (4) it enhances the tourists' experiences, that should help to create a higher satisfaction level. With regards to the understanding and profiling of the tourists, Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) posit that the process of doing so helps to understand a tourist's personal *external factors* (for instance, family, culture and economic status) and *internal factors* (such as attitude, perceptions and buying patterns) that affect the tourists' participation in the tourism product offering consumption process. Rajesh (2013) argue that the tourists' experiences and overall satisfaction level with tourism offerings are measured against their personal external and internal factors, versus the consumed tourism product. To simplify the above, Fayed et al (2016) highlight the fact that the tourists' external and internal factors are those that create their motivation to travel, and, therefore, are crucial to understanding them, with the destinations concerned needing to look at their motivation for travel in the first place.

2.2. Tourist Travel Motivations

In the absence of the needs, desires or interests (interpreted as motives) to travel, tourism ceases to exist. In the above regard, Gabbott and Hogg (1998) highlight the importance of understanding the motives of the tourists concerned, in terms of which they indicate that motives are divided into two: escape motives, and compensation motives. Escape motives, on the one hand, are the tourists' individual characteristics and the tourist's cultural attributes that stand as push factors in relation to travel to other environments (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998). On the other hand, compensation motives are the destination of choice's attributes, such as activities, the vibe, the weather, attractions, accessibility, and accommodation, which act as pull factors that rouse the tourist to visit (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998). According to Holloway (2004), a combination of escape and compensation motives creates the *primary purpose of visiting* a destination. The extant research has shown, further, that the primary motives for travel to a destination are: leisure/holiday (Rogerson, 2015a); business (Rogerson, 2015a); visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (Rogerson, 2017); shopping; and sports (Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016), among others. Fagerton (2017) argues that the visited destination becomes inseparable from the aforementioned tourist motives, for it is the role of the public sector, the private sector, the community members and other relevant stakeholders at the destination to meet the needs and expectations attached to the motives, through a provision of transport, accommodation, activities, and other facilitating and supporting amenities. Fayed et al (2016) press that the extent to which the

abovementioned is provided to tourists influences their experiences and overall (dis)satisfaction levels, which then inform how they perceive the destination and its tourism products, and, thereafter, their future decision to travel.

2.3. Tourist Perceptions

Another crucial aspect in the understanding of tourists is their perceptions (Rajesh, 2013). Fayed et al (2016) describe a tourist's perceptions as being a way in which a tourist experiences a tourist destination and its tourism offerings, and tries to make sense of the experiences that he/she has. The definition concerned offers the perspective that a tourist's perception is how a combination of tourism offerings, such as attractions, accommodation, and things to do and see, are viewed by the tourist. In order to understand the tourists' perceptions, a number of studies (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gunn, 1988; Mohamed, 2008; Rajesh, 2013) have advised destinations to look at the tourists' views on such attributes as the general infrastructure, the different types of attractions, the accessibility and availability of things to do and see, the pricing of tourism services, the economic factors prevailing at the destination, safety and security, the attitudes of locals, the tourism organisers, and the service providers. In addition, such factors as demographic profiles, more especially in the originator region, the degree of familiarity with the destination, and the associated expectations (Fayed et al, 2016, p. 17) play a major role in creating perceptions about the destination.

2.4. Tourist Levels of Satisfaction

Satisfying the tourist is a priority for many destination managers and tourism authorities. The above is because, according to Hensley and Sulek (2007), perceptions influence the tourists' experiences and their levels of (dis)satisfaction. Therefore, the tourists' experience must be satisfactory for the tourists to consider revisiting (Chand et al, 2016), or, better still, remaining loyal to the destination (Fayed et al, 2016). The concept of tourist satisfaction, which is described by Fayed et al (2016, p. 17) as being the tourists' assessment of the perceived service quality, is one of the major performance indicators of a destination. The idea of 'satisfaction' can be described as the extent to which positive feelings are roused by the touristic experiences at a destination. Fayed et al (2016) highlight the importance of tourists' satisfaction levels with tourism offerings, in terms of which they underscore that the sustainability of the offerings depends on to what degree the tourists were satisfied during the consumption process (experience). According to Hosany et al (2015:484), tourist satisfaction is measured through *place attachment* and *place dependence*. In this regard, Hosany et al (2015) define place attachment as being the attributes that fulfil the tourists' needs and that connect to the tourists' internal factors (Fayed et al, 2016) and escape motives (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998), such as for the available attractions. In contrast, the concept of 'place dependence' is defined as the ability of a place to provide the facilitating of

amenities, and to connect with the tourists' compensation motives (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998). The above is in terms of, for example, facilities that enable the tourists to fulfil their needs, such as those for accommodation and transport, and things to see and do (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Place attachment and place dependence influence the tourists' loyalty to a destination (Gross & Brown, 2008; Williams & Vaske, 2003), in relation to which destinations that develop strategies that create attachment and that generate dependence always influence the levels of good experiences and tourist satisfaction accessed. Tourist satisfaction is one of the most critical elements of destination marketing (Liu et al, 2017), with it influencing the tourists' choice of travel, in terms of considering whether or not to revisit the destination (Hosany et al, 2015). One of the main activities of the tourism stakeholders at a destination entails identifying variables influencing tourists' satisfaction levels (Chand et al, 2016). Further, the degree of satisfaction attained is a result of the tourists' perceptions of the product offering (Vega-Vazquez et al, 2017), their expectations of the service quality involved (Chand & Kumar, 2017), and their actual experiences during consumption (Liu et al, 2017). The above means that satisfaction occurs after the tourists have already consumed the tourism products involved (Fayed et al, 2016), in terms of which the tourists gauge their expectations against the perceived service quality and the degree of service effectiveness, as based on their experiences (Hosany et al, 2015). In the above case, tourists can only indicate a high level of satisfaction in the event that their expectations have been met (Vega-Vazquez et al, 2017). To achieve the goal of measuring the tourists' satisfaction levels, a number of variables relating to the consumed tourism products/service, such as the quality of attractions and service, are usually given for the tourists to indicate their associated level of satisfaction with each variable, by means of a Likert scale (Fayed et al, 2016), as was used in the current study.

3. A Note on Methodology

To measure the international tourists' experience and satisfaction levels, a quantitative research design that incorporates a case study approach was employed in the current study. Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, which is the main gateway city for international travel into the country, was the focus of the present study. A purpose convenience sampling method was employed for the sampling of the tourists. In the study, the tourists were accessed at the point of entry, being Harare International Airport, as the focus was on overseas travellers. The main reason behind using a convenience sampling method for the survey population was that it was both difficult to identify tourists, and to distinguish an international tourist from a traveller. Therefore, it was relatively easy for the researchers to target the tourists' point of exit.

A structured questionnaire survey was used as the survey instrument to obtain the results of the study. Likert-type scales was used in the survey instrument, with experience and satisfaction levels being gauged along a number of predetermined variables, as informed by the literature reviewed, as well as by the destination characteristics concerned. To meet the study objective, and to ensure that a reasonably large population size was sampled, the researcher decided to target international tourists at two different locations. During a six-week data collection period, international tourists were targeted upon departure from the airport, and from their place of accommodation. The hotels, guest houses and lodges involved that were requested, and willing, to grant access to their guests assisted in the data collection. International guests who had checked out of a hotel, and who were on their way to the airport were asked to complete the survey with the assistance of hotel staff. In addition, international tourists were also targeted upon departure from the Harare International Airport, at which point trained fieldworkers purposively targeted them by way of a screening question. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 223 valid surveys were received, which formed the basis of the empirical results presented in the results and discussion section below. The obtained data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 24. The use of such software allowed for the conducting of statistical tests to generate the inferential data that assisted with the presentation of the results.

4. Findings

4.1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability is mainly concerned with a scale's internal consistency, regarding whether the items involved all measure the same underlying construct. One of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency is the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The response 4-point scale used to indicate the *level of satisfaction with the overall experience* was ordinal, with the categories used being: (1) very dissatisfied; (2) dissatisfied; (3) satisfied; and (4) very satisfied. Furthermore, the response 5-point scale used to measure *which tourism products should be prioritised in the tourism product development* was ordinal, with the categories used in terms of the level of satisfaction with the overall experience being ordinal. The categories used were: (1) not at all a priority; (2) not a priority; (3) neutral; (4) priority; and (5) essential priority. Additionally, the response 5-point scale used indicating the *level of quality of the tourism offerings* was also ordinal, with the categories used being: (1) poor; (2) fair; (3) good; (4) excellent; and (5) unknown. All the dimensions measured had a very good internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha coefficient values of over the accepted level of 0.70. The alpha values show the scores for the product offering and for the infrastructural level of satisfaction

with the overall experience being 0.96, the natural/human-made attractions being 0.93, the tourist services and events being 0.91, and the tourist attractions and services level of quality of the tourism offerings being 0.90.

4.2. Respondents' Profile

The necessity of profiling the demographics of the respondents in this study emanates from a belief that demographics and psychographics influence tourists' behaviour, explain their expressed views and attitudes towards tourism offerings and satisfy the need for more knowledge and for an improved understanding of the needs and expectations of the different tourists involved (Holloway, 2004; Rajesh, 2013). In such regard, the findings of the study indicate that there were more female respondents (58%) than there were male (42%). The results showed that there was an equal distribution of the age groups that participated in the study, with an average age of 35 years old. In addition, the study found out that the respondents originated mainly from Europe (37%), Southern Africa (29%), Asia and the Middle East (14%), North and South America (10%), and other parts of mainland Africa (10%). Most of the respondents (55%) indicated their economic status as average. Further, the respondents indicated that their main purpose in visiting Zimbabwe was leisure and holiday (49%), VFR (16%), and business (11%), with an average group composition of from two to three people travelling together, and the average frequency of visit being twice a year. Apart from the primary purpose for visiting Zimbabwe, the majority of the respondents (76%) indicated visiting natural attractions to be their secondary activity engaged in during their stay in Zimbabwe. The average number of nights spent in Zimbabwe was three, with there being an interest in repeat visits to Zimbabwe expressed.

4.3. Level of Satisfaction with the Tourism Offerings

The international tourists were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a number of tourism offerings and services. Table 1 depicts a possible point of concern for the destination managers involved, considering that, while the tourists seemed to be somewhat happy with the attitude of the personnel / service providers (M=2.73), the friendliness and helpfulness of the locals (2.68), and safety and security (M=2.63), they expressed dissatisfaction with the number of things to see (M=1.84), the pricing of tourism offerings (M=1.68), the general infrastructure (M=1.65), and the road network (M=1.58) concerned, indicating that such aspects required urgent attention from a Zimbabwean tourism development perspective. Vega-Vazquez et al (2017) indicate that tourists tend to reveal a high level of satisfaction only when their expectations are met through the experiences that they have at a destination.

Table 1. Levels of satisfaction with the tourism experience

Item	Variables	N	Mean	Std dev.
V1	Attitude of the personnel / service providers	223	2.73	0.638
V2	Friendliness and helpfulness of the locals	223	2.68	0.722
V3	Safety and security	223	2.63	0.734
V4	The general ambience/vibe	223	2.47	0.795
V5	Accommodation facilities	223	2.08	0.801
V6	Things to do and see	223	1.84	0.852
V7	Diversification of the tourism offerings	223	1.83	0.798
V8	Access to places of interest	223	1.79	0.870
V9	Positioning of tourism products	223	1.72	0.802
V10	Management of tourism attractions visited	223	1.71	0.816
V11	Pricing of tourism offerings	223	1.68	0.784
V12	General infrastructure (e.g. state of roads, water supply, etc.)	223	1.65	0.728
V13	Signage	223	1.64	0.746
V14	Road network to/from prominent attractions and other amenities	223	1.58	0.743

Responses based on a 4-point scale (1= very dissatisfied, 4 = very satisfied).

4.4. Rating of Tourism Product Offering Priorities

Tourism offerings are developed to cater for the needs and expectations of tourists (Holden, 2016). Therefore, it might be, to a relatively large extent, beneficial to the tourist destination if such offerings were to be prioritised from a tourist perspective. Accordingly, the international tourists generally indicated a high priority level on all the tourism offerings indicated in the survey instrument (see Table 2). With the highest mean score being obtained for the accommodation facilities (M=4.93), and the lowest being obtained for the theme parks (M=4.77). Clearly, the international tourists considered all of the aspects as important focus areas that required development appropriate to their needs. Unsurprisingly, accommodation and air transport were regarded as the most prominent priorities. The above argument is strengthened by the United Nations (2017), whose report on tourism and economic development in Africa through tourism recognises the need for such least developed countries as Zimbabwe to focus on developing and sustaining the enablers of tourism development, including infrastructure. The availability and quality of such basic infrastructure as roads, airports, accommodation, and other supportive tourist infrastructure, including attractions, are crucial for enhanced competitiveness in the sector that should lead to improved tourism receipts and to crucial benefits for the local citizenry.

Table 2. Rating of tourism product offering priorities

Item	Variables	N	Mean	Std dev.
V1	Accommodation facilities (hotels, guest houses, etc.)	223	4.93	0.347
V2	Airline industry	223	4.90	0.450
V3	Cultural attractions	223	4.88	0.407
V4	Natural attractions (mountains, lakes, landscapes, etc.)	223	4.87	0.392
V5	Transport network	223	4.85	0.548
V6	Monuments	223	4.84	0.481
V7	Tour operators / travel agencies	223	4.81	0.518
V8	National parks	223	4.81	0.439
V9	Events/festivals	223	4.80	0.542
V10	Car hire	223	4.80	0.506
V11	Theme parks	223	4.77	0.606

Responses based on a 5-point scale (1= not a priority at all, 3 = average priority, 5 = essential priority).

4.5. Level of Quality of the Tourism Offerings on Display

The result portrayed in Table 3 below show that the international tourists ranked the tourism offerings as being of low quality, which could be seen as affecting their level of satisfaction and experiences. The highest mean score was linked to the quality of service offered by the ground travel organisers (V1) (M=2.47). Transportation (V10), banking services (V11), and water and electricity (V12) were noted to be of low quality, which negatively influenced the satisfaction levels and experiences of the tourists. According to Hosany et al (2015), the tourists' levels of satisfaction were based on the service quality of the tourism offerings, by means of which place attachment and place dependence were created, resulting in the tourists' loyalty to the destination. Therefore, tourism destinations managers must consider the continuous strengthening of inter-sectoral linkages and tourism, as such linkages as banking, transportation, and water and electricity (United Nations, 2017) could have an effect on the tourists' levels of satisfaction attained, and on their experiences at a given destination. Perhaps, through sustainable public-private partnership initiatives, the above could be achieved, as Rogerson (2016) observes that such partnerships are important drivers of infrastructural development in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 3 Ranking of the level of quality of the tourism offerings on display

Item	Variables	N	Mean	Std dev.
V1	Travel organisers (tour operators and travel agents)	223	2.47	0.623
V2	Food and beverage outlets	223	2.13	0.533
V3	Events/festivals	223	2.03	0.605
V4	General atmosphere (ambience)	223	2.01	0.669
V5	Cultural attractions	223	1.91	0.608
V6	Natural attractions	223	1.87	0.621
V7	Human-made attractions	223	1.86	0.608
V8	Merchandise (souvenir/gift shops)	223	1.83	0.622
V9	Accommodation	223	1.51	0.683
V10	Transportation	223	1.22	0.482
V11	Banking	223	1.16	0.438
V12	Water and electricity supply	223	1.10	0.412

Responses based on a 5-point scale (1 = poor, 3 = good, 5 = excellent).

4.6. The Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding Tourism Offerings

Tourism development initiatives worldwide are largely influenced by tourists' needs and expectations (Holloway, 2004; Rajesh, 2013). In terms of such logic, the gaining of insights into the tourists' experiences, and into the levels of satisfaction attained in relation to the tourism product offerings and service quality, was the best way of learning about their needs and expectations, and of strategising towards the sustainable meeting of needs (Lo, 2017). Table 4 below shows that the international tourists felt that Harare was a friendly environment for tourists, and that the locals were welcoming and friendly, as they rated this item highly (M=3.44). Contrary to the recent perceptions that Zimbabwe is an unsafe place to visit (Zengeni & Zengeni, 2012), most international tourists also felt safe travelling in the country (M=3.29). However, the tourists rated good value for money (M=1.92), poor signage (M=1.89), road network and accessibility (M=1.86) poorly, indicating a negative perception of the items. Overall, items V3 to V13 received low mean scores. When the key dimensions that are measured in the current study (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4) are looked at holistically, a good level of consistency can be seen in the responses received from international tourists in terms of their levels of satisfaction and the experiences that they had in Zimbabwe, which can be summarised as low.

Table 4. Respondents' perceptions of tourism offerings in Zimbabwe

Item	Variable statements	N	Mean	Std dev.
V1	Harare is a friendly environment for tourists, and the locals are welcoming and friendly.	223	3.44	0.937
V2	I felt safe travelling in Zimbabwe.	223	3.29	1.183
V3	Harare motivates tourists to make repeat visits.	223	2.49	0.918
V4	There is a wide range of car hiring companies, which are easily accessible from Harare international Airport and around the city.	223	2.39	0.952
V5	There was a wide range of accommodation facilities (hotels, guest houses, and campsites) from which I could choose during my stay in Harare.	223	2.34	0.945
V6	There were many things to do and see that enhanced my stay in Harare.	223	2.16	0.967
V7	There were regulations of behaviour and environmental usage relating to all the tourist attractions that I visited in Harare.	223	2.10	0.945
V8	Tourism products of Harare are well marketed and promoted.	223	2.08	0.874
V9	My first experience, on my arrival in Harare, was highly satisfactory.	223	2.06	1.013
V10	I am happy with the current state of tourism products in Harare.	223	2.01	0.921
V11	Harare ensures good value for money.	223	1.92	0.885
V12	Harare has proper signage.	223	1.89	0.887
V13	There is a good road network in Harare that allows for easy access to and from tourism offerings.	223	1.86	0.856

Responses based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree).

4.7. Implications and Conclusion

The above study has shown that the current tourism offerings in Zimbabwe were generally rated poorly, and portrayed a low level of international tourist satisfaction with their experiences. Surprisingly, despite the above-mentioned finding, the respondents indicated that they would consider revisiting Zimbabwe in future, which is a positive indication in terms of the future prospects of Zimbabwean tourism. However, the respondents pointed out such worrying factors as the weak infrastructure, the inconvenient banking system, the expensiveness of the destination, the lax safety and security, and the corrupt policing, which might well serve to discourage them from revisiting the country in future. Such factors could be the reason for the number of international tourists to Zimbabwe by air having decreasing over the past decade, with a 13% drop having occurred between 2007 and 2016 (ZTA, 2016). The recent underperformance in the above regard is an issue that is worthy of some consideration, given that the country is currently faced with economic challenges to which tourism could be a solution.

In relation to the findings highlighted in the paper, the international tourists' low levels of satisfaction might have been attributed to a lack of attractiveness of the

country's tourism offerings, as the negative responses offered the perspective that the offerings made available might not have appealed to the international tourists in the present context. In addition, such aspects as the poor infrastructure, the bad road networks, and the poor banking system in Zimbabwe were noted as being factors that affected the tourists' experiences. Another issue that could have brought about a low level of satisfaction might have been the pricing of the tourism offerings. The respondents indicated that Zimbabwe was an expensive destination that did not offer value for money. The finding is consistent with ZIMSTAT's (2016) VES report, which indicates that international tourists tended to perceive most of the country's offerings as being expensive. The devaluation of the Zimbabwean Dollar over the past years, and the adoption of the US Dollar as the official currency of the country, as well as the scarcity of certain goods and services as a result thereof, could have been blamed for the increased costs that had been passed on to the tourists in the above regard. Besides, as the tourist profiles of those who were sampled in the study revealed, most of the tourists concerned originated from developing economies in the global south, where the income levels were low, which might have affected the related spending power. Therefore, as Hellstrand (2010, as cited in Ntimane and Tichaawa, 2017, p. 27) underscores, the need for destinations to "continuously strive to balance the pricing and quality of service that they offer with a view to maintaining, or retaining, customers, and to gaining their loyalty" is of essence in the above regard.

The poor state infrastructure has also been noted as being a key factor about which the current tourists to Zimbabwe are concerned. In relation to the above, Mlambo (2017) highlights that there is a lack of upgrading of the once good infrastructure in the country, in relation to which he argues that the country, in overhauling its stuttering endeavours at economic rebuilding, should urgently upgrade the national roads, which are over forty years old, the antiquated railway system, as well as the country's airport infrastructure. Given that tourism is seen as an industry that enhances economies (Biswakarma, 2015), its development could be a way out for the struggling and 'distressed' economy for which Zimbabwe has become well-known. In the above regard, there is a need for investment in tourism in the country, given that most of the role players who previously ran the sector, left a while ago. In the above regard, the present study recommends the formation of public-private investment partnerships as a way of developing tourism. Tourism might not function without the existence of the private sector, as the sector is responsible for meeting the needs and expectations of the tourists (South Africa. DEAT, 1996). Hence, the formation of public-private partnerships could be the first step to be taken towards creating an enabling environment in which tourism can develop still further (see Rogerson, 2016).

The current study's results have implications for tourism marketers generally, in terms of identifying what motivates tourists to travel to a destination, and in

regards to the developing of strategies to provide for the necessary tourism offerings, and for facilitating and supporting the facilities that are required to enhance the Zimbabwean experience. The exertion of more effort to understanding the needs and expectations, through market research, of tourists is required. Furthermore, new marketing and development efforts should be focused on what is meeting the needs and expectations of the current market. Service quality and delivery should be promoted at various destinations, with tourism business being advised to offer a service that meets the expectations of the identified tourists' motives (Ntimane & Tichaawa, 2017). On an ongoing basis, studying the tourists' profiles and motivations, and their changing needs, should inform the strategic initiatives that are adopted with the view to providing memorable experiences and the degree of satisfaction that they desire (Fayed et al, 2016). The diversification of tourism product offerings and activities should, therefore, play an important role in the planning of tourism development within the Zimbabwean context going forward. As the United Nations (2017) report on African tourism posits, the country's economy depends on tourism as the sector that contributed over 10% to the country's GDP in 2014, with it being a source of employment and wealth creation, as well as poverty alleviation, for its citizens. However, as is the case with most sub-Saharan African destinations, the sector still need to be harnessed for it to realise its full potential (World Bank, 2013).

A few limitations linked to the current study should be considered in terms of generalising the outcomes. Firstly, the study was limited to obtaining insight into the international tourists' experiences and their degree of satisfaction with Zimbabwe's tourism product offerings, with a specific focus on the airborne tourist only. International tourists coming into Zimbabwe also tend to travel by road, with the majority of such tourists travelling from mainland Africa. Cross-border international tourism represents a significant aspect of most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, to which Zimbabwe is no exception. Consequently, the profiles and experiences of the road-using incoming tourists were not considered in the current study, which could have yielded a different outcome if they had been included, and they should, therefore, be the subject of future-related research. Additionally, it will be important to ascertain, through further research, the influence of sociodemographic variables on the international tourists' experiences and levels of satisfaction, as such variables are important in terms of determining the similarities and differences across profiles to inform market segmentation planning. Secondly, the sample size, although deemed acceptable for the present statistical analysis, should be considered, as using a much larger sample might also have provided some differences in the study. Lastly, the employment of a more insightful and interesting focus within the same context would enable the ascertaining of the key tourism stakeholders' views of Zimbabwe's tourism product offerings and the

levels of tourist satisfaction, so as to be able to unpack, holistically, the visitors' experiences and degree of satisfaction obtained.

5. References

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