

Cultural Tourism, A Value Addition Alternative for Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, tourism has developed into a major economic, cultural and social preoccupation and Zimbabwe has not lagged behind in this scenario. At its peak in 1999, the tourism sector showed an annual growth of 18%. Arrivals had reached 2 million visitors per year contribution to 7% to GDP and 15% to formal employment. Though tourism was at an all time low from the year 2000 it is viewed as an industry that can significantly contribute to the wealth of the nation. To date, value addition in the tourism sector in Zimbabwe has concentrated on exploiting traditional tourist attractions like one of the natural wonders of the world, Victoria Falls, heritage sites like the Great Zimbabwe ruins and the smaller Khami ruins, and the Chinhoyi caves. Other natural attractions also come into play namely the largest man made lake in Zimbabwe, Lake Kariba and the mountainous Eastern Highlands. The rich Zimbabwean culture and beliefs also blend well with such attractions. For example the 'living museum' found in the Victoria Falls resort area. However, using such products as the backbone of a country's tourism industry is limiting as visitors can enjoy a site so many times and there is very little that can be done to change the Victoria Falls for instance. It will always be water cascading over a cliff. Added to that, to maintain such a site or environment as a prime destination requires huge amount of resources. The increasing demand for holiday accommodation means an added expense to the tourist and pressure to the resort. This paper seeks to discuss cultural tourism as an alternative tourist attraction to enhance a country's tourism product offering at the same time increasing wealth of the rural population. The visit to sites have become mere one day excursions but cultural tourism can be packaged to entice tourists to stay longer and spend more. Furthermore, cultural products can be changed from year to year with added features, new players and diverse attractions. The paper will explore alternative tourism in other regions and also suggest areas that can be developed in Zimbabwe tourism product offering in trying to package rural Zimbabwe into attractive tourist destinations and enhance the cultural heritage into world acclaimed tourism products.

Key Words: Cultural Tourism, Value Addition, attraction Economic Development, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimate that tourism generates some 12% of the world total GNP (Pedersen 2002). With studies predicting continued growth tourism is set to be of increasing importance more so in developing countries which have hitherto depended on natural resources as the major contributors to G.D.P (UNCTAD, 2001) notes that for developing countries tourism is noticeably generating foreign exchange earnings, attracting international investment, increasing tax revenues and creating new jobs, and more recently tourism has begun to be exalted as a powerful weapon to attack poverty.

The face of tourism is changing worldwide and the tourism markets can now be segmented as tourists have become more and more discerning. Traditional tourism popularized sun, sand and sea mass tourism but according to Sinclair (2002) a growing segment of the tourism market has shown an interest in going beyond (sometimes well beyond) the beach; in pursuing attractions and experiences that are available only in the deep interior recesses of distant lands. This "alternative tourism" market has been characterized by a desire on the part of travelers to enjoy experiences that are more rounded, more fulfilling the needs of the tourist for diversity and natural encounters. Cultural tourism has been noted as the type of tourism that can best satisfy this segment.

This type of tourism is concerned with a country or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those peoples, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that helped shape their way of life. The tourist activities spans across urban and rural areas. In historic urban areas it includes cultural facilities such as buildings, museums and theatres. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities like festivals and rituals, and their values and lifestyle. In some cases it involves the tourist actually staying in the traditional homes and the rural setting and participating in the festivals and rituals being showcased. In the Zimbabwean context, cultural tourism would go beyond the cultural dances and traditional African villages currently showcased at traditional tourism destinations, but should seek to present a complete package of the meaning behind the dances and the methods of building houses. Tourists would benefit from enhanced authentic experiences which include:

- Beliefs
- Rituals
- Forms of Worship

- Totems and their origins
- Marriage ceremonies

The aim of the complete package is to entice a higher level of appreciation without judging by the tourist.

This paper is by no means a criticism of the present tourist strategies where operators have exploited traditional tourist attractions but is a suggestion of diversification into cultural tourism as a means of value adding thus increasing revenue as tourists pursuing this product are known to stay longer in the country, and it is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do.

This paper explores a change in tourism focus for Zimbabwe by introducing the concept of cultural tourism not only to look at present cultures, but marketing the past in a slightly different way from the old idea of bare breasted women and man in loincloths (Miedema 2004) to more meaningful packaged experiences aimed at satisfying the curiosity and need for in-depth cultural experience by the tourists.

Articles note that globally, different countries have developed cultural festivals or tribal showcases to attract tourists to their countries. These events normally coincide with legendary happenings, rituals or seasons important to that country. The case in point are events like Madi Gras of Southern Americas, Bull Running in Spain, Divalis in India and Beer Festivals in Germany. In some cases they started off in localities but have spread not only far and wide in the respective countries but in many cases worldwide. Further to this, other nationals like Scotland, Sweden and Ireland have popularized visits to the rural areas to experience a taste of ancient civilization.

Concept of cultural tourism

Cultural tourism can be defined as the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information, to understand, learn and experiences diverse cultures in reality in order to satisfy their cultural needs Ivanovic (2008). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has two definitions of cultural tourism.

‘In the narrow sense, cultural tourism includes “movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other

cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimages." In the broader sense it is defined as "all movements of persons, because they satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters."

It is a genre of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological. It can also be referred to as indigenous tourism defined by Hinch and Butler (1996) as tourism activity in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction. Smith (1996) perceives indigenous tourism as: that segment of the visitor industry which directly involves native peoples whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction. The cultural attractions can be grouped into four main types according to a national scale survey of 6405 US respondents in 2000, Festival and Musical Attractions, Commercial Recreation Parks, Local Festivals and Fairs, and Knowledge/Aesthetic Seeking Attractions. The common denomination of all these definitions is the fact that a segment of tourists is willing and able to travel to diverse destinations to appreciate the history of the people through monuments and buildings and the present lifestyles through fairs and festivals and the type of tourism greatly involves the local people.

This form of tourism is also becoming generally more popular throughout the world. Foroohar (2002) notes that a new kind of travel is in vogue now. Savvier tourists are abandoning the mock-European high-rises for more authentic experiences, like horseback riding through the bush. In agreement Ayres (2000) notes that although the total number of world tourists continues to rise, there are some indications that tourism is changing in form and composition. There is also evidence that the mass tourist market is growing more slowly while at the same time price competitiveness in this sector is intensifying. In many ways, this off-the-beaten path vacation represents the future of global tourism— an industry which according to Ivanovic (2008) is on the verge of tremendous growth and change.. Moreover, the tastes and preferences of international travelers seem to be changing and as they become more demanding the tourist product and the tourist market are expected to become increasingly segmented. New competing destinations are emerging and there is the growth of alternative forms of tourism.

Literature is clear that cultural tourism is not for the run of the mill, mass tourist rather cultural tourism and cultural tourists are often referred to in terms that

suggest a superiority over other forms of tourism—a new, growing and premium market. The cultural tourists have been profiled favorably, for instance as, being ‘typically well educated, affluent and broadly traveled, and they generally represent a highly desirable type of upscale visitor’ (Holcomb,1999 page 10). This is closely supported by Kim Cheng and O’Leary (2006) who describe cultural tourists as “up-scaled” people who have high income earnings, high education, mature aged from higher socioeconomic groups with higher cultural capital and possessing high cultural knowledge. This type of tourist can therefore create extra revenue streams for the country and, as a consequence, sustains and enhances cultural resources that otherwise might disappear (Hughes 2000). The mark-up may be higher and in so far as quality tourists also have a higher per capita spending capacity the benefits to the host community may be enhanced further.

Economic development and cultural tourism

Historically it has been estimated that there were 25 million tourist arrivals globally in 1950 and this had risen to 594 million by 1996, but receipts from tourism have grown even more rapidly from less than US\$2 billion to almost US\$423 billion over the same period. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has estimated that the number of international arrivals would exceed 630 million by the year 2000 and rise to almost 1,000 million by 2020 but it already appears that these forecasts may be on the low side. In support, the UNWTO world tourism barometer states that international arrivals actually grew by 4% to 982 million in 2011 and receipts surpassed US\$1 trillion in the same year. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of economic activity and the (UNWTO) has estimated that it currently accounts for 6 per cent of global GNP, 13 per cent of consumers’ expenditure and employs over 200 million people worldwide Pedersen, (2002). According to UNWTO (2011), cultural tourism is the fastest growing type of tourism with 17 to 35% of all travel in the world is motivated by a need to experience diverse cultures thus cultural tourism presents a huge opportunity for the tourism industry.

As far back as 1996, Ayres, (1996) pointed out that tourism in small states has opened up new markets which were generally not subject to the tariffs, quotas and other barriers to trade that limited the growth of commodity exports. With their narrow resource base and limited domestic market the scope for import substitution is restricted in small states. He further notes that for many developing economies with favorable natural resources, tourism was regarded as an easy, low cost/high profit option offering limitless scope for economic and social improvement . Tourism therefore exists as a powerful economic force in developing

countries. In Zimbabwe at the height of the country's economic woes in 2004 tourism earned US\$198 million Zimbabwe Business report March (2006) using traditional tourism as the backbone products. The value addition of cultural tourism can witness a much higher contribution to the now recovering economy.

Measured by the number of arrivals world tourism has grown at an average rate of over 4 per cent per annum since 1980 and expenditure per head on tourism has grown at more than twice the rate of increase in per capita incomes in the developed world Pedersen, (2002) . Moreover, a wide range of economic, technological and social developments seem to indicate that the upward trend in tourism will continue into the foreseeable future. Demographic changes, social, educational and work patterns, increasing leisure time, rising real incomes and the falling cost of long distance travel are likely to increase both the desire and the ability of an expanding number of people to take holidays abroad or engage in more frequent foreign travel. In addition, the social, political and economic changes taking place in many parts of the world and the anticipated rise in the standard of living of many in the developing world are likely to reinforce the growing demand for foreign tourism.

Even though on the one hand, tourism activities despite their economic significance in criticized as an exploitative force which emanates from the desires of affluent middle classes this somewhat fatalistic view suggests that residents of a destination have little, if any, voice in the developmental process of the tourism function and, as a result, can only react to its consequences on their home environment but on the other hand tourism can be viewed as a proactive force which, if developed appropriately, seeks to maximize positive returns to a community's overall growth while minimizing the costs to the environment and culture.

Evidence of cultural tourism

People have long traveled to experience different cultures and many destinations have promoted their heritage as tourist attractions for centuries Prentice, (1993) and Zimbabwe would not be the exception. The concept of alternative tourism has ridden on the back of popular festivals of the world which attract thousands of tourists each year. The Beer Fest of Munich for instance attracted over twenty thousand people in 2003 Yang X, Reeh T and Kreisel W (2011). The festival was not only celebrated in Germany but there were over 477 festivals in 18 countries. Historically these celebrations started on October the 12th at the royal wedding of Crown Prince Ludwig to Princess Theresa of Saxony . The celebration went on for

5 days and the festivities were meant to strengthen ties between Odlbavari, Swabia, Franconia and Palatinate. Because it was so popular, it was allowed to be repeated every year by royal decree Yang Reeh, and Kreisel W (2011).

All along beer was not the central theme and it was only on 1918 that beer was allowed to be sold. Today, 800 stalls are erected on the grounds which invite Germans and foreigners to take part. At least four million litres of beer are consumed, 550 000 roast chicken are eaten and numerous pretzels are prepared. The festivals runs over 16 days and during this time other events take center stage like the Bavarian costume display where over 7000 people took part in 2003 and 7 huge tents for bands were erected and the bands play to audiences of 500 people and over at any one time.

Ironically these events are held on a plain without such magnificent sites as the 'Smoke that thunders', but the tourism mileage gained is astronomical.

The Mardi Gras festival is another popular event that has now spread to numerous cities in North and South America Jacobson (2011). The festival started as a celebration before the beginning of Lent, a period of fasting and penance for Catholics. Today the date still holds but the festival has transformed into a music, parade, picnics, floats and dance showcase. In New Orleans where the festival is most popular, a holiday has been declared and beautiful floats are mounted with beads and thousands of tourists have picnics while watching the crowds go by. More than half a million people gather on the streets to participate in Mardi Gras.

Of significance is also the bull running festival of Pamplona, Spain. The tradition started thus: Basically, the bull corral is quite a ways from the Plaza de Torso where the bulls are fought. So every day, the bulls had to be transported somehow from the corral over to the bull ring. The stable hands used to herd the bulls by running behind the bulls with rolled up newspapers, guiding them along the path to the Plaza de Toros. Young men from the town would gather along to watch the action, and soon people started joining in to help. And before they knew it, everyone was getting into the act. The bull running is the prelude to the popular bull fighting.

Another case in point is agri-tourism which has gained popularity in recent years. Organic farming has spread rapidly in Sweden and has gained more and more recognition by the general public: In 1996, 20% of the farms in Sweden were registered as agri-tourism business and a lot of tourists travel each year to the

northern European country to find solitude, quietness, and unspoilt nature. In the Scandinavian cultural landscape, meadows and natural pastures are appreciated elements with high esthetic values but also high biodiversity values. In Sweden, there are several accommodations connected with the national parks and the protection of the cultural heritage, preserving old architecture, showing old farming technologies.

Cultural tourism in the Zimbabwean context

Before the current economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe, the country was one of Southern Africa's major tourist destinations. While neighboring countries like South Africa and Botswana focused on safari and natural sites tourism, Zimbabwe always has promoted itself as a destination of cultural tourism as well (afro news (2010)). Over the years, numerous rural tourist projects throughout the country have contributed immensely to improvement of standards of living for communities through employment creation and provision of infrastructure. It is estimated that community-based projects are contributing between 10 million and 15 million U.S. dollars to the Zimbabwean economy every year while communities involved in the projects are also enhancing their interest in managing and maintaining the natural environment. The most popular and lucrative of these by far has been the Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) project.

Zimbabwe adopted the concept of CAMPFIRE in the late 1980s as part of efforts to encourage rural communities, particularly those adjacent to national parks, to manage their natural resources through conservation by utilization following an increase in cases of poaching and human animal conflict. Through the program, local inhabitants are assisted to manage their natural and cultural resources in a sustainable manner, derive income from these resources, and determine how this income will be utilized. A majority of CAMPFIRE profits come from leasing trophy hunting concessions to foreign hunters. Foreign hunters who come to Zimbabwe pay large fees to hunt elephants, buffaloes, giraffe, lion, kudu and other wild animals. Over 60% of profits from CAMPFIRE are derived from elephant hunts. Besides ecotourism, communities also engage in such activities as fisheries, harvesting of wild fruit, bee keeping, among others, and revenue from these is used to develop infrastructure such as roads, schools, clinics, dams and bridges. Today 54 out of the 58 Rural District Councils in the country are members of the program.

Added to that are the cultural tours around tourism sites like the touring the Mukuni village is another cultural highlight when visiting the Victoria Falls Zimbabwe. This cultural village is home to the Leya people and the village itself is over 700 years old. The chief of the Mukuni village is the Monarch of the Victoria Falls area and is a greatly respected member of the town. Another cultural highlight at Vic Falls is the Maramba Market which is famous for its colorful and lively fresh produce market and traditional musical instruments. The Maramba market is a rich and colorful experience with so much to choose from. The heritage site, Zimbabwe ruins also boasts of a cultural village nearby but the structures have been run down over the years.

Discussion

The development of cultural tourism in Zimbabwe will not necessarily be a reinventing of the wheel but to follow the tried and tested beaten trail that has proved successful for many economies. The face of tourism industry in Zimbabwe can be changed and popularizing some of the rich traditions and expand them into festivals that attract tourists every year can be the first step. At least 70% of the Zimbabwean population live in the rural areas and this is the main stay of cultural activities in Zimbabwe. The case for rural/cultural tourism in Zimbabwe is that it offers an opportunity for income generation and job creation at the grassroots. It is therefore an activity that can provide additional economic activity in addition to replacing traditional rural economic activities now on the decline (i.e. agriculture) and in so doing arrest the prevalent rural urban migration (Mac Nulty, 2002) and of late emigration to neighboring countries.

Cultural tourism can provide an incentive to protect the environment. The overextended rural areas due to overpopulation, which has led to overgrazing and excess use of land has left its mark. But the lure of economic recovery through cultural tourism can be essential to ensure that the environment is protected.

Cultural tourism can also enhance the quality of life. The flow of visitors to these areas can help maintain the viability of rural businesses and even encourage the upsurge of other non traditional businesses in the cultural areas like car hire. This can also play an important role in the need for transition to a richer countryside. Rural areas in Zimbabwe are the custodians of culture and tradition, cultural tourism can play a significant role in ensuring the preservation of valuable cultures and traditions. The development of any destination has to be centered on the development of the people and the development of the infrastructure in that area.

Whenever the amenities for the tourists are much more advanced than those of the local residents, this can lead to resentment toward tourists. Cultural tourism can take a multidimensional approach to include

- Experiencing life in a natural rural setting
- Cultural traditions and beliefs in action like the burial of chiefs
- The traditional uses of music and dance
- Popular rituals and method of worship

Cultural villages have been set up in the resort places like the Great Zimbabwe and Victoria Falls where tourists have a chance to have a superficial view of the 'rural setting'. Some of the buildings are so modernized as to be confused for a hotel. The alternative proposes to entice tourists to a natural rural setting where the tourist is given an opportunity to dwell among the people of the area and get a 'rural Zimbabwe experience'. This will entail sharing the meals, appreciating how they are prepared and enjoying the wild fruit in season! Rural settings close to towns and cities would be most suitable for this exploitation. Sites located in or adjacent to large urban populations or major destination areas are more likely to experience increased visitation whereas remote, isolated attractions may have difficulty in drawing visitors, especially if they are located in socially marginal areas. Added to this, the proposal is in line with the global trend in tourism, which is not in the direction of sea and sand tourism, or popular resorts but rather more towards cultural, heritage and green tourism.

Added to this the tourist can enjoy the cultural beliefs and ceremonies that are held seasonally or to mark significant occasions like rain ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and death rituals. The popular rituals of Zimbabwe include the burial of chiefs. The burial of chiefs has been hitherto shrouded in mystery and since the actual burial is sacred a simulation burial can prove intriguing to a tourist. Such an event can be made to take place over a number of days which would be filled with traditional accompaniments like the mourning period and the accepted methods of mourning. Added to that would be the brewing of the beer for the ceremony. Tourists would be allowed to go through the whole process including the tasting of the beer.

The main focus of this simulation would be to

- Entice tourists to enjoy a whole process thereby staying for several days at a place which is the best method of earning the tourists' dollar.

- Develop the rural areas to cater for the tourist
- Getting away from the flight by night tourism which currently characterizes Zimbabwe tourism .

Another cultural aspect that can be tapped for tourism mileage is the use of music and dance at different occasions. Similar to the Reed dance in Swaziland, the music of and dance ceremonies of Zimbabwe can be given a tourist flavour to create a festival where music and dance are the main stay .The main ones that can be exploited are

- The songs and dances that befit rain making ceremonies and the accompanying dances
- Celebration dances for ceremonies like the harvest, weddings and traditional marriages
- Deaths and ceremonies

One of the brilliant exports of Africa is its music and the traditional music of Zimbabwe has a lot of rhythm and is full of excitement and vigorous dancing. Traditional ceremonies have always been an eye catcher more so to the tourist who is unlikely to take it for granted. The songs are composed poetically and are full of riddles and in many cases carry current themes. For tourist mileage the Zimbabwean music and dances can be showcased in a rural setting to enhance the African flavour. The festival can be held over several days different themes dominating each day and the other minor Zimbabwean rituals could be role played along to create a full package for the tourists. Added to this workshops could be held focusing on the training to play the different musical instruments, giving the tourist a complete Zimbabwean experience.

As far as festivals are concerned, the starting point for Zimbabwe could be the conversion of the already existing events into tourist attractions. Events like the Harare International Festival of the arts (HIFA) in a case in point. The HIFA is already set for such an exploitation because of its international flair and its cultural emphasis. In 2004, the six-day festival kicked off with a medley of music and dance and was a rare treat for Zimbabweans who are starved for international entertainment because of the prohibitive costs of bringing artists one at a time. The artists came from as far a field as South Korea, Sweden, Germany, Angola and Britain .

Local and regional participants included Inkululeko Yabatsha School of Arts, (IYASA) a traditional company from Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe

which was performing on the new global stage. This enthusiastic and very passionate group goes about encouraging an interest in traditional Zimbabwean artistic styles. The music from Africa, the mbira, marimba and the accompanying dances also had a showcase at this festival. From West Africa, was Ismael Lo, who is a star in his own right graced the occasion Harrigan (2004) With such a background, HIFA is ripe for an explosion of cultural tourism that can draw the discerning tourist to Zimbabwe at this time every year. The different themes developed each year would attract a different crowd year on year.

The Festivals should not only concentrate on the visual arts but also on fine arts like sculpture and the National gallery which has some extraordinary masterpieces depicting themes which cut across Economic and political issues. For thirty years Shona Stone sculpture has been perceived as a modern artistic tradition with an imagined mythicized historical past Zilberg, a revival of the superior stone work found at the Great Zimbabwe ruins McEwen (1991). Although Shona stone sculpture is argued to be firmly located within a modernist discourse, its content and form are informed by traditional spiritual beliefs, myths, legends, oral history, customs, and rituals, which impart a new function and modernist aesthetic for creative expression in stone. This is indeed a stage set for tourism mileage also enhanced by the fact that Zimbabwe is the only African country with large deposits of stone suitable for sculpting.

Conclusion

The tourism industry in Zimbabwe is one of the 4 wealth earning sectors contributing 15% to GDP in 2011(Zimstats 2011) and with the boost of value addition in the form of cultural tourism which can enhance the tourism products the sector can surpass any performance expectations. Value addition has become synonymous with recovery and in the tourism sector this can have profitable ripple effects. These include more and better quality arrivals, quality in terms of more sophisticated and more willing to spend visitors. It also means development of the rural areas which are the custodians of Zimbabwe's cultural heritage. This can result in less urban migration which is a thorn in the flesh for developing economies. The prospects of employment are also numerous both directly in tourism ventures or indirectly in support services. The poverty alleviation for the more than 70% Zimbabwe rural population can be a reality. Zimbabwe might not have a coastline and cannot therefore boast of sea, sun and sand but there still remains an opportunity to utilize its rich culture and

heritage of its people as an alternative form of attracting the cultural tourism niche market to its doors. In line with a 'cultural awareness' trend, there are multiple examples of initiatives to use 'music and dance' as cultural resources for local development and eventually as tourism magnets Jansen-Verbeke (2009).

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