



FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURISM DEMAND FOR MASVINGO PROVINCE IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract:

The demand for tourism in Masvingo Province (Zimbabwe) is influenced by various factors which are discussed in this paper. The article seeks to examine these factors with a view to providing recommendations for increased tourism demand for the province. Since tourism is regarded as a low hanging fruit in Zimbabwe, these recommendations are quite significant. Broadly two main factors influence tourism in a country. They include economic and social-psychological factors. Economic factors include: disposable income, gross national product per capita (GNP), private consumption, cost of living, tourism prices/costs, costs of living of destinations, exchange rate differentials, relative prices among competing destinations, promotional expenditure, marketing effectiveness and physical distance. On the other hand, the social-psychological factors include: demographic, motivational, travel preferences, benefits sought, images of destinations awareness of opportunities, cognitive distances, attitudes, amount of leisure time, paid vacations, past experience, health and safety considerations and the like.

Keywords: tourism, economic, psychosocial factors, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is difficult to define as it is multifaceted and so many disciplines have an influence in its operations. Several scholars have provided tourism definitions in an attempt to clarify and bring meaningful contributions to the field. Mathieson and Wall (1982) defined tourism as *“the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs.”* Moreso McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) defined tourism as *“the sum phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors”*. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2016) provided a universally accepted definition of tourism which says *“tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their*

usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”.

What is not subject to debate is the fact that tourism involves the temporary movement of people from their usual place of residence to a somehow novel or ‘foreign’ region. Tourists by purpose of visit are those who undertake a trip for the following reasons; holidays, business, health, study, meetings, incentive travel, conventions, exhibitions, congresses, family, visiting friends and relatives, religion, sports, and others (UNWTO, 2016). The following are not regarded as tourists; border workers, transit passengers, nomads, refugees, members of armed forces, representation of consulates, diplomats, temporary immigrants, permanent immigrants (UNWTO, 2016).

Tourism is the world’s largest and fastest growing industry in the increasingly globalizing world. Tourism contributes 10% to the global gross domestic product (GDP), one in ten jobs is in the tourism industry employing over 200 million people worldwide. Tourism account for 30% of the world’s total service exports and 7% of the world’s exports and generates US\$1.4 trillion. In terms global tourist arrivals there was a 7% increase in 2017 from 1.2 billion in 2016 to 1.3 billion in 2017. In Africa, tourist arrivals grew by 7% in 2017 from 57.8 million in 2016 to 62.1 million in 2017. In Zimbabwe, tourist arrivals grew by 12% from 2.17 million in 2016 to 2.42 million in 2017 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, ZTA, 2017). Arrivals into Southern Africa account for 2% of global arrivals. These arrivals figures show the level of tourism demand globally, continentally and nationally.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To identify and examine the key determinants of tourism demand for Masvingo Province.
- To propose recommendations for increasing tourism demand level for Masvingo Province

2.1 Significance of the Study

The study is very important given the fact that in Zimbabwe, tourism is one of the economic sectors being given priority given the long held belief that it is a low hanging fruit. The study help in the making of informed decisions by government and other policy making agencies by unravelling the determinants of tourism demand particularly for Masvingo province. More so, there is limited literature particularly on tourism demand determinants for Masvingo Province and this paper seeks to address that gap.

2.2 Tourism demand

Tourism by its very nature is fundamentally a demand driven activity (McKercher and du Cros, 2002). Tourism demand is the result of activities and decisions made in the tourist generating region (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill, 2005). Wall and Mathieson (2006: 21) defined tourism demand as *“the total number of persons who travel,*

or wish to travel, to use tourist facilities and services at places away from their places of work and residence". Tourism demand can be categorized into three distinct components which are actual or effective demand, potential demand and deferred demand. Actual or effective demand refers to *"people who currently possess the wherewithal and willingness to travel to tourist destinations and use their services and facilities."* (Wall and Mathieson, 2006: 22). Effective demand refers to *"the actual number of participants in tourism or those who are travelling."* Cooper et al., 2005:39). This is the most common element and the easily measured component; the one shown by national and international tourism statistics. Potential demand *"includes those persons motivated to travel but who are unable to do so because of temporal or financial constraints"* (Wall and Mathieson, 2006: 22). An increase in disposable income for example may turn them into effective demand in future. Deferred demand includes *"those people who could travel, if motivated, but they do not do so because they either lack the knowledge of opportunities, facilities, or both."* (Wall and Mathieson, 2006:22). Deferred demand normally results from unfavorable circumstances on the supply side such as lack of capacity in accommodation, weather conditions, terrorist attacks. When these conditions turn for the better, deferred demand can become effective demand. Lastly, there will be those who simply do not wish to travel or are unable to travel, thus, creating a no demand category (Cooper et al., 2005).

All these forms of tourism demand are important and worth equal consideration when measuring and planning for tourism development. However, there is overemphasis and biased focus on only effective demand within tourism literature. Potential and deferred demand can be regarded both under suppressed demand. Suppressed tourism demand is difficult to measure and is therefore overly ignored in tourism literature though it's worth a critical examination and consideration as it is a representation of part of future effective demand given the provision of the right conditions.

3. Tourism Demand determinants; A critical review of literature

Tourism demand is a function of several determinants, micro and macro, personal and lifestyle, past, current and future. Determinants of tourism demand are the focus of this paper. Wall and Mathieson (2006) citing Uysal (1998) outlines three categories of tourism demand determinants namely economic, social-psychological and exogenous factors. Under the economic determinants of demand, there are several factors including, disposable income, GNP per capita income, private consumption, cost of living, tourism prices/ costs, costs of living in relation to destinations, exchange rate differentials, and relative prices among competing destinations, promotional expenditures, marketing effectiveness and physical distance. The social psychological determinants of tourism demand include demographic factors, motivations, travel preferences, benefits sought, images of destinations, awareness of opportunities, cognitive distance, attitudes about destinations, amount of leisure time, paid vacations, past experience, lifecycle stage, physical capacity, health and wellness, cultural similarities, affiliations, and family circumstances. Wall and Mathieson (2006) list

several exogenous determinants of tourism demand as availability of supply resources, economic growth, economic stability, political, economic, social environment, technological advancements, accessibility, levels of development for both infrastructure and superstructure, natural disaster effects, health conditions, safety factors, social and cultural attractions, degree of urbanization, special factors, Olympic games, mega events, Meetings, Incentive travel, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE), immigration conditions, restrictions, rules, and laws.

Holloway and Humphreys (2012) citing Dann (1977) and Ryan (1991) categorized tourism demand determinants into push and pull factors. The push factors of tourism demand include the motivation to escape from perceived mundane environments, relaxation and recuperation, the opportunity to play, providing adults with an opportunity to regress into the carefree of childhood, strengthening of family bonds, and the opportunity to spend time with other members, gaining status and prestige amongst one's peers, social integration with hosts and other guests, romance and sexual opportunity, the opportunity for educational development and broadening of the mind, self-fulfillment and self-discovery which may potentially be life changing, wish fulfillment and achievement of long desired goals as well as shopping. The pull factors of tourism demand according to Holloway and Humphreys (2012) include range of attractions, including the natural environment, cultural resources, and a welcoming host population, availability and quality of amenities, special events, MICE, infrastructure and accessibility, suitable weather conditions, and a positive image as well as a safe, entertaining, interesting place to visit. These factors do play an important role in shaping tourism demand for each and every tourist destination.

McIntosh, Goeldner and Ritchie (1995) categorized tourism demand determinants into four distinct classes namely physical, cultural, and interpersonal as well as status and prestige factors. The physical factors include refreshing the body, reducing mental stress, improve physical health, exercising, and having fun and enjoyment. Cultural factors of tourism demand include curiosity about foreign lands and people, developing historical or cultural interests, attending cultural events, exploring local music, folklore, lifestyles, art etc. Interpersonal motivators include maintaining and enhancing relationships with friends and family, making new friends, escaping own routine environment. Lastly status and prestige factors of tourism demand include gaining status from others, gaining recognition from others, pursuing one's own hobbies, continuing education, and self-development.

Holloway and Humphreys (2006) added a very important dimension to tourism demand determinants, that is, the issue of facilitators to undertake tourism related activities. Facilitators make it possible for prospective tourists to undertake a trip. The common identified facilitators include time, money, cost, accessibility, disposable income level, exchange rates, immigration controls, cultural distance, and welcomeness of the host population, conducive political and economic environment. Holloway and Humphreys (2006), stressed that demand for tourism is influenced by the following factors political, social, economic, technological, natural factors, government and legal as well as international factors.

Moreso Cooper et al. (2005) posit that the determinants of tourism demand for individuals can be categorized into two factors namely lifestyle and lifecycle stage. Lifestyle determinants of tourism demand include income, employment, paid holiday entitlement, education, mobility, race and gender. Lifecycle stage determinants of tourism demand include childhood, young adult, marriage, empty nest stage and old age. The aforementioned lifecycle stages determine level of tourism demand. Cooper et al., (2005) outlines certain barriers that reduce the level of effective tourism demand. The identified barriers include lack of time, expensive travel costs, physical limitations such as ill health, family circumstances (single parents), government restrictions and lack of interest as well as fear of travelling. Macro factors that influence tourism demand include political, economic, sociocultural and technological factors. Tourism demand level reflects the level of tourism performance of a particular destination. The higher the tourism demand level the higher the performance of tourism in a particular place or destination.

According to the Leiper's tourism system model, tourism demand decisions are made in the tourist generating region (Cooper et al., 2005). Tourism demand is one of the fundamental elements of the tourism system for without demand there is no tourism industry to talk about, as the industry is alive and visible in the presence of tourists. The ultimate aim of tourism is the improvement of the quality of life and the creation of better living conditions for all peoples. Tourism demand results in flows between the generating region and the destination region. Tourism demand and motivation to travel go hand in hand. Determinants of demand and travel motivators are in reality synonyms and as scholars, there is need to consider the two as intertwined two sides of the same coin.

3.1 Measuring Demand for Tourism

Tourism demand is measured using statistics of volume, value and visitor profiles in an attempt to holistically capture data for convenience of all stakeholders. Volume statistics capture tourist arrivals and departures in a country or place which are key measures of tourism demand. Cooper et al., (2005) clarified by stating that arrivals or departures are not counts of individuals but are the number of trips, for example a family that visit a destination twenty times will be counted twenty times. The number of trips is calculated by multiplying the number of individuals by average number of trips taken per individual. For example, the number of trips made in total by Zimbabwean tourists to Botswana in 2017 is equal to the product of the number of individuals involved and the average number of trips they make to Botswana. The main advantage of volume statistics in measuring tourism demand is its general applicability to any group of tourists. The main disadvantage of volume statistics as a measure of tourism demand is that the length of stay is not considered, yet it's a critical for hoteliers and other accommodation establishments (Cooper et al., 2005). Therefore total tourist nights are considered a better measure of volume for many purposes and it acts as an indicator of the likely impact of tourism in a tourist destination. Total tourists nights is number of tourist trips multiplied by average length of stay.

Tourism demand can also be measured using value or expenditure statistics. Expenditure by visitors shows the economic importance of tourism to a particular nation or destination. Expenditure statistics include spending by tourists in the host country excluding fare payments to international airlines. Expenditure of outgoing tourists abroad is a measure of the economic cost to a country due to its nationals travelling abroad. International tourism expenditure is classified into accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, shopping and travel within the host country (Cooper et al., 2005).

Visitor profile statistics are also used to measure tourism demand, and these consist of statistics relating to the visitor including age, sex, nationality, occupation, income, group type (alone, family) and those of the visit including purpose of visit, length of stay, places visited, activities engaged in, mode of transport, accommodation used, origin and destination, tour or independently organized (Cooper et al., 2005). It is worth noting that most tourism statistics are not exact but are estimates due to the difficulty associated with collecting data relating to movement of people. Though tourism statistics, a measure of tourism demand, are normally estimates, they do provide numerous benefits which among them include; for measurement of tourism contribution to the economy in terms of employment, GDP, exports and services, for marketing and promotion policies, assist in crafting area development policies, aid in crafting social development policies. Furthermore, tourism statistics, as tourism demand measurement tools, provide valuable trend data, provides a database which may influence decision making, statistics enable the effects of decisions or changes to be monitored, they enable current data to be viewed in context and lastly provide a means of making forecasts (Cooper et al., 2005).

The focus of this paper is to identify and examine the key determinants of tourism demand for Masvingo province. The demand level for Masvingo Province as shown by the volume statistics, value statistics as well as profile statistics is also going to be unravelled in this paper. Recommendations for increasing tourism demand level for Masvingo Province are going to be proposed.

4. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative survey design with interviews and document studies being the data collection methods. The study participants were key informants from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (HAZ), Great Zimbabwe Masvingo Publicity Association (GZMPA), Masvingo Tourism Businesses Forum (MTBF), Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZIMPARKS), Great Zimbabwe National Monuments (GZNM). The participants were purposively selected based on their deep knowledge on tourism marketing issues in Masvingo as well as the importance of the attractions to the province as in the case with ZIMPARKS and GZNM. Area Managers, regional managers and marketing managers within the respective organisations were the actual study participants purposively interviewed face to face with interviews taking an average of twenty to thirty minutes

per session. An interview guide with five open ended questions was used as a data collection instrument. Moreso, document analysis was also employed in the study as a data collection method. Documents from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), Zimbabwe Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and reports from tourism related organisations were analyzed in an attempt to gather data on the tourism demand determinants for Masvingo province. Study was conducted in January 2018.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Political Factors

All study participants concurred that the political climate in Zimbabwe since the turn of the new millennium as reported in the international media has been characterized by violent elections, gross human rights abuses, repression of opposition groups. This coupled with the badly implemented fast tract land reform programme increased the country's security risk placing Zimbabwe in the same league with war torn countries. Thus, this had profound negative effect on arrivals to Zimbabwe and Masvingo in particular hence negatively reduced effective or actual tourism demand to Masvingo province. Arrival fell from over two million in 1999 to 1.5 million in 2006 (ZTA). Hotel occupancy since the turn of the new millennium for Masvingo has been below fifty percent (ZTA) an indication of weak or depressed demand. Zimbabwe's political image internationally was considered bad especially during the presidency and administration of former president Robert Mugabe and that negatively affected tourism demand for Masvingo. This finding is supported by Cooper et al (2005), Holloway and Humphreys (2008), Wall and Mathieson (2006), Morrison (2013) as they argue that a stable and positive political image is a draw card for tourists given the fact that tourists consider security issues when making destination choices. Political instability, real or perceived chases away tourists, hence weak demand.

5.2 Economic Factors

The economic environment of Zimbabwe was also considered by the study participants to be a key determinant of both domestic and international tourism demand for Masvingo. Zimbabwe experienced economic hardships including hyperinflation, cash shortages, high unemployment, sluggish economic growth, increased poverty levels, foreign currency shortages, low disposable incomes, liquidity crisis, and a deterioration in balance of payments position. All this negatively affected effective or actual tourism demand for Masvingo province due to the fact that all these economic factors rendered locals penniless and unable to finance their travel purposes. ZTA (2016) reported that the liquidity crisis and the sluggish economic performance negatively affected tourism performance in Masvingo with hotel occupancy reaching 46% in 2016. Study participants bemoaned the economic hardships subsisting in the economy as these were affecting tourism demand in Masvingo province. This is supported by Mathieson and Wall (2006), Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2014) who posited that the level of disposable income, GNP per capita income, private consumption, cost of living, tourism prices/

costs, costs of living in relation to destinations, exchange rate differentials, and relative prices among competing destinations, promotional expenditures are key economic determinants of tourism demand.

5.3 Sociocultural Factors

The sociocultural factors though they were mentioned by the study participants, they were considered as determinants of tourism demand to a lower extent. Here factors such as religion were strongly mentioned. Pilgrims to the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) at Mbungu in Masvingo who gather at least twice a year were considered to be a significant determinant of tourism demand. The study found that these Christian gatherings have a tangible effect on hotel occupancy, transport services as well as increasing the number of tourists at tourist attractions such as Great Zimbabwe Monument, Kyle Recreational Park, and Mushandike Game Sanctuary. Another religious centre which helps to drive demand for tourism services in Masvingo is the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe Rufaro Conference centre which hosts all the church's national events for at least five times per year. These religious gatherings do determine the level of tourism demand in Masvingo by increasing hotel occupancy; shopping malls normally record high sales when religious gatherings are in session. Other sociocultural factors that were mentioned by study participants include education, age, gender and the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. The study found out that most people who engage in tourism activities are those with at least a college qualification and above, they were between the ages 25 to 65, they were mostly men and when females were involved, the family was on holiday or visiting friends and relatives. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS at 12% was also considered to be a determinant of tourism demand in Masvingo.

5.4 Technological Factors

The study found out that the advancements in information and communications technology (ICT) played a pivotal role in determining tourism demand for Masvingo. Study participants strongly mentioned that social media tools such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Google maps, websites and the internet in general has made it possible for tourism players in Masvingo to market themselves to a global audience at little costs and tourists across the globe are now able to conveniently get real time information about Masvingo's tourism attractions and facilities at the touch of a button thus helping to enhance the tourism demand for Masvingo province. Tourists are now able to make bookings online as well as make payments thus bringing travel convenience hence tourism demand enhancement Morrison (2010) supports this finding by asserting that information communications technological advancements have transformed the tourism distribution channel by bringing information and transacting convenience to tourists, hence increases in global tourist arrivals.

5.5 Legal and Policy Factors

The study found out that the Indigenization and Empowerment Act caused some damage on the image of the country as the study participants mentioned that the interpretation of the act from an international perspective was negative and was viewed as an attempt to forcibly grab foreign owned companies as was done on land during the fast track land reform programme. The study found out that the Act led to a decrease in tourism demand for Zimbabwe in general and Masvingo in particular. Furthermore, it generated international negative publicity. The Save Conservancy in the Lowveld was invaded under the cover of the indigenization and empowerment act as well as the fast track land reform programme. Mathieson and Wall (2006) argue that the legal environment is also a key determinant of tourism demand. Moreso, the country's visa regimes and immigration laws as well as border controls and procedures determine tourism demand. The congestion and corruption at Beitbridge border post as well as the prevalence of police roadblocks were all mentioned to have a negative impact on tourism demand for Masvingo.

5.6 Natural Environment Factors

Masvingo has a tropical climate and boasts of more sunshine hours during the day. It has cool dry winters and hot wet summers. The climate is conducive for all forms of tourism activities, Masvingo boasts of natural tourism attractions in the form of wildlife in Kyle Recreational Park, Gonarezhou National Parks, and Mountains, Lake Tugwi Mukosi, the largest inland lake in Zimbabwe, Lake Mutirikwi, second largest inland lake in Zimbabwe as well as private game conservancies and sanctuary. The Big Five are found in Masvingo province. The study found that the natural environment is a key determinant of tourism demand in Masvingo province. This finding is supported by Holloway and Humphreys (2012) as they asserted that one of the major pull factors that determines the level of tourism demand are the natural attractions in a destination.

5.7 Government Factors

The study participants hailed the government for creating a stand-alone ministry responsible for tourism issues, that is, the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry. The creation of the ministry has helped to put the tourism industry on the map as more focus is given on tourism issues. This has culminated in the creation of the Zimbabwe National Tourism Policy, a first in an independent Zimbabwe. The Government, through its parastatal the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority has managed to come up with the Harare International Carnival thus helping to increase tourism demand for the country as a whole including Masvingo. Zimbabwe cohosted the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) general assembly in 2013 with Zambia, a development which helped to put the country on the map. The study found out that these efforts by the government had a positive impact on tourism demand for Masvingo. However, some study participants bemoaned what they term 'over marketing' of Victoria Falls by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) at the expense of other local destinations including Masvingo province. They blamed the over

marketing for weak demand level experienced by Masvingo province. Study participants bemoaned lack of air transport for Masvingo province as a huge hindrance and barrier for tourism demand and development. Study participants strongly asserted that it is the government's responsibility to ensure accessibility of Masvingo Province by air.

5.8 General Barriers to travel

The study found out what study participants considered as barriers to travel. These barriers lead to zero demand or no demand for tourism (Cooper et al., 2005). The following were found to be barriers to travel, poor road network, non-accessibility of some attractions, lack of awareness, lack of development and enshrinement of certain attractions such as Kamungoma Liberation Heritage site, mushrooming of police roadblocks, rampant corruption at police roadblocks, decreased range of tourist activities such as boat cruises, lack of incentive travel among the civil service and the private sector employees, lack of time to travel, the high cost of travel, lack of disposable income and poverty, physical limitations such as ill health, family circumstances (single parents), government restrictions and lack of interest as well as fear of travelling restrict people from undertaking tourism activities hence zero demand.

5.9 Key Challenges in the Tourism Sector in Zimbabwe

Tourism demand is a function of several factors. According to the National Tourism Policy, Zimbabwe (2014) the key challenges facing the tourism sector in Zimbabwe including Masvingo province, which have been responsible also for weak or depressed tourism demand are: inadequate skilled human resources worsened by skills flight over the past ten years; dilapidated tourism facilities in need of refurbishment; few direct flights to and from major tourism source markets; tourism remains inadequately resourced and funded. This has been compounded by the unavailability of long term loans due to liquidity challenges facing the country; continued negative perceptions in the traditional source markets; poor state of the roads; tourism infrastructure that is not adequately maintained; power / electricity shortages; high utility charges which increases the cost of doing business in Zimbabwe thus making the destination regionally uncompetitive.

6. Conclusion

Tourism demand for Masvingo province is a function of several determinants which among them include political, economic, sociocultural, technological, legal, natural environmental factors, and governmental factors. Key barriers to travel that result in no demand or zero demand for Masvingo were also identified including key constraints and challenges for the tourism sector in Masvingo and Zimbabwe in general.

6.1 Recommendations

Tourism is government led and private sector driven. The study recommends that the government should take a strong lead role in creating a sustainably conducive environment supported by physical, institutional, policy and legal structures that promote robust growth and development of tourism in Masvingo Province. The government should make the macro and micro environment conducive for tourism sector development.

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