Exhibitors' perception of the 2017 Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo

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Abstract

The event management (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) industry has been booming of late (Lim and Zhu, 2018) and recording high growths rates over a number of years, as tourism players are prioritizing the product as a way to diversify their tourism offerings. The study consequently sought to explore exhibitors' perceptions of the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017. The study purposively sampled 60 respondents from a population of 340 exhibitors who attended the event at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) grounds in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The study found that exhibitors perceived Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017 to be an important tourism event that brings considerable benefits to participants. The perception that exhibitors place on the event was determined by the quality of staff brought to the stand, the geographical dispersion of exhibitors from the venue, the amount of money spend on the exhibition, the number of times exhibitors have participated at previous editions as well as the diversity of sectors exhibiting at Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017. The study also unearthed challenges faced by exhibitors such a poor information dissemination, poor time management, booth management, slow internet connectivity and challenges in accessing the venue among others. The study concluded that the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo was perceived to be a highly beneficial event and well worth the attendance of exhibitors.

Keywords: Travel fair, Tourism Exhibition, Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo, Exhibitors' perception, Event Management.

Introduction

The event management (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) industry has been booming of late (Lim and Zhu, 2018) and recording high growths rates over the last few years, as tourism players are prioritizing the product as a way to diversifying their offerings. As such, hospitality and tourism industry players, academia, and many other stakeholders now take fairs as being critical, because they expose them to the right audiences in their line of business. Success of such events is as important as exhibitor's perceptions are focused on organisers. In Zimbabwe, the Tourism industry is an important industry and it is the major earner of foreign currency and creates much needed jobs (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). Since the country's independence in 1980, a number of initiatives were proposed and implemented to promote the growth of the industry and one such initiative is the Sanganai/Hlanganani World

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Tourism Expo. *Sanganai and Hlanganani* are Shona/Ndebele words, which in English mean "meet". The major purpose of this event is to provide a platform where buyers and exhibitors can interact and clinch business deals that promote tourism products to potential tourists (Wong *et al.*, 2017). Participants who attend this event are both local and international tourism players and numerous support service providers.

Trade shows are generally regarded as an effective way of marketing an organisation's offering (Kozak, 2005; Skallerud, 2010) and appeal more to organisations that operates in the global environment (Kellezi, 2013; Santos and Mendonça, 2014). Organisations make use of trade fairs to obtain information about their products, move into new markets, have an understanding of current industry trend, extend their product offering, gain insight about current technologies in the industry and also to give attendees the opportunity to see their products in a physical space (Gębarowski and Wiażewicz, 2014; Maskell, 2014). Trade Fairs are credited for bringing together competitors allowing them to compare their products and strategies (Bathelt and Schuldt, 2008).Trade fairs are also known as trade shows, exhibition shows, expositions, technical or scientific conferences and conventions among other names (Gottlieb, Brown and Ferrier, 2014) depending on the industry's preference.

Different sectors have their own industry related trade fairs where they meet occasionally to showcase their products and to interact with each other sharing ideas on how to develop a particular industry. The tourism industry like any other industry has its own trade fairs known as travel fairs, travel exhibitions or travel expo where organisations in the Tourism industry meet buyers of tourism products, the general public and also support service providers. Travel fairs deal with products that are perishable, intangible and heterogeneous in nature and customer evaluation process is different from a trade show for physical products (Menon and Edward, 2013). Yuksel and Voola (2010) highlight that the main difference between travel fairs and trade fairs is that the later deals with tangible products and the former emphasizes more on the intangibility nature of the tourism product. Zamzuri, Awang and Samdin (2011) point out that travel fairs and trade fairs fall under the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, conventions and exhibitions) sector in the tourism industry particularly the exhibition arm which is a very important element of business tourism. Travel fairs are the fastest growing sector of the travel and tourism industry for countries like Germany and the USA it is a billion dollar sector (Lin and Lin, 2013). Of late there has been a rise in the construction of infrastructure for exhibitions as well as the hosting of business events resembling exhibitions (Jin and Weber, 2013). Maskell, Bathelt, and Malmberg (2004) mentioned that travel fairs are important for the hospitality industry and cities compete to bid for the hosting of such events because of the significant benefits that the local economy can gain.

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) make use of travel fairs to promote their countries as well as their tourism products (Mhizha *et al.*, 2013). The tourism industry is characterised by a combination of different players in the tourism value chain that comes together and form interdependent relationships to provide tourism products (Leszczyński and Zieliński, 2015) hence making travel fairs a platform where these players can interact and share ideas. In addition Mihai (2010) argued that travel fairs brings together travel professionals under one roof offering participating companies the opportunities to market their special offerings. There are a number of popular and significant travel fairs around the world and they include the International Tourism Bourse (ITB) which is the largest travel fair in the world hosted by Germany in Berlin every March, the World Travel Market hosted by London every November (Lim, 2013), Shanghai Tourism expo, Indaba in South Africa, Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo in Zimbabwe among many others.

The popularity of any travel fair is dependent on how participants perceive the fair. Perception is the monetary and non-monetary value customers attach to a product and includes aspects like the amount customers are willing to pay for a product and also the time and effort they invest to get that product (Lim, 2013). Jung (2005) indicates that exhibitors base their perception of a travel fair on the management of the booth, accessibility of booth by attendees, registration procedures and the attractiveness of the venue. Jin and Weber (2013) also argue that venue and destination attractiveness as well as the activities of the organisers, are also important in influencing a good perceptions of an exhibition. It therefore follows that organizers of the event must pay attention to such variables that exhibitors perceive as important if they are to boost the appeal of their event. The accessibility of the venue, cost of exhibition space, food and beverage services and the duration of the exhibition are other factors that build up to exhibitors perception of the travel fair. Lin and Lin (2013) further highlight that the attitude of service staff, the availability of service information as well as the exhibition design are very important aspects that exhibitors use to determine the value they attach to an exhibition. Wong *et al.* (2017) also confirmed that the quality of service staff is important in shaping perceptions and choice of an exhibition venue.

The value that management place on an exhibition events can also be manifested by their commitment in capacitating exhibition staff through budgetary allocations to the exhibition and also time and resources allocated in the planning for the event (Li *et al.*, 2011). In addition Jung (2005) argue that the range of services available at the exhibition center, the location of the venue, duration of the event and opening hours at the exhibition also play a big part in determining exhibitors perceptions of an event. It is important to have an understanding of how exhibitors perceive the travel fair they participate in and get feedback of the experiences so that the next editions can be improved. Gopalakrishna, Roster and Sridhar (2010) observe that close to 40% of first-time exhibitors do not return to the same fair in the next edition, if their expectations are not met during their first time exhibition. This therefore makes an understanding of exhibitors' perceptions of the event important for organisers as it allows them to make continuous improvements which serve to increase the rate of return exhibitors.

The main objective of this paper was therefore to establish perceptions of the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017, by various exhibitors. The study begins by discussing the concept of travel fairs and providing an insight into the main objective of the study, this is followed by the methodology section dealing with data collection methods, findings present data collected in tabular and graphical format, the discussion of findings interprets findings of the research and the last part provides conclusions from the research.

Methodology

The data for the study was collected at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) grounds during Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe; from the 27th of September through to the 1st of October 2017 during the exhibition period. ZITF, are grounds and infrastructure built for international trade fair exhibitions in Zimbabwe. The researchers were also part of the exhibitors at the travel fair. Bulawayo is the country's second largest city and the perennial host of the event. Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo is an important event in the business calendar of hospitality and tourism stakeholders. Big established industry players as well as small and new attend and exhibit in the event. The event also helps industry players interact with government and policy makers in a friendlier environment. Eighty exhibitors participated in the study and were randomly drawn from a total list of 340 exhibitors in the event. After the participants were identified, self-administered and semi-structured questionnaires were sent to the selected exhibitors and only 60 were filled in, others were either not returned or spoiled.

Questions in the questionnaire were grouped into two sections. Section A sought demographic data of respondents: age, level of education, marital status as well as respondent's designation in the organisation. Section B measured perceptions of exhibitors on: geographical location of exhibitors, expenditure by exhibitors during Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017, exhibitor's general perception of the event as well as perception of benefits exhibitors expected to gain from the event among others. Descriptive inferences were then made generated with assistance of SPSS version 18.0.
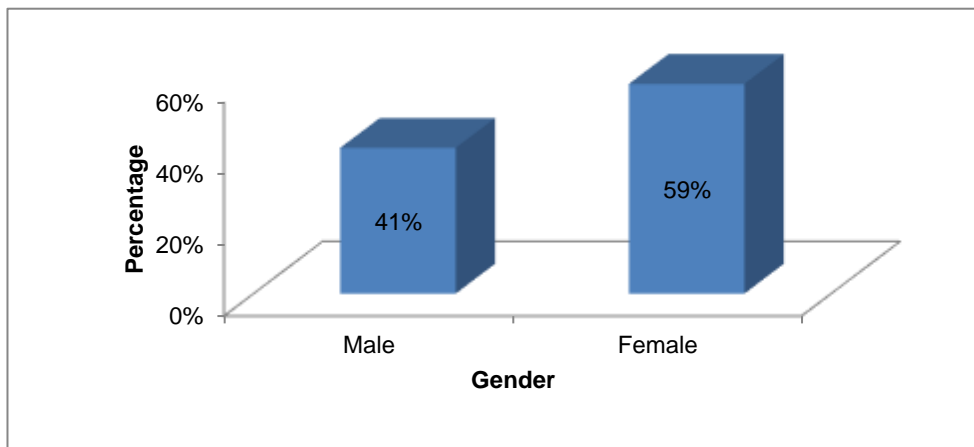
Findings

Gender of respondents

Figure 1: Gender of respondents (N=60)

Figure 1 shows that of the 60 respondents who completed the questionnaires, there were more females than males. Males constituted 41% of the respondents and females constituted 59% showing a balanced representation of gender at the fair.

Profile of respondents

Table 1 Profile of respondents

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age of respondents	56	20	68	33.95	9.931
Respondent's number of years in school (including primary, secondary and college)	50	11	25	16.86	2.726
Number of times exhibitor has exhibited at Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo	52	1	10	3.58	3.333
Size of delegation the exhibitor has brought to the exhibition	47	1	24	6.60	5.755

Table 1 highlights that of the 56 respondents who provided details on their ages, the minimum age was 20 and the maximum was 68, providing a mean age of 34. This indicates that the average age of the respondents was in the middle age range. The 50 respondents who answered the question on the number of years they spent at school yielded an average mean of 17 years. This meant that on average each respondent had either a university degree or held a professional qualification of some kind. A mean rating of 3.58 was obtained on the number of times the

respondents have exhibited at Sanganai/Hlanganai World Tourism Expo implying that on average the respondents have exhibited at least 4 times since the inception of the expo. The number of delegates brought by exhibiting organisations averaged 7 as shown by a mean rating of 6.6.
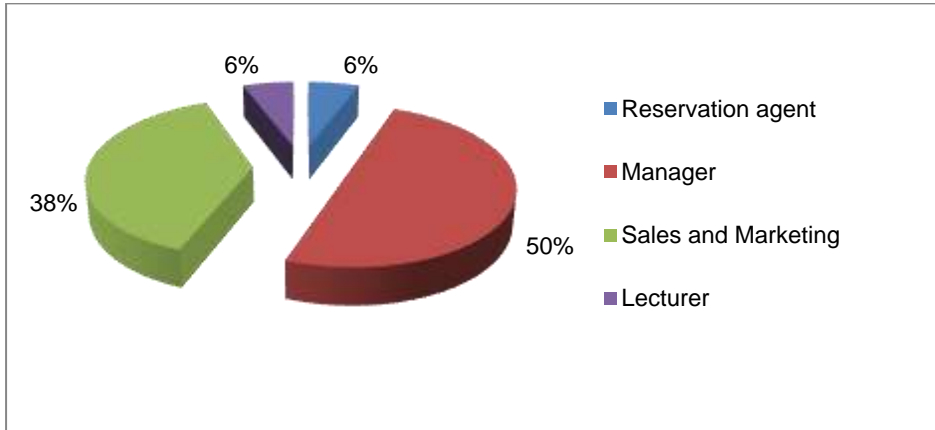
Designation of respondents

Figure 2: Designation of respondents in the organisation (N=60)

Figure 2 shows that 50% of the respondents held managerial positions within their organisations, 38% were in the capacity of sales and marketing, 6% were reservations agents and another 6% were employed as class tutors in institutions of academic learning.
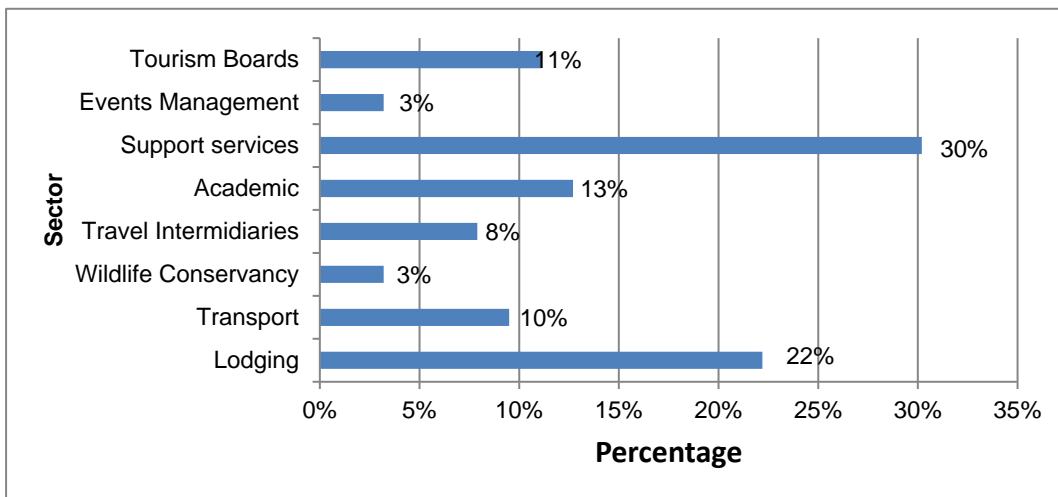
Exhibitors sector

Figure 3: Exhibitors' sector (N=60)

Figure 3 shows that 30% of the respondents were from the support service sector (telecoms, insurance, medical field, media, creative designs among others). 22% were from the lodging industry, 13% constituted the academic sector, 11% were tourism boards, 10% from the transport sector, 8% were travel intermediaries (tour operators& travel agents) and events management and wildlife conservancies had 3% representation.
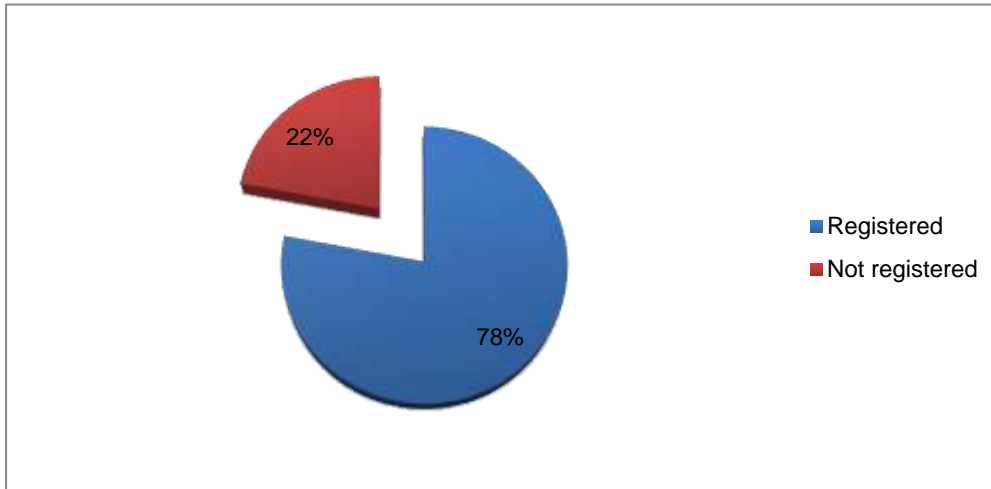
Registration status of exhibitors

Figure 4: Organization's Registration Status with ZTA (N=60)

Figure 4 shows that 78% of the exhibiting respondents were registered with the national tourism board (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority) whereas 22% where not registered possibly because they were either from outside the country or they belonged to the support service sector not regulated by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA).
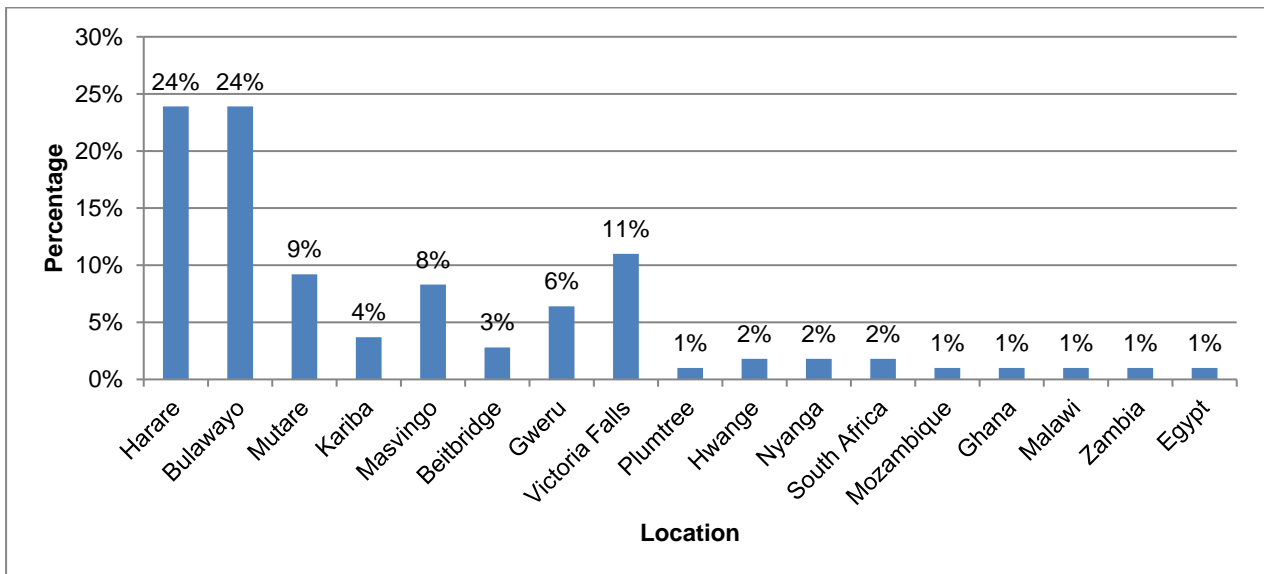
Location of exhibitors

Figure 5: Location of exhibitors (N=60)

Figure 5 shows that all the Zimbabwean exhibitors combined added up to 93%. The bulk of these exhibitors were from Bulawayo and Harare with 24% each whilst the least were from Beitbridge with 3%. The other exhibitors came from other African countries such as South Africa, Mozambique, Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and Egypt all contributing to 7%.

Estimated expenditure by respondents during Sanganai/Hlanganani 2017

Table 2: Estimated expenditure by respondents during Sanganai/Hlanganani 2017

	N	Minimum $	Maximum$	Mean $	Std. Deviation
Estimated expenditure per person on food	45	0.00	675.00	105.84	117.22
Estimated expenditure per person on accommodation	30	0.00	900.00	293.07	242.41
Estimated expenditure per person on airtime	29	0.00	60.00	16.86	14.39
Estimated expenditure per person on entertainment	19	0.00	200.00	66.47	67.93
Estimated expenditure per person on transport	29	0.00	1000.00	146.28	213.73
Estimated expenditure per person on other items	2	0.00	36.00	18.00	25.43
Organization's expenditure on exhibition space	16	0.00	6000.00	2179.10	1546.32
Organization's expenditure on design of the stand	27	5.00	5400.00	1160.60	1314.32
Organization's expenditure on airtime used to set up the stand	22	0.00	50.00	19.8636	11.65
Organization's expenditure on material used for exhibition	29	65.00	3750.00	945.69	971.61
Organization's expenditure on transport to carry materials for exhibition	26	0.00	3750.00	448.19	918.35

Table 2 indicates that the estimated expenditure on food per person for the duration of the event had a mean score of $105.84, accommodation $293.07, airtime $16.86, entertainment $66.47, transport $146.28, other miscellaneous items had a mean score of $18. Respondents were also asked on expenditure incurred by their organisations on setting up the stand.

The average spent on exhibition space was $2179.10, designing of the stand had a mean of $1160.60 and airtime used on initial preparation was averaged at $19.86 per exhibitor. The average cost of materials used for setting up the stand was $945.69. Transport used to carry exhibition materials to the exhibition place was $448.19 on average for each company.

Exhibitors' Perception about Sanganai/Hlanganani world tourism expo 2017

Table 3 Perception about Sanganai/Hlanganani world tourism expo 2017

Variable	N	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Neutral N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
ZITF is the right venue to host Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo	58	32 (55.2%)	21 (36.0%)	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.4%)	2 (3.4%)	1.64	0.950
2017 Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo is better than 2016 edition	46	9 (19.6%)	16 (34.8%)	14 (30.4%)	5 (10.9%)	2 (4.3%)	2.46	1.069
Exhibiting organisation was well prepared for Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017	59	20 (33.9%)	25 (42.4%)	10 (16.9%)	6.8 (6.7%)	0 (0)	1.97	0.890
Organizers of Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo were well prepared for 2017 edition	57	12 (21.1%)	20 (35.1%)	13 (22.8%)	10 (17.5%)	2 (3.5%)	2.47	1.120
Finding accommodation was a challenge during Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017	51	-	9 (17.6%)	9 (17.6%)	25 (49.0%)	8 (15.7%)	3.63	0.958

Prices of basic commodities changed drastically in Bulawayo during Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017	50	5 (10%)	11 (22.0%)	18 (36.0%)	12 (24.0%)	4 (8.0%)	2.98	1.097
Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo is a good platform for players in the same industry to interact	55	27 (49.1%)	23 (41.8%)	3 (5.5%)	-	2 (3.6%)	1.64	0.754
I will participate at the same event in 2018	55	28 (50.9%)	24 (43.6%)	3 (5.5%)	-	-	1.55	0.603

On suitability of ZITF as a venue for the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo, fifty eight (58) responses were obtained where ninety one percent (91%) supported the idea of using ZITF as an ideal venue for the Sanganai/Hlanganani. On comparison of the 2016 and 2017 exhibitions, thirty percent (30%) of the respondents echoed the sentiment that there was no difference, while thirty five percent (34.8%) said the 2017 exhibition was better. Seventy six percent (76%) of 59 respondents that responded on their state of preparedness by exhibitors indicated that exhibiting companies were well prepared for the event. Regarding the state of preparedness by organisers a mean rate of 2.47 was scored. This shows that a significant number believed that the organisers were well prepared for the exhibition.

Forty nine percent (49%) of the 51 responses indicated that they did not face any challenges on finding accommodation in Bulawayo during the expo. Thirty six percent (36%) were neutral on the issue of prices of basic commodities in Bulawayo having changed during the event possibly because most participants tend to spend more on luxury hence did not notice any changes on the prices of basic commodities. Ninety one percent (91%) said that the expo provides a good platform for interaction between different players in the same industry. A mean score of 1.55 was obtained for participating at Sanganai/Hlanganani World tourism Expo 2018. This shows that exhibitors see more value in in participating at the event.

Benefits that can be gained from participating at the event

Table 4: Benefits gained from participating at Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017

Rank	Benefits	N	Percent
1.	The event allows participants to interact with customers	55	17.8%
2.	The event provides a platform for interaction with other players	52	16.8%
3.	The event helps exhibitors to get new business	47	15.2%
4.	The event helps participants to generate new ideas	46	14.9%
5.	The event gives exhibitors the opportunity to check on industry trends	44	14.2%
6.	The event allows organizations to undertake competitor analysis	34	11.0%
7.	The event provides a platform for interaction with policy makers	31	10.0%
	Total	**309**	**100.0%**

Multiple responses on the benefits gained from participating at the expo totaled up to 309 responses. Figure 4 presents the responses on the benefits gained from participating at Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017. The most popular benefit was that of enabling interaction between industry players and customers with a frequency percentage of 17.8%. The

percentage indicating Sanganai/Hlanganani as a platform for industry players to interact scored 16.8%. Benefits associated with acquiring new business through the expo scored 15.2%, generation of new business ideas was 14.9 %. Another benefit that exhibitors gained from the event was getting an opportunity to check on industry trends with 14.2% of the respondents. In addition to this 11% of the responses viewed the event as an opportunity for organizations to undertake a competitor analysis and 10% were of the opinion that the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017 allowed them to interact with policy makers.

Major challenges exhibitors faced during the Sanganai/Hlanganani 2017

Table 5: Challenges faced by exhibitors

Rank	Challenges	N	Percent
1.	Poor organization	18	26.9%
2.	Information Dissemination	9	13.4%
3.	Food and Beverage services	8	11.9%
4.	Exhibitors logistics outside the event	8	11.9%
5.	Accessibility into the venue by exhibitors	6	9.0%
6.	Air conditioning in the venue	5	7.5%
7.	Cash shortages	4	6.0%
8.	Internet connectivity	4	6.0%
9.	Duration of event	3	4.5%
10.	Booth management	2	3.0%
	Total	**67**	**100%**

Table 5 presents the frequency of the respondents' view on challenges faced during the exhibition. The respondents highlighted that they faced challenges during the hosting of the Sanganai/Hlanganani world tourism expo, the most frequent being the poor organisation of the expo by organisers which scored 26.6% of the respondents. Respondents cited challenges such as poor time management by organisers, disorganization in the allocation of exhibition booths as well as failure to adhere to the programme. Information dissemination was also another challenge cited by 13.4% of the respondents, challenges with food and beverages services was mooted by 11.9% of the respondents and this included limited food outlets at the venue and also high prices of the catering services. Exhibitors' logistics outside the event was noted by 11.9% of the respondents as a challenge faced during the event. This included import restrictions by exhibitors from outside the country when bringing in exhibition materials, police roadblocks, shortages of fuel during the event days and also mobility to and from the event was of concern. (9%) of the respondents cited challenges related to accessibility to the venue by exhibitors, 7.5% mentioned poor air conditioning of the venue, 6% mentioned cash shortages and internet connectivity as challenges, 4.5 % said the duration of the event was too long while 3% highlighted that booth management was a challenge.

Discussion of findings

The results of this study show that the perception exhibitors hold on a travel show is manifested in the diversity of sectors present. Sector focus is an important factor that exhibitors take note of in selecting a travel fair to participate in (Seringhaus and Rosson, 2001).The sectorial representation at a travel show can tell which sectors value more attending a particular travel show. A balanced sectorial representation is more ideal as it shows that all the tourism sectors see value in attending and exhibiting at a particular travel show. The local tourism and hospitality industry at large perceived the 2017 Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo as an important

tourism calendar event worth attending based on the sectors represented at the event. Figure 3 shows the tourism sectors that were present at the 2017 Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo which are the support service sector (telecoms, insurance, medical field, media, creative designs among others), the lodging industry, the academic sector, tourism boards, transport sector, travel intermediaries (tour operators& travel agents), events management and wildlife conservancies.

The study also revealed that the quality of staff brought by exhibitors is also a determinant of how exhibitors perceive a particular travel show. Tourism companies bring along qualified and experienced staff to attend to visitors at exhibition booths if they believe that the travel fair will benefit them. These findings where corroborated by Li *et al.* (2011) who observed that the value that management place on an exhibition event can also be manifested through their commitment in capacitating exhibition staff. Wong *et al.* (2017) further emphasised the importance of having quality staff at an exhibition sentiments also shared by (Jung, 2005). Table 1 shows that on average each respondent had either a university degree or held a professional qualification with skills to market the organisation's products and were mostly the active middle aged who could withstand the pressure of standing the whole day, and interacting with large number of customers visiting their organisation's stand.

The study further highlighted that if exhibitors perceive the event to be beneficial they tend to spend more in order to attract potential business interests at their stands. Exhibitors spend significant amounts of money before, during and after the event bringing about considerable economic benefits to hosting cities as exhibitors have a high spending power (Lim and Zhu, 2018). Maskell, Bathelt and Malmberg (2004) also concurred that the hosting of exhibitions brings about significant benefits to the local economy. Exhibitors spend money on preparation of the exhibition, setting up the stand, buying collateral and other materials used for exhibiting, transporting exhibition materials and on subsistence allowances for staff manning the exhibition stand which is synonymous with the findings of (Mihai, 2010). Table 2 shows the expenditure on various items such as the exhibition space, design of the stand, travel and subsistence for exhibitors as well as transport costs by exhibitors at Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017.

The geographical location of exhibitors can also be used to measure how an exhibition is perceived by current and potential exhibitors. Seringhaus and Rosson (2001) alluded that geographical scope is an important factor in international trade fairs. If a travel show attracts more local than international exhibitors it is a clear signal that it is more popular with local than international players. The Sanganai/Hlanganani world tourism expo was largely attended by exhibitors from Zimbabwe and fewer exhibitors were drawn from the foreign market specifically the African countries. This means that the locals perceive the event to be more beneficial to them and it lacks in appeal with the foreign exhibitors, as shown by the low numbers of foreign exhibitors in attendance.

The venue of the event is important in determining the perception of a travel show, sentiments shared by some researchers (Jung, 2005; Jin and Weber, 2013). Venue must be conducive, big enough to accommodate all stakeholders and accessible to both exhibitors and the general public. The respondents in this study highlighted that the Zimbabwe Trade Fair grounds (Venue for the event) were considered to be the right venue to host the event because of the size of the place available which can accommodate large numbers of people without causing logistical challenges.

The purposes and motivation of exhibiting at travel fairs are very diverse as noted by (Menon and Edward, 2013). Participants posited that exhibiting at the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism

Expo facilitates interaction with customers and other players in their industry, helps organisations to generate new business, expose them to new business ideas, check current industry trends, monitor competitors' activities and interact with policy makers. This is in agreement with Maskell's (2014) assertion that organisations make use of trade fairs to obtain information, move into new markets, have an understanding of current industry trend, extend their product offering and to gain insight about current technologies in the industry. Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) also added that Trade Fairs are credited for bringing together competitors allowing them to compare their products and strategies.

Finally, the study unearthed some of the challenges that exhibitors face when exhibiting at a travel fair. The challenges include poor information dissemination by the organisers, failure by organisers to prepare and avail exhibition booths to exhibitors on time and poor time management, inadequate food and beverage services providers at the venue, poor WIFI connectivity, poor air conditioning in exhibition halls, ease of accessibility to the venue by attendees, exhibitors' logistics outside the venue and the duration of the event (in this case exhibitors highlighted that the duration of the event was long that is from Wednesday to Sunday). These aspects have been cited by various sources as important in building perception of travel fairs. Booth management, accessibility into the venue, attractiveness of the venue, range of services available and the duration of the event (Jung, 2005), the conduciveness of the venue and the activities of the organisers (Jin and Weber, 2013) and dissemination of up to date service information by exhibition organisers (Lin and Lin, 2013) are important determinants in shaping exhibitors perception of an event.

Conclusion

The research focused on exhibitors' perception of the 2017 Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo with the aim of unearthing the value exhibitors attach to the event. Exhibitors appear to attach significant value to the fair gauging by the amount of resources spent to participate at the exhibition, quality of staff representing organisations at exhibition booths, the distance that exhibitors travelled to the venue as shown by places where exhibitors came from and the various sectors exhibiting at the event. The Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo 2017 was perceived to be a successful and beneficial event for exhibitors basing on the benefits highlighted by exhibitors. Organisations in the Tourism and Hospitality industry have strongly affirmed their willingness to participate at future events because they perceive that they benefit a lot through such exhibitions. However, there is need for the organisers to take note of the challenges faced by the exhibitors and find ways to improve on them so that the perception of the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo improves and also enables the event to attract more international exhibitors.

The organisers can improve on organisation levels in future editions by ensuring that booths preparations and allocation are done in advance and by adhering to the timelines on the event programme. Information dissemination can be improved by installing public address system to make announcements of activities as each day progresses and using social media platforms to disseminate information to exhibitors. There is also need to engage various catering services providers that serve different markets to increase the options available to exhibitors. The organisers can also engage the government to help on issues that are beyond their control such as availability of fuel, import restrictions for exhibitors and police roadblocks.

Suggestions for Future research

Future research can be directed on exhibition service quality at future Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expos. Service quality is another criterion that helps to influence exhibitors' perceptions of an event therefore it is important for the organizers to measure the level of service quality offered during the event so that continuous improvements can be done. The same study can also be conducted involving a larger sample to improve on the generalisability of the findings.

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