

Can Tourism Sector Steer The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET)?

Anna Chingarande

Faculty of Commerce, Department of Economics, Bindura University of Science Education, P Bag 1020 Bindura, Zimbabwe.

ABSTRACT

The author sought to establish whether tourism could steer Zimbabwe's Agenda of Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation. Using historical approach, the author has demonstrated that tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe have been fluctuating. The conclusions reached are that the tourism sector has potential to contribute to ZimAsset provided there are significant interventions to make the sector more robust. There is also lack of utilising more effective tools in promoting tourism in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Tourism, Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimAsset), Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the fast growing sector world-wide. It is also the sector that is the most vulnerable of political disturbances. Political disturbances have affected tourism growth in Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Mali and other countries. In Zimbabwe, tourism ranks fourth in its contribution towards the country's earnings and 10% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)(Mzembe 2014). Zimbabwe's Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimAsset) is a government of Zimbabwe macroeconomic program launched in October 2013 and will run up to December 2018. The program is

divided into four clusters namely: Food Security and Nutrition; Social Services and Poverty Eradication; Infrastructure and Utilities; and Value Addition and Beneficiation. The program aims at rapid economic growth and creation of wealth through indigenisation, empowerment and employment creation based on utilisation of Zimbabwe's human and natural resources (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). The objective of this paper is to explore whether tourism can steer the Zimbabwe's Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation.

BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe experienced economic down turn from 2001 to 2008. A positive economic growth to the tune of 4.7% was reached in 2009 signifying a sign of recovery. However, such recovery cannot be sustainable for a long period without the Government of Zimbabwe implementing deeper reforms (African Development Bank, 2010; World Bank, 2011; Mzumara, 2012; Mzumara et al 2013). To answer or deal with the objective of this paper, the starting point is to look at the tourism sector in Zimbabwe.

The tourism sector grew steadily at independence in 1980 owing to the removal of sanctions imposed on Rhodesia then by the United Nations. With the new legitimate government in place, the number of visitors coming to Zimbabwe grew. The period 1980

to 1999 was a now remarkable growth in the sector. However in 2000, the war veterans' occupation of white commercial farms and subsequent formalisation of it by the government was seen as marking of intensive land reform program. This angered countries and organisations such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and the European Union. The anger was followed by measures or travel bans imposed on Zimbabwe's political leadership (Timbe, 2007). These measures were subsequently expanded in full sanctions such as the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) of 2001 by the United States of America Congress. The act prevented the Secretary of Treasury and USA Directors in Multilateral Organisation such as the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund from extending credit to Zimbabwe (USA Congress, 2001; Mzumara, 2012). The Act was replaced with Zimbabwe Transition and Economic Recovery Act 2010 and allowed some assistance to some ministries not controlled by ZANU PF in the inclusive government and the Parliament of Zimbabwe (USA Congress, 2010; Mzumara, 2012). However the major tenets of both acts still remain intact and Zimbabwe has been unable to secure credit needed to modernise facilities in this sector and others. The impact of the sanctions have resulted in a fluctuation in the tourism sector just like other sections in Zimbabwe experienced. The fluctuation in tourism was mainly due to bad publicity of Zimbabwe by international media especially in the western countries that imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe. The tourism sector is quite sensitive and responds immediately to travel bans and warnings especially by countries such as the United States of America. The USA State Department is known for issuing travelling warnings to its citizens. Such warnings are taken as a cue if the security situation in a country named in the bulletin.

Zimbabwe's hopes to revive the sector was hinged on the hosting of FIFA World Cup by South Africa in 2010. There was euphoria of hope that visitors coming to watch the game in South Africa would find their way to Zimbabwe before or after the World Cup.

South Africa had given the impression of its neighbours that they too would benefit from the World Cup through tourism without putting in place a mechanism that would help the neighbouring countries benefit through tourism. Zimbabwe's tourism stakeholders and individuals embarked on infrastructure renovation and development in readiness of the FIFA World Cup 2010. The World Cup was seen as an opportunity in Zimbabwe to increase on bed occupation rates in Zimbabwe. However, despite the readiness by Zimbabwe, its main predicament was inefficiency of the national airline which was experiencing operational challenges arising from many factors. In order for Zimbabwe to benefit from the FIFA World Cup 2010, it needed to have a very efficient air transport which would have allowed a number of aircraft operating between Zimbabwe and South Africa for short intervals. That could have allowed visitors to the FIFA World Cup 2010 opting to stay in Zimbabwe while commuting to the matches in South Africa. Zimbabwe should have come up with such a package and advertised it internationally. In the absence of such a package and failure by South Africa its accord some official tasks to its neighbours such as Zimbabwe led to such countries not benefitting from the millions of visitors who visited South Africa. However, South Africa cannot be entirely blamed as it wanted to maximise the facilities it had built which now stand as white elephants. The one off income was necessary to compensate the overall costs of hosting such a tournament.

In August 2013, Zimbabwe and Zambia co-hosted the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNTWO) General Assembly. According to Mzembi (2014) this was an affirmation and endorsement that Zimbabwe is a safe place for tourists. Zimbabwe proudly has one of the wonders of the world, the Victoria Falls. The Victoria Falls is one of the wonders declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage. Besides Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe also has other area of tourist attraction such as the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, Nyanga National Park, Hwange National Park and Lake

Kariba. Lake Kariba is the largest man-made lake. Victoria Falls are the largest falls in the world.

Tourism falls under the fourth cluster of ZimAsset (i.e Value Addition and Beneficiation) and is expected to contribute significantly towards the transformation of the socio-economic development of Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, the author uses historical approach to trace the growth of tourism in Zimbabwe. The data used in this paper was obtained from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA). The data used is secondary, the most preferred data in Economics.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe.

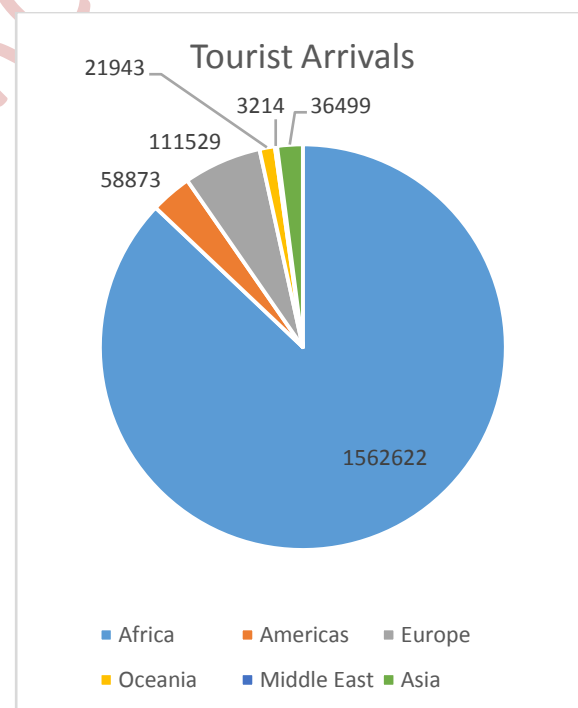
Year	Arrivals in Zimbabwe
1995	1 363 412
1996	1 577 005
1997	1 281 205
1998	1 986 474
1999	2 249 615
2000	1966 582
2001	2 217 429
2002	2 041 202
2003	2 256 205
2004	1 854 488
2005	1 558 501
2006	2 286 572
2007	2 513 204
2008	1 956 442
2009	2 017 264
2010	2 239 165
2011	2 423 280
2012	1 794 230

In Table 1 above, taking 1995 as a base year, in 1996 tourist arrivals increased by 15.7%. In 1997 however tourist arrivals fell by -7.9%. In 1998 tourist arrivals picked up by 45.5%. The arrivals further increased by

64.9% in 1999. In 2000 there was an increase but was less than that of 1999 at 44%. In 2001 tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe soared to 62.6% before only increasing by 49.7% in 2002 then picking up 65.4% in 2003. Then in 2004 tourist arrivals increased only by 36%. In 2005 the increase was marginal at 14.3%. In 2006 there was substantial increase in tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe by 67.7%. Then the increase soared by 84% in 2007. In 2008, the increase in tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe was only 43%. In 2009 the increase was 47.2%. In 2010 the tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe increased by 64.2%. In 2011, Zimbabwe recorded an increase of 77.8% while in 2012 the increase amounted to 31.6%. Since 1995, the increase has been fluctuating rather than steady.

Figure 1 shows tourist arrivals by region in 2012 in Zimbabwe.

Figure 1: Tourist arrivals by region in 2012 in Zimbabwe.



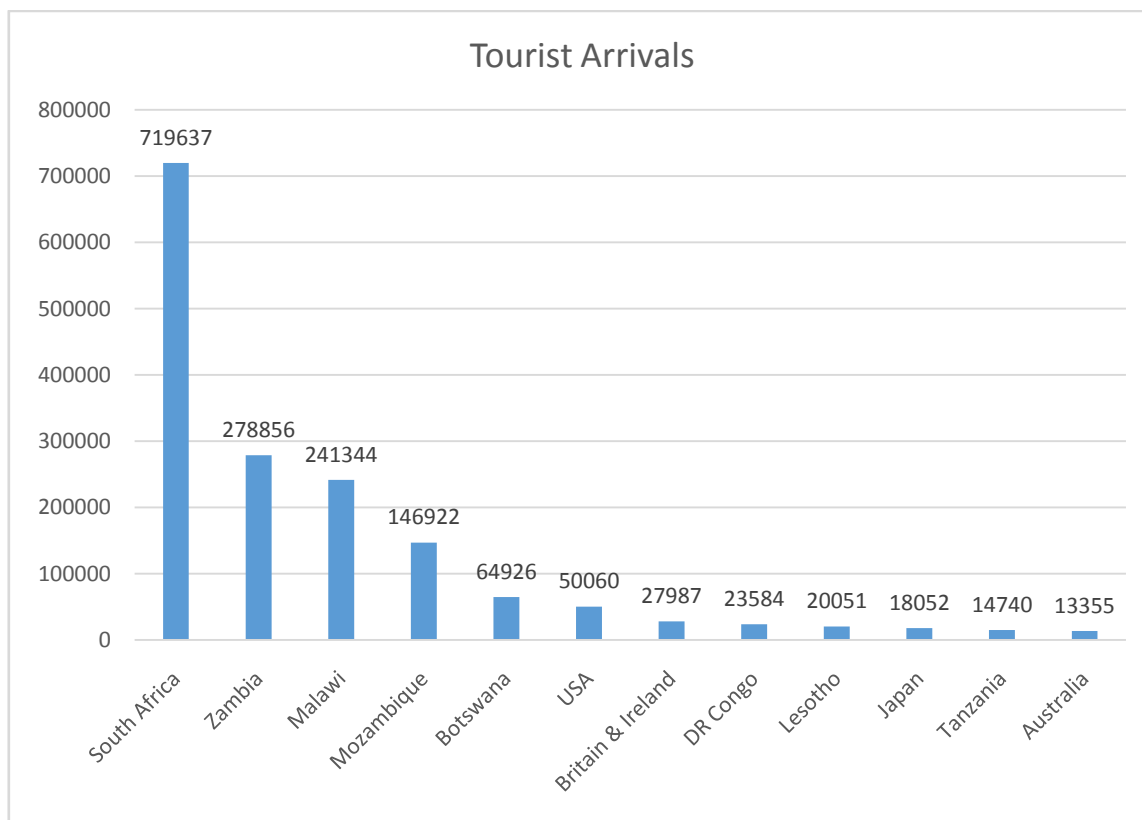
Source: Drawn using numbers obtained from Zimbabwe Tourism Authority

In Figure 1, the highest tourist arrivals came from within Africa accounting for 1 562 622. In the second place was Europe accounting for 1 115 290. In the third

place was America accounting for 58 873. In the fourth place was Asia accounting for 36 499 tourist arrivals. In the fifth place is Oceania accounting for 21 493. In the sixth place was the Middle East accounting for only 3 214.

Figure 2 shows top 12 countries which contributed to tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe in 2012.

Figure 2: Top 12 countries which contributed to tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe in 2012.



Source: Drawn using numbers obtained from Zimbabwe Tourism Authority

In Figure 2, the highest contributor to tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe in 2012 was South Africa accounting for 719 637. It was followed by Zambia accounting for 278 856. In the third place was Malawi accounting for 241 344. In the fourth place was Mozambique accounting for 146 922. It was followed by Botswana 64 926. In the sixth position was the USA accounting for 50 060. In the seventh position was Britain and Ireland accounting for 27 987. In the eighth rank was DR Congo accounting for 23 584. In the ninth rank was Lesotho accounting for 20 051. In the tenth position was Japan accounting for 18 052. In the eleventh place was Tanzania accounting for 14 740. In the twelfth place was Australia accounting for 13 355.

The Southern African countries are leading in contributing to tourist arrivals due to the fact that the countries are close to Zimbabwe making the cost of travelling affordable. Further under the Southern African Development Community (SADC) arrangement member states have removed visa requirement in the region making travelling within the region much easier. Other regions are slower in contribution because of hassles in securing visas. According to Mzembe (2014) the Western countries are the biggest spenders followed by the Asians. The Africans are less spenders although they contribute much more in numbers.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that the tourism sector has potential to contribute to ZimAsset provided there are significant interventions to make the sector very robust. There is also lack of appropriate promotion in the high spending countries of places such as the Victoria Falls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that government considers streamlining visa requirements to enable the tourist to come to Zimbabwe easier. It may be necessary for some potential to remove the visa requirement altogether. It is further recommended that the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) should use other modes of promoting tourism in Zimbabwe such as advertising of places like the Victoria Falls on channels such as CNN and Sky News. Such channels are watched in many heavy spending countries and there are other Tourism Promotion Agencies that advertise their countries as destination.

REFERENCES

- [1] African Development Bank (2010) Zimbabwe country brief. Regional Department - Southern region. <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/upload/afdb/Documents/project-and-operations/Zimbabwe%20country%20Brief-02.pdf>
- [2] Government of Zimbabwe (2013) Zimbabwe's Agent of Sustainable Social-Economic Transformation, Harare: Printflow
- [3] Mzumara, M (2012). Developing an Export Promotion Strategy for the post-conflict Reconstruction of Zimbabwe, PhD Thesis, Potchefstroom: North-West University. Unpublished.
- [4] Mzumara, M. Mathee, M. & Steenkamp, E. (2013) Can a New Export Promotion Strategy Revitalise Zimbabwe's economy? *Africa Insight*, 43(3):63-73
- [5] Mzembi, W (2014) Contribution of Tourism. A paper presented to Parliamentary Seminar held 12-13 March, Harare International Conference Centre.

[6] Timbe, A.M. 2007. Democracy in emergent states case study of Zimbabwe and other developing countries, Harare:sn

[7] USA Congress (2001) Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 Public Law 107-99- Dec, 21, 2001. Washington DC: USA Congress

[8] USA Congress (2010) Zimbabwe Transition and Economic Recovery Act of 2010 Public Law. Washington DC: USA Congress

[10] World Bank (2011). Zimbabwe Country brief. [Http://ao.worldbank.org/RFP74M2PK1](http://ao.worldbank.org/RFP74M2PK1)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The Researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to Bindura University of Science Education for the research grant, without which the publication fees would not have been paid and this paper would not have been published.