

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges Facing Zimbabwe in its Look-East Tourism Development and Turnaround Policy for 2014

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Abstract

This article focuses on analysing the challenges facing tourism development and the momentous turnaround strategies by Zimbabwe with respect to the declining arrivals and depleting proceeds from tourist revenues. New tourism policies were adopted at the turn of the century geared at reversing the declining trends in tourist arrivals and receipts, and serving as a panacea to the downward spiralling developments in the tourism sector. A survey was carried out on a drawn up population of 180 registered tour operators, hoteliers and industry stakeholders over an extended period of time in order to identify the current challenges facing the tourism Look-East Policy and establish how the negative impacts could be mitigated. From 123 responses, a turnaround strategy was advanced focusing on how Zimbabwe could pull itself out of this dilemma. The study recognized that, Zimbabwe should intensify its quest to open up new markets in the East to boost arrivals. Evidently, the Look-East Policy can only be a credible alternative when the major challenges facing tourism developments in general are adequately addressed. A strategy encompassing a marketing mix that contents both the traditional visitors from the West and the new visitors from the East is proposed. The paper also applauds a new marketing-mix strategy incorporating pricing, product development and capacity building measures geared towards the Asian market. This development should be complimented by expanded air routes between Zimbabwe and Asia in order to offer regular and affordable air access to Zimbabwe.

Keywords: *Tourism management, Look east policy, Product promotion, Turnaround strategies, Marketing-mix.*

Introduction

Alongside mining and agriculture, tourism is one of the key primary economic drivers of Zimbabwe's economy. The country has a unique variety of major tourist attractions which include Victoria Falls, one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, Great Zimbabwe, Lake Kariba, Eastern Highlands, Matopos and an abundance of wildlife. In 2000 the Zimbabwe tourism sector opened up to new source markets from Asia and the Far East. The investigation underlying this article was aimed at collecting opinions and operational strategies among captains of the tourism and hospitality industry, comprising members from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism (ZCT), Air Zimbabwe, tour operators, travel agencies and accommodation providers around the country. Data were collected in part using a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews on a drawn-up population of 180 operators where some 123 responses were received.

Background to the Zimbabwe Tourism Policies

The United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism (1963) defined a visitor as, someone who travelled to another country as long as they did not seek to be employed in the host country. In 1993 the United Nations Statistical Commission assumed the WTO's recommendation on tourism statistics and adopted the definition describing tourism as being made up of the activities of people travelling outside their usual environment for business, leisure or other purposes [1]. Recognizing the economic contribution of tourism to the national economy, yet concerned about the potential negative impacts of tourism, the Zimbabwe government embraced the 'Low Volume, High Yield' tourism policy at independence in 1980. The major objectives of the new policy were in the first instance to keep the number of visitors low,

thereby ensuring that tourism operations were limited to within the carrying capacities of the tourist resorts. The other objective was to reduce pressure on the various tourism facilities. It was also hoped to maintain high quality standards through the grading and classification of designated tourist facilities, and clearly to maximise on revenues by targeting the elite class, through the requisite branding and positioning of the tourism product.

In an effort to realise this policy, marketing campaigns were launched in the United Kingdom, North America, Central Europe, Australia and New Zealand, which subsequently realised increased visitor numbers to Zimbabwe at an average growth rate of 9.2% per annum over the years. Visitor numbers rose from 79.4 thousand tourists in 1979 to over 2.09 million tourists in 1999 [2]. The resounding success of this 'Low Volume, High Yield' tourism policy is further augmented by the increase in foreign currency receipts to a peak of over US\$200 million annually by 1999, before the downward spiral to 2005.

In 1999 the land reform programme was launched in Zimbabwe. The intense negative press publicity against Zimbabwe following the launch of this programme resulted in negative perceptions by travellers on visits to Zimbabwe regarding the safety and security of tourists. As from February 2000, these negative international perceptions compounded Zimbabwe's economic difficulties. The tourism sector was hardest hit in its western international markets. There were massive cancellations of bookings and a significant decline

in forward bookings. The hotels and distribution sector declined by 9.1 percent in 2001 alone. The 'Look-East Policy' targeting China, India, Malaysia and Singapore, was adopted immediately, albeit only officially declared later in 2003, as a way to redress the anticipated negative trends to tourist arrivals from the traditional markets. The objectives of the policy were, to boost the anticipated decline in tourism receipts, to replenish depleted foreign currency reserves, and to fill excess capacities. Such a policy, like the 'Look-East Policy, is basically a market development strategy that involves the selling of an existing product to new markets in the Far East [3] This required expansion of the existing infrastructures, and a shift from the 'low volume, high yield' to the 'high volume, high yield' strategies.

Going by the 2012 arrivals of 1 794 230 visitors, Mainland Africa continues to dominate having contributed 87% of the total arrivals followed by Europe 6%, the Americas 3% Asia 2% and Oceania and Middle East 2%. Although overseas arrivals decreased by 39% from 381 261 to 231 608, Europe remains Zimbabwe's overseas leading source market making up 46% of all overseas visitors. Germany accounts for most visitors followed by the UK and France. Other notable markets comprise the Benelux countries. Asian arrivals into Zimbabwe declined by 59%, with all eastern markets exhibiting dismal performances contrary to the general global trend where South Africa registered a 34% increase in Asian arrivals in the same period.

Table 1: UK, German Japanese and Chinese arrivals in Zimbabwe

Year	Number of Visitors					
	UK	Germany	USA	France	Japan	China
1999	190 642	66 084	101 445	*	*	*
2000	136 808	33 379	78 592	*	*	*
2001	156 519	32 694	91 714	*	*	*
2002	77 262	21 333	55 180	*	*	*
2003	58 354	25 902	47 197	12 504	9 648	8 199
2004	42 260	11 863	49 808	12 331	17406	25 974
2005	42 525	6 851	30 710	12 197	10 481	7 146
2006	22 045	10 104	32 968	11834	12 124	9 583
2007	22 295	15 459	26 464	14 446	12 949	12 349
2008	22 778	14 929	32 274	15 134	14 803	14 169
2009	27 580	22 936	43 271	27 193	18389	30 102
2010	24 192	24 300	56 416	13 687	18 593	12 343
2011	35 913	24 300	72 605	16 232	32 784	30 549
2012	27 587	17 126	50 060	11 149	18 032	4 937

Source: Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Harare 2012

The Growth of the Chinese Market

Earlier demographics indicated that about 12

million Chinese nationals, out of a population of over 1,3 billion have the propensity to make holiday trips worldwide, annually [4]. Hall [5]

noted that, the early 1990s saw the loosening up of travel restrictions by the Chinese government, which allowed for more residents' travel for leisure and business, aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of professionals and government officials. Subsequently, China's outbound trips rose from 529.9 thousand to 4.8 million in 1995 and to a high of 6 million in 1998 [4]. The WTO further noted that in 2006 over 34.5 million Mainland Chinese took travel trips abroad mostly to Hong Kong and Macau. In 2013 a total of 97 million Chinese travelled abroad 14 million more than the previous year. In 2012 having recorded an expenditure of US\$102 billion abroad the Chinese travellers topped the worldwide list of overseas spenders ahead of German and US tourists.

The Chinese government encourages travel to countries with the 'Approved Destination Status' (ADS), which was granted to Zimbabwe in 2004 amongst over 100 other countries that have been granted the ADS. It should however, be noted that when they travel overseas the Chinese are amongst the biggest spenders of the world. There is also a growing desire among the Chinese to spend money on leisure time activities, as well as a greater willingness to use credit cards or to borrow money to do so.

The Look East Policy as a Credible Turnaround Marketing Strategy for the Zimbabwean Tourism Sector

The land reform programme running through 2000-2003 was viewed with suspicion by the international community resulting in a lot of negative publicity for Zimbabwe in its traditional markets of the UK, Central Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. With Zimbabwe being accused of having no rule of law, the security situation for tourists visiting the country was subsequently questioned.

Security warnings against travel to Zimbabwe were issued to tourists in those Western countries resulting in a drop in arrivals from 2.2 million tourists in 2003 to 1.5 million in 2005. ZTA statistics show that this drop naturally resulted in a decline in tourism earnings, from US\$193.7 million in 2004 to only US\$98.7 million in 2005. This was an estimated mere 3% contribution to the GDP. Evidently, the 'Look East' policy was adopted to reverse the negative trends in tourist arrivals and receipts.

Shift in ZTA Marketing Strategies

As highlighted before, Zimbabwe adopted a policy of 'Low Volume High Yield', in 1980, which was naturally targeted at the traditional source markets of Europe, United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia, as these were the countries buying more exclusive and expensive holiday packages at the time. Circumstances relating to the controversial land reform programme forced Zimbabwe to adopt the 'Look-East' policy, suggesting a shift in the marketing strategies of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA). Robbins [6], Middleton & Clarke [7] and Thompson & Strickland [8] all define strategy as the process of setting long term goals and objectives of an organisation and pursuing courses of action as well as allocating resources necessary for attaining such goals. Porter [9] in his Diamond model noted the various factors used to assess the key components of a destination's competitiveness, and the interaction thereof with the government acting as a facilitator in the integration process. He outlined these components as, demand conditions, supply or factor conditions, related and supporting industries and the industry structure, strategy and rivalry.

By looking East, Zimbabwe would be segmenting its target market further. Market segmentation recognises that people differ in one or more ways in their tastes, wants, needs, buying attitudes, lifestyles, and composition [7]. Chisnall [10] found that, it is a deliberate policy of maximising market demand by directing marketing efforts at significant sub-groups of customers or consumers. Buyers are too numerous, widely scattered, and varied in their needs and buying practises. They pointed out that one therefore, has options to do *mass marketing*, where the seller mass promotes to all buyers, or *product variety-marketing*, where the seller produces two or more products that have different features, or *target marketing*, where the seller identifies market segments, and develops products tailored to each market segment. They observe that target marketing is increasingly taking the form of *micro* or *customised marketing*, where the product is tailored to the needs and wants of narrowly defined geographic, demographic, psychographic or behaviour segments. By looking East, Zimbabwe has to redesign its products to appeal to the new markets, the Eastern markets through target marketing.

Building a Positive Image through Tourism Promotion Strategies

According to Gunn [11], the tourist image is only one aspect of a destination's image. She identifies two levels of image, the *organic* image which is

the sum of all information that has not been deliberately directed by advertising or promotion, but coming from television, reading, and word of mouth, and the *induced* image formed by promotion. As a result because one can control the amount of promotion for a destination the induced image becomes controllable whilst the organic image is not. The image of a destination is a critical factor when choosing a destination. Doswell [12] defines the image of a destination as the way in which the destination projects itself, and the way in which it is viewed by its markets. He however argues that if the image is positive, people may visit and if it is negative they stay away. Images are built around the unique attributes of the destination, and the more these help to distinguish the destination from competitors the greater the attraction of the destination to the tourist. He adds that the image must be induced by the tourist office in order for the resort to distance itself from the image of other similar resorts, and enhance its own unique brand name. Effective destination imaging requires congruence between advertising and the destination where, there is a marked relationship between the promotion material and what tourists actually experience at the destination.

Pricing Strategies for the Tourism Products of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is perceived to be at the higher end of the tourism pricing scale. This is mainly because the product was for years priced in a four tier system of local and hard currencies, in US dollars for the North Americans and Europeans, in Australian dollars for the Australians and New Zealanders, in Rand for the regional visitors and in Zimbabwe dollars for the locals.

Now that Zimbabwe has adopted a multi-currency pricing system the major hotel chains lead the promotional campaigns abroad and they are themselves priced at the upper end, in hard currencies, resulting in the overall product being perceived to be expensive. Bovée and Arens (1992) identify a number of factors that influence pricing strategies: market demand, production and distribution cost, competition, corporate objectives, and variable influences.

Accessibility and Infrastructure Strategy

Cooper *et al.* [1] believe that the development and maintenance of efficient transport links to generating markets are essential for the success of destinations. Product design requires an understanding of the target market, the core product and the facilitating services that they require. The implementation of a seamless and

hassle-free emigration system with no visas for tourists and the proactive development of air routes to offer regular, affordable air access to the destinations and attractions constitute facilitating services to accessibility. Middleton [7] discusses aspects of the product that comprise accessibility of the destination as including the infrastructure, equipment operational factors and government regulations. Doswell [12] asserts that tourist enclaves consist of well-planned integrated resort complexes that keep tourists in one area, as they concentrate the infrastructural requirements in the same area. Such examples of tourist enclaves in Zimbabwe include the Victoria Falls, Hwange and Kariba [13].

Product Strategy, Branding

Cohen [14] came up with four tourist roles: the organised mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter, in his attempt to establish the effects or impacts of tourists on a given destination. He found that the different tourist roles influence product authenticity issues, standardisation of product offers in destinations, the kind of festivals held and the development of facilities. The organised mass tourists buy group inclusive tours and their only contact with the local population is through shopping. This is typical of the Chinese market since organised tour packages are sold to small groups of Chinese travellers. The Chinese market is characterised by the *psycho centric* segment [15], of visitors who seek familiar surroundings, belong to the lower income groups, are unadventurous as they demand more scheduling of activities, are insecure and prefer the '*tried and tested*' destinations. Individual mass tourists are similar to the above category but have more control over their itinerary, travel as individuals or families in hired cars and this category corresponds to the traditional markets of UK, North America and Europe.

Bovée and Arens [16] postulate that *product differentiation* is a competitive strategy of creating merchandise or services that draw to the inclinations of a distinctive market segment. They further add that, the fundamental differentiating device for all products is the *brand* – the combination of name, words, symbols, or design that identifies the product and its source and differentiates it from competitive products. Since South Africa, Botswana and Zambia all offer wildlife products similar to Zimbabwe's, it follows that Zimbabwe has to establish a strong brand positioning so as to avoid losing a unique destination identity of its own within the Asian

market, and becoming merely an 'add on' to South Africa. New packages developed for the Chinese market, similarly need to take the following considerations into perspective: *identity, security, convenience, consumer appeal and economy*, so that they are exciting, appealing and functional. The positioning of Zimbabwe today is '*Zimbabwe a world of wonders*' which identifies the product with the Seven Wonders of the World and World Heritage Sites. The country has six world heritage sites and has to live up to this brand.

Capacity Building and Investment Strategies

Robbins [6] quotes Chandler's *strategy-structure* thesis that if management makes a significant change in its organisation's strategy, the structure will need to be modified to accommodate and support this change. Daft [17] speaks of the *adaptability culture* which he observes to be characterised by strategic focus on the external environment adjusting to suite resultant customer preferences. He says, if the external environment requires flexibility and responsiveness, the culture should encourage adaptability. Adaptable organisations monitor the environment continuously and attempt through flexible strategic planning to maintain a fit with the evolving environment. Daft [17] further argues that strategic alliances are the hottest way to get involved in international operations, and these take the form of licensing, joint ventures and consortia. Cooper *et al.* [1] penned that a successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place amplified to enable the purchaser to appreciate relevant, unique added values that satisfy them. Its success results from being able to sustain these added values against competitors. Zimbabwe's major competitors are South Africa, Zambia and Botswana. The regional neighbours to Zimbabwe are targeting the western markets. The Annual Ibrahim Index [18] ranking countries strength in terms of how each country is appraised in respect of sustainable economic opportunities, human development, safety and health provision, cites major strengths of South Africa in that, South Africa is more innovative and more responsive to customer needs as it focuses more on product enhancement and diversity, through offering the famous sun, sand, and sea product. Comparatively, it has poured more resources into aggressive marketing and promotion. Having the strongest and fastest growing economy in Africa it offers an apparently safer and economically more stable environment. It lies on fifth place in terms of overall performance on the index. Zambia on the other hand occupying the seventeenth position in Africa

is politically stable hence; it is a safe and secure destination, has large game reserves in Luangwa and Kafue basins and also has the Victoria Falls on offer. The index places Botswana on third position after Mauritius and the Seychelles making it the most politically stable, safe and secure country in the region (<http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/interact/>. 2014).

Botswana boasts of large game reserves in Chobe National Park, which harbour the world's largest elephant population and the Okavango National Park. To add to this it has a stable economy, being the world's largest producer of diamonds, and enjoys a strong strategic alliance with South Africa, having established the first Trans frontier Park in Africa, the Kgalagardi between the Kalahari and Gemsbok. Middleton [7] argues that websites and the so-called e-brochures are more flexible, more convenient, and in some ways more user-friendly forms of information provision than print. Zimbabwe is yet to rebuild strong strategic alliances with its neighbours and develop effective websites and user friendly e-brochures.

Responses in Relation to Promotional Strategies

In the survey respondents were asked what they thought about the efforts of the ZTA offices in China and Malaysia and what improvements could be effected to improve Zimbabwe as a destination for the Asian market.

All respondents cited lack of publicity for Zimbabwe in China as a hindrance to travel to the country. They mentioned that there is no literature and brochure material available for the travellers. This situation was further reiterated by the Chinese delegation at a debriefing session in Harare when they cited lack of brochure kits written in Chinese. One respondent added, "*Zimbabwe needs to come up with a new slogan and argued that the existing slogan, 'A world of Wonders' under the current economic climate, had outlived its usefulness*". Respondents observed that the image of the country was said to be at rock bottom even in the Chinese market. Negative perceptions about the safety of travelling on Air Zimbabwe were also cited, where lack of Jet A1 fuel had compounded the problem and they mentioned the many cancelled flights at short notice as responsible for inconveniencing travellers.

Comments on Distribution Strategies of the Zimbabwean Product in China

When respondents were asked to comment on what they viewed as the shortcomings in the packaging of Zimbabwean tours for the Chinese by and large they brought up the idea that there was an urgent need to improve on the range and quality of information given to customers, and its distribution channels. Some suggested the use of electronic brochures and web sites as an alternative likely to lure the Chinese market. They even suggested that the CD-ROM covering Zimbabwe or other brochure material was outdated and needed to be translated into Chinese.

Recommendation on Pricing Strategies

Respondents were asked to comment on how the Zimbabwean products pricing was perceived on the Chinese market, and whether they were happy with their own pricing. They pointed out that promotional focus should be on value for money rather than price. It has been observed that the Chinese travel in groups, sometimes as families, and as a result it becomes pertinent to introduce more of group fares, based on market penetration pricing techniques. Quite a few of them then cited the need to exploit the Chinese love for shopping and gambling. However, at a debrief in Harare soon after the Harare Travel Expo a delegate from Malaysia was quoted as saying, "It costs US\$20 to ride an elephant in Zimbabwe which would only cost US\$0.20 to ride in Malaysia". Delegates from China commented that, "In terms of pricing Zimbabwe is as good as Europe". They mentioned that a lot of artefacts from Zimbabwe are heavy. Clearly, there is a need for the carriers to give pertinent baggage allowances for such goods in order to support tourist shopping as Zimbabwe is endowed with a wide variety of traditional products such as wood and stone carvings, Nyaminyami sticks, unique embroidery, basketry, beads, and Zimbabwean design fabrics. Recommendations from respondents reiterated administering a uniform pricing system for both resort areas and cities, to achieve similar prices whereby all payments would have to be made in one currency for all services rendered. Furthermore, respondents mentioned intermittent shortages of fuel as a big problem, and added that, fuel is more expensive in Zimbabwe than in Europe or the US. The four tier pricing system widely used before the introduction of the multi-currency system was perceived by respondents as discriminatory and responsible for making the product expensive.

Accessibility into Zimbabwe

Asked about the performance of Air Zimbabwe and suggestions to improvements on accessibility

options, Respondents cited immigration formalities as a problem. Chinese as well as all other Asian countries require visas to enter Zimbabwe. There is need to implement a seamless and hassle-free immigration system with no visas for the tourists they argued. Chinese tourists have the added problem that they come from a vast country and visas are only obtainable in Beijing. It becomes costly for them to travel to the capital to obtain visas before their holidays. There are no visa requirements for Chinese tourists to Zambia they said. Other respondents rallied behind the uni-visa system for the SADC region to enable visitors to enjoy multiple destinations on one visa and also be able to visit the Trans-frontier Parks with relative ease. Three leading tour operators suggested introducing private charter flights between China and Zimbabwe. This is in line with the anticipated high volumes of low priced tour packages. This strategy also calls for a proactive development of air routes to offer regular, affordable air access to the attractions in Zimbabwe. One of them went further to cite the timing of flights to allow for a longer length of stay or connection to other destinations in the region. One-weekly-flights allow for only one week's stay when the visitors need flexibility in their arrangements.

On the question of infrastructure, respondents brought up the need to maintain the roads and infrastructure networks by removing the numerous potholes in the cities and main roads. They were worried about the lack of a coherent system of signage with some of them arguing that some of the road signs need to be in the Chinese language especially at entry and exit points.

Design of the product

Respondents asked for the establishment of a strong brand positioning so as to avoid Zimbabwe losing its unique destination identity. They cited the need for locals to train in the preparation of Chinese cuisine. Training in Asian languages and culture and general etiquette issues was emphasised. Further emphasis was placed on the need for game drives conducted by professional tour guides, and the distribution of a Chinese tour kit to each and every visitor from China. Mention was also made that although National Parks, in their bid to commercialise had to charge commercial rates, there is need to accommodate the domestic market in their strategic product development plans. Half of the respondents argued in favour of attracting direct foreign and local investment, but advised that one has to be careful not to allow expatriates to take over.

Concern was raised at the ownership structures of tour operations businesses and accommodation provision in Victoria Falls where the operations are now fully foreign owned. Some respondents opted for branding of tour products by inviting more of the international brand names like Sheraton, Ramada, etc. Respondents warned that there is need to strengthen tourism institutions especially local governments in order to contain the Chinese market. They emphasised the need for bigger boats to transport the bigger Chinese groups, especially in Kariba and Victoria Falls and for government to give more concessions for the importation of a wider variety of coaches for transportation rather than just for mini busses.

Conclusions

The results of this study uncover major challenges facing the Look-East Policy which need attention as a matter of priority if the policy should succeed:

- There is a language barrier, resulting from only a few speakers of Mandarin or other Chinese dialects.
- Eastern markets call for complicated dietary requirements to satisfy the Chinese and other Asian visitors which include growing rice, herbs and other special vegetables and producing the requisite meat dishes.
- A tourism policy with a potential to lead to mass tourism, through large inflows of visitors with low spending capacities can easily result in the destruction of the tourism product itself and the related biodiversity.
- Poorly managed air connections to the Far East, need revamping. The Harare / Entebbe / Dubai flight already suspended by Air Zimbabwe due to unsustainable loads needs reinstating together with other critical connections to China.
- Inadequate domestic air connections to Kariba, Hwange, Victoria Falls, Eastern Highlands and the Lowveld pose a serious threat to the development of internal tourism.
- National Railways of Zimbabwe's potential as a tourist carrier is not being exploited.
- Poor pricing policies in the multi currency system constitute a product perceived to be expensive by the Chinese tour operators and visitors themselves.
- Complex visa requirements where visas are issued at only two points in China, in Beijing

and online or through agents hamper on accessibility options to Zimbabwe.

- There are intermittent shortages of basic commodities, fuel, and water and power cuts, almost on a daily basis, which can cause anxiety among visitors.
- Stakeholders feel that the Look East Policy was imposed on them by government, as there were hardly any consultations with private sector stakeholders.

Tourist Enclave Creation

The continued modification of infrastructures and tour package programmes is encouraging the creation of tourist enclaves in Victoria Falls, Hwange, Kariba and Gonarezhou. The tourist enclaves will obviously cater for tour groups with minimal tour-host contact, but clearly pose the danger of fanning irritation, hostilities and antagonism against tourists [19] by the host communities. Irritation comes as a result of situations where fuel would be reserved for tourists at 'tourists-only' service stations within enclaves, where locals are not allowed access to such scarce commodities, or where tourists use their hard currencies to exploit the host communities, especially women who could be lured into prostitution and money laundering, and young men into crime and drug abuse.

Marketing Mix for the Chinese Market versus the Western Market

As the stakeholders sponsor more familiarisation tours to educate the Chinese on Zimbabwe's product, it is of utmost relevance that they also learn from the invited delegates about their special interests and preferences both during the tours and at the post-tour debriefs. Zimbabwe is not ensuring maximal use of the Travel Expo to invite the right mix of credible buyers, journalists and travel writers from China, and the region. There are few speakers of Mandarin and other Asian languages like the Korean and Japanese languages. Existing opportunities for learning the Chinese language through exchange programmes are not being exploited. Zimbabwe is perceived to be an expensive destination and does not offer value for money.

It is clear from the findings that the Look-East policy can only be a credible alternative when all the challenges mentioned above are tackled successfully. It is going to be difficult to come up with a product and a marketing mix that will satisfy both the traditional visitors from the West and the Asians at the same time, since one policy

advocates low visitor numbers of high spending and the other goes for high visitor numbers of, low spending. And to imagine mixing these two categories of visitors in the same resort at the same time would need a lot of product redesigning.

Evidently in order to realise any meaningful flows from China the government needs to implement strategies that enhance investment into facilities that accommodate the Chinese religion whose beliefs are wide-ranging and eclectic, deriving from several religious traditions, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and include appropriate offers in terms of Asian cuisine. There is need to develop tour guiding in Mandarin or other major Chinese languages and dialects and invest into shopping facilities that suit the Chinese market who also patronise gambling casinos. Brochures, printed materials and collaterals ought to be in the appropriate languages. More advanced technologies should be imported in order to enhance accessibility of the destination, addressing issues related to the issuance of visas for Asian visitors. It is important to modify hospitality facilities to suit the target market in terms of product design and pricing.

Educational and Awareness Campaigns for the Locals

There is need to educate and carry out awareness campaigns for locals so that they appreciate the Eastern markets, especially China and the visitors from the Far East. This can be achieved through encouraging local involvement in the assembling of specialised tour packages and product design for the Asian tourists. In order to achieve economies of scale Zimbabwe clearly needs to enter into some integration arrangements forming multi-destination packages with South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia. Visitors will then be able to visit two or more countries on one trip, having the benefit of

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enjoying a beach holiday in South Africa, viewing wildlife in Zambia and visiting the majestic Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe among other activities.

National Parks Authority's Policy

There is definitely a need to revamp the National Parks policy which was drafted in line with the low volume high yield policy, and hence there is underdevelopment of road networks in the Parks, limited accommodation facilities within the Parks, limited entrance points, high parks entry fees, limited viewing time and limited visitor numbers. There is need to develop packages that suit local consumption before the Asian packages are put forward to avoid possible confrontation and antagonism that might develop against the visitors. Care should however be exercised in order to mitigate the dangers of overuse, and product degradation, resulting in the deterioration of biodiversity.

Accessibility to Zimbabwe as a Destination

Chinese and other Asian flag carriers need to be encouraged to form pooling arrangements with Air Zimbabwe to overcome inaccessibility problems. There is need to liberalise and open up the skies allowing for charters into Harare and directly into the resorts if the high volume low yields policy is to be realised. Visas should be scrapped as they increase the cost of travel and inconvenience to the visitors. Zimbabwe should start seriously thinking about introducing charter flights into the country. It is imperative for Zimbabwean stakeholders to hold some workshops to come up with a unified pricing system that is competitive and perceived to be non-discriminatory. The multi currency system adopted by Zimbabwe in 2010 is a blessing in disguise as it has helped stabilise prices and stamped out inflation [20-27].

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