Legacy, Emotions and Reality: Asymmetry or Composite formation of Zimbabwe Tourism Destination Brand Elements

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Abstract

This study investigated on the sources of Zimbabwe tourism brand success focusing on legacy, emotions and reality. The main aim was to understand if tourism destination marketers in Zimbabwe have crafted the destination brand statement based on legacy that is in the form of natural heritage, by simply following their emotions or by drawing from reality of events transpiring in the country. The study applied a QUAL to QUAN mixed methods research design. In-depth interviews helped in grouping various elements that are regarded to have constructed the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand. The findings from the in-depth interviews were classified under three main headings, which were legacy, emotions and reality. Thereafter, a research survey was carried out in line with the quantitative research design so as to ascertain the most dominant sources for constructing Zimbabwe tourism destination brand based on the finds from in-depth interviews. The results from the in-depth interviews revealed the promising basis for constructing Zimbabwe tourism brand as culture, animals, landforms, vegetation, minerals, people, accessibility, infrastructure, education, hardworking and national flag. A further investigation of these elements in order to specify the precise ones to be applied for Zimbabwe tourism destination success, informed that the main factors to rely on are the people, landforms, vegetation, culture, animals and national flag. This shows a need for a balance between legacy and reality in order to brand and re-brand Zimbabwe tourism destination. The study recommended that there should be a composite framework that connects legacy issues and reality in the formation of a vibrant destination brand. Also, destination marketers should consider local people as the main branding element through high participation in the brand building exercise. There is need for effective sustainable management of natural resources so as to preserve landforms, animals and culture. The tourism destination brand should show a connection with the national flag of the country.

Keywords: Destination branding, Brand elements, Tourism, Destination, Marketing, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The concept of destination branding is important in the current world, since there is a growing global competition in the market for tourists to which is forcing destination marketers to improve on their market planning and strategies that will position and differentiate them from the rest (Kotler & Gartner, 2002). Zimbabwe like any other tourism destinations, around the world is failing to withstand the market pressures resulting in a reduced number of visitors. A market is complete

when there is an equilibrium of the forces of demand and supply. Tourism destination marketers have more control on the supply side of the market than the demand one, which they need to stimulate. They supply the offering of nature and man-made aspects which need to be branded and promoted effectively so as to lure and satisfy the tourists needs and wants. Mere branding does not strengthen competitiveness of a destination but rather, how the brand is presented in the form of using the right brand elements. As denoted by Fyall (2011:101) destination marketers should maximize the use of resources or elements that uplift their global reputation. The aim of this study was to establish the most relevant elements to fuse with the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand, so as to improve its market visibility, position and reputation. This was through categorizing the brand elements as legacy, emotions and reality. Even with a plethora of research available, the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand has generally been downplayed by negative international publicity emanating from socio-economic and political upheaval that are transpiring in the country since year 2000. As a tourism destination the country has developed its legacy mainly as natural gifts of flora and fauna. This is reflected by the presence of the world's most dominant 'big five' animals, the majestic Victoria Falls and other scenic landforms around the country. According to United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2010) Zimbabwe is rich in tourism attractions that are unique, attracting visitor from nay corner of the world. These attractions, however have become the most dominant points to sell Zimbabwe tourism destination and its brand around the world.

The worry in the current competitiveness of the destination and its brand is that, Zimbabwe tourism destination brand has been named from these 'gifts' just after independence in 1980 as "Discover Zimbabwe," then in 1996, as "Africa's Paradise," and the current brand that was introduced in the year 2011 as the "World of Wonders." The effectiveness of using legacy in branding the Zimbabwe tourism destination has to some extent proved to be in turmoil in improving the market position of the brand as there has been a continuous re-branding from one decade to another. One of the key success factors of an effective brand is that it should be consistent, so as to last in the mind of the target markets. Therefore, this study interrogated other elements that might support the legacy or work in isolation, in order to improve the global positioning and identity of the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand.

It was in this view that, emotions of both the tourism marketers and the tourists contribute to tourism brand vibrancy. The emotions of the destination marketers can be expressed in their processes of crafting strategies to counter competition and win the hearts of the tourists. Since many tourists have already reacted by not visiting Zimbabwe tourism destination, influenced by negative media publicity, this can be viewed as an emotional reaction to the media. However, there is little knowledge from existing researches on the effect of emotions on the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand performance.

Also relating to past-experiences and the current state of affairs in Zimbabwe, there are real issues influencing the tourism destination brand performance. These can be analysed from a socio-economic and political perspective, the physical environment, regional and international relations. They have an effect on the performance of Zimbabwe tourism destination and its brand. Though some existing researches have already divulged some of the effects, there is still very little research on the most dominant elements to address a desired and improved Zimbabwe tourism destination brand ascendancy. Therefore, this study examined legacy, emotions and reality as brand elements to consider in building a strong Zimbabwe tourism destination brand.

Literature Review

Destination brand elements

According to Schultz and Barnes (1999) in their assessment of the evolution of brand elements, they inform that the traders started using trademarks, names, places, designs of animals and people that they in order to differentiate their products from others. These products include ceramics, swords, silverware, leather goods and porcelain. The brand elements then help as drivers to connect and communicate to the customers (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011). There is need to understand these brand elements with reference to a particular situation, in this case Zimbabwe tourism destination brand and select the most effective element(s) for positioning and attractiveness. Pike and Steven (2009) postulated that an effective use of logos and slogans as elements for promoting branding, together with creativity of ideas can stimulate repeat purchases. This informs that logos and slogans can help in attracting consumers to buy and follow a certain brand. According to the American Marketing Association (2013), in the current days the use of a name, symbol, design, term and other elements help in distinguishing the products or services of one producer to another. Wee (2004) went on to announce that brand elements can help in building a brand personality adding on other elements such as music, imagery, humour and endorsers. In these discussions, there are no specific issues with regards to the effectiveness of the mentioned brand elements for a tourism destination. However, Blain et al., (2005:337) fused the brand elements in an effort to define destination branding by postulating that it is a marketing process that involves: (1) creating name, establishing a symbol, logo or word mark even graphics that identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) works on continuously providing the expected memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. This shows that the brand elements in general and from a tourism destination perspective, are mainly based on the name, logo, symbol, graphics, people and slogans. Aaker (1997) even added colours, price, and logistics of the product, price and way of communication to the generic brand elements.

Brand name

A brand name has been considered as one of the main branding elements that have been informed by several researchers as a tool for improving identity and visibility of a brand in its target markets. De Chernatony (2010) announced that a name is the most dominant source of information that is seen by the consumer. Day (2011) concurred by extending that a name helps as a presentation of a promise to satisfy the customer as given by the seller. Zimbabwe's tourism destination brand name has changed three times in three decades reflecting an ineffectiveness of the name. The question is what should be done to make the name more appealing. The current brand name is "A World of Wonders", which leave the market to ask about the wonders and even the meaning of a 'wonder' in the Zimbabwean context and its market.

Brand logo

A logo has also been identified as another common used element in branding. Kohli, Suri and Thakor (2002) expressed that a logo is vital in improving market visual identity of the brand. This means that it improves on what people see about the brand, that is tangibilising the brand and the services or products it represents. This is in support with Janiszewski and Meyvi (2001) who postulated that, many studies have concluded that the graphical design of a logo has helped in improving both brand awareness and its recognition on the market. Grohmann (2008) also extended another dimension by informing that a brand logo is important in revealing the personality of a brand that is whether it is sincere or not. Mearns (2007) further made an

evaluation by saying that a brand is more than just a logo, such that marketers should understand what the customers see beyond the logo. This might be the problem with Zimbabwe tourism destination brand in the sense that what is graphically presented on the logo is not what convinces and attracts the tourists. Kotler and Keller (2012) then denoted that the most effective aspect in brand communication with the customer is to address the issue of brand personality. Tourists might be going beyond a mere logo to the personality of a represented brand from a Zimbabwean perspective.

Brand colour

The presentation of most brands is usually enhanced by colours which have been announced by Bottomley and Doyle (2006) to have different meanings for the target market. This explains that every colour that is used in branding has a meaning that will be communicated to the target customers. There is a need to communicate the intended meaning of a brand by understanding the expectations of that market. There is little research available in relation to the effectiveness of a colour as brand element for the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand.

People in branding

People can be used as brand element representing the intended meaning of a brand in its target market. The reason being that people have a direct influence on the perceptions given to the brand personality (Levy, 1959). These people can be employees or the customers, but for this study the employees representing a particular brand have an influence on its market performance. This is supported by Harris and Fleming (2005) who announced that employees in a service sector influence the perception that customers have on the brand. To a greater extent, local people in a tourism destination influence market performance of a destination brand at any given period in time. Pringle and Binet (2005) took another view by classifying people as actors, celebrities and anonymous, to whom all have an influence on the market functionality of a brand one way or another.

To a great extent, the ultimate objective of using the brand elements is to achieve an improved brand association. Keller (1998) informed that brand associations can be grouped into attitudes, functions and symbolic aspects. There is a small gap in the current literature with regards to the relationship between brand associations and destination brand elements, especially from a Zimbabwean perspective. As denoted by Bond (2013), it is not only about the brand elements such as name or logo, but what they reflect in the minds of the customers so that they become brand associations. In this view, Bonn et al, (2005) the most important factor is to build a positive perception in the mind of the customers so that they patronize a destination and are attracted by its brand. Even with several researches on brand elements (Maehle & Supphellen, 2008; Dikcius, Seimiene & Zaliene, 2013) there is little information available with regards to the specific brand elements that can be used to improve market performance of the Tourism destination brand that is in a decline, more specifically the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand.

Tourism destination branding

The concept of tourism destination branding gained in popularity in the late 1990s (Oppermann, 2000), making it relatively new. The infancy in its development calls for extensive research in order to develop comprehensive views, models and theories for all types of emerging and existing destinations. This is because there is no "one size fit all" in developing effective brand elements. Zimbabwe's dire destination brand performance requires an urgent relook of the existing destination branding elements in order to come up with specific elements for brand rejuvenation. This was supported Hudson and Brent Ritchie (2009) who announced that successful destination

branding is now achieved through understanding the tourists' needs and creating a branding message that is appealing to their emotions and experiences. This is because destinations are a composite of experiences that not only satisfy consumption but as postulated by Gartner (2014) they have become a place for changing life. The reason for this study is to try come up with a Zimbabwean destination branding strategy, though Srivastava (2009) has mentioned that it is difficult to measure and come up with an effective brand strategy. Looking at the specific brand elements for the Zimbabwe destination may thus help in improving brand communication. As alluded to by Kolb (2006) it is through destination branding that the benefits of a visit and consumption will be communicated to the potential tourists.

Research objectives

- To understand the elements that can be used to brand Zimbabwe as a tourism destination
- To classify the suggested elements as either legacy, emotions or reality
- To establish the specific elements that can be referred to as sources for developing a vibrant Zimbabwe tourism brand

Statement of the problem

Zimbabwe tourism destination brand has changed three times in the last three decades calling for the need to re-strategise by the destination marketers. It has been reported that various factors including strategic planning anomalies, the destination's international negative media publicity and other socio-economic and political factors have contributed to the demise. However, there is no clear evidence and measurable factors established yet, on the real cause of this state. In this regard, the concept of branding in general specifies the relevant brand elements that help in improving market visibility and identity. From a tourism destination perspective, little research has been done on the effective elements to be applied in order to promote a positive performance of the destination brand. However, Blain et al., (2005) informed that it is important to measure the critical factors for building a brand. Thus, the establishment of destination brand elements might help in uplifting the performance of the Zimbabwe tourism brand. Hankinson (2009) postulated that there is a lack of appropriate managerial solutions in destination branding. This study therefore, will hopefully help in coming up with specific destination brand elements by grouping them under three main categories namely legacy, emotions and reality.

Research methodology

The research was based on triangulation, which applied both qualitative and quantitative designs in establishing the research data. The study was initiated by qualitative research which was then followed by quantitative research. The qualitative research helped in establishing themes for the study, that were then further developed into questions for a survey research complementing a QUAL to QUAN sequential mixed method. The use of a mixed method helps in structuring questions that are in context of the research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Population and sampling procedure

Qualitative research was used to establish themes which were then used to construct a questionnaire for quantitative research. In-depth interviews were used in order to support a qualitative research method (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The participants for in-depth interviews were selected using a purposive judgmental sampling approach and emanated from universities, tourism industry, marketing practitioners, and media industry. These were chosen mainly based on their expertise with regard to marketing of Zimbabwe as a tourism destination. The total number of the participants for the in-depth interviews were n= 10 as presented in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Profiles of participants for in-depth interviews

ORGANISATION	n	POSITION	INDUSTRY TYPE	DURATION	DATE
Zimbabwe School of Tourism and Hospitality	2	Lecturer	Polytechnic	40 mins each	22/05/18
Africa Hype Tourism and Resorts	1	Operations Manager	Tourism Resorts	1 hour 17 minutes	2/ 7/ 18
Zimbabwe Broadcast Corporation	1	Public Relations Officer	Media	57 minutes	4/ 8/18
Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality	2	Destination Branding Principal Officers	Government Ministry	45 minutes each	5/6/18
Zimbabwe Council for Tourism Organisation	1	Marketing Officer	Destination Marketing Organisation	1 hour 5 minutes	20/7/18
Midlands State University	1	Lecturer	University	1 hour 25 minutes	4/09/18
Victoria Fall Hotel	2	Marketing Officers	Tourism and Hospitality	40 minutes each	10/06/ 18

Surveys

A survey was done to in order to support the gathering of data for the quantitative research. The respondents for the survey research were drawn from the accommodation sector and resorts in Zimbabwe using a stratified random sampling approach. In each of the two sectors, a further convenience sampling was used to distribute survey questionnaires. This is because in both the accommodation and resorts respondents are always moving from one point to another making it difficult to determine or calculate sample size. Hence, with convenience sampling it was easy to distribute the questionnaires to those who were present at the time of the survey. The total respondents for the survey were n=120 that is 80 from the accommodation sector and 40 from the resorts.

Data collection

Since the study was based on both on a mixed methodology of both qualitative and quantitative research, the instruments for data collection were in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires respectively.

Data analysis

A content analysis was conducted for qualitative data that was obtained from interviews and this helped in establishing themes for this study. Analysis of quantitative data was done through converting frequencies of respondents into means and percentages that were then presented in the form of tables.

Findings and discussions

The results from the in-depth interviews helped in establishing the themes for the research as sources of brand elements that can help in improving market visibility and positioning of the Zimbabwe tourism destination brand. As announced by Flick (2005:17) qualitative research helps in working with real life routines in order to create new ideas. Since brand elements already exist in general literature, there was a need to create new brand elements specifically for the Zimbabwe tourism destination and provided by key people who are involved in the day to day operations of the tourism industry and the destination. The established themes were as follows:

- Culture;
- Animals;
- Landforms;
- Vegetation;
- Minerals;
- People;
- Accessibility;
- Infrastructure;
- Education;
- Hardworking and
- National flag.

A further research survey on these themes has helped in establishing grouping these variables under the three main headings which are legacy, emotions and reality. The results are as shown in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2 Classification of brand elements under legacy, emotions and reality

ATTRIBUTES	LEGACY (mean values)	EMOTIONS (mean values)	REALITY (mean values)
Culture	1.37	3.11	1.98
Animals	1.76	2.78	1.01
Landforms	1.55	3.93	1.29
Vegetation	1.85	2.96	1.13
Minerals	1.04	3.75	1.23
People	1.99	2.03	1.13
Accessibility	3.78	4.17	1.58
Infrastructure	4.11	3.04	1.20
Education	1.02	4.48	2.75
Hardworking	1.89	3.87	2.01
National flag	1.78	2.33	1.91

*** mean values ranging from 1 to 5 Likert scale with 1=Strongly Agree and 5=Strongly Disagree

The presentation in Table 1.2 shows that the respondents agreed that the **legacy** of the Zimbabwe tourism destination is as a result of culture (1.37), minerals (1.04), education (1.02), hardworking people (1.89) and the national flag (1.78). This is because they have their lowest mean value of

less than 3 under the legacy classification. The responses also revealed a lowest mean value in relation to **reality** for animals (1.01), landforms (1.29), vegetation (1.13), people (1.13), accessibility (1.58) and infrastructure (1.20). The respondents revealed that on the established elements there was no classification for emotions as they all have a higher mean value. This shows that the brand elements that would be used to uplift Zimbabwe tourism destination brand are based on the destination's legacy and reality. These responses were further presented in table 1.3 below in order to clearly classify those brand elements that can be used as legacy and as reality.

Table 1.3 Brand elements for legacy and for reality

LEGACY	EMOTIONS	REALITY
• Culture	-	• Animals
• Minerals	-	• Landforms
• Education	-	• Vegetation
• Hardworking	-	• People
• National flag	-	• Accessibility
		• Infrastructure

The presentation in Table 1.3 is a summary of the brand elements that have been propounded by the respondents to be emanating from legacy and reality in the Zimbabwean tourism destination. Under legacy, there is culture, minerals, education, hardworking and national flag. For reality, there are animals, landforms, vegetation, people, accessibility and infrastructure. These were further investigated as a composite in order to know the most dominant sources for brand Zimbabwe tourism destination. The responses are as presented in Figure 1.1 below.

Q: Which of the elements for both legacy and reality can be used to brand Zimbabwe tourism destination?
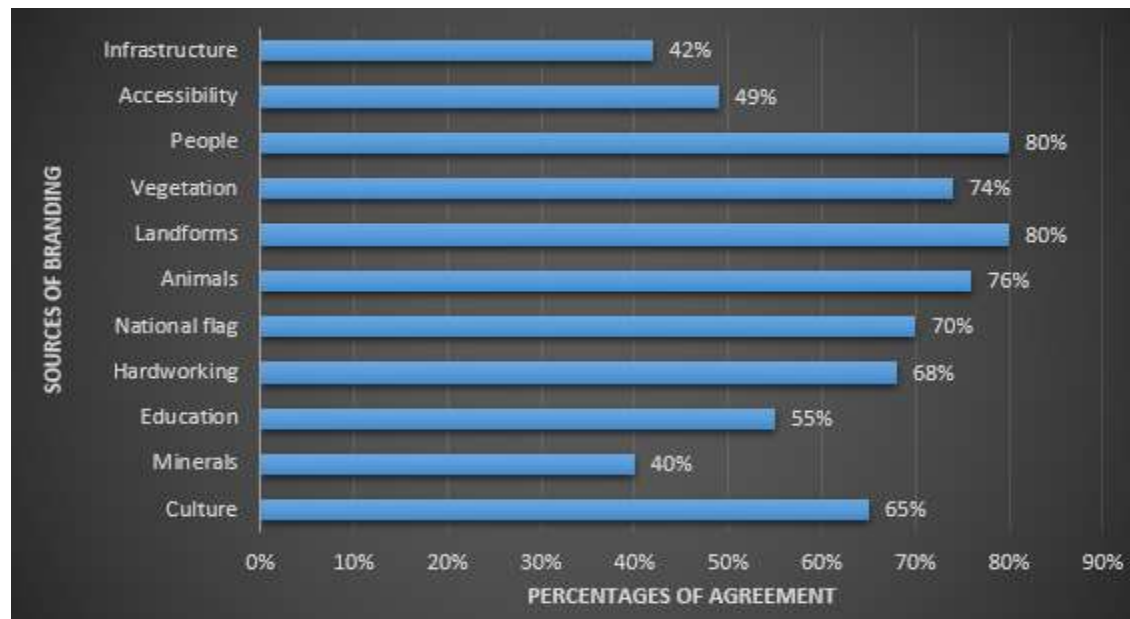

Figure 1.1 Responses on the elements for branding Zimbabwe tourism destination

The presentation in Figure 1.1 shows that the majority (80%) of the respondents informed that Zimbabwe tourism destination branding can be improved when considering people and landforms

as main elements to showcase the brand. This might be due to the fact that, Zimbabweans have generally been regarded as hospitable and peaceful over the years especially in a harsh socio-economic and political environment. Also the presence of many scenic landforms across the country which have been developed into resorts might be the reason for this high response. Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) postulated that the presence of a brand is supported by its core assets mainly the people and landscape. These should therefore be considered in coming up with a vibrant destination brand for Zimbabwe. Also, of greater consideration from the high responses is the animals (76%), vegetation (74%), national flag (70%) and culture (60%). These responses show that the gifts of nature that comprise animals and vegetation should be considered when crafting and re-branding Zimbabwe as a desirable tourism destination. This might the due to the fact that Zimbabwe is endowed with rare species in the form of fauna and flora. These can be regarded as elements of competency which were supported by Davis (2002) who announced that destinations should take advantage of various elements which provide a promise of value to customers and win when placed against any competition. Culture is also an outcome of creative tourism that can help in branding a tourism destination. As propounded by Richards and Raymond (2000), creative tourism attracts the tourists not only to be observers but also participants in the tourism activities. Various authors Kotler, (2000); Qu et al., (2011); Richards, (2007); Whyte et al., (2012) have all acknowledged this.

Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to establish the main elements that would be applied in branding the Zimbabwe tourism destination. Some classifications were established for these elements as legacy, emotions and reality. The initial findings of the research informed these. Under legacy there is culture, minerals, education, hardworking and national flag. There are also animals, landforms, vegetation, people, accessibility and infrastructure for the reality aspect. There was no agreed brand element to be classified under the banner of emotions. A further investigation of these elements in order to specify the precise ones to be applied for Zimbabwe tourism destination success informed that the main factors to rely upon are the people, landforms, vegetation, culture, animals and national flag. This shows a need for a balance between legacy and reality in order to brand and re-brand Zimbabwe tourism destination.

Recommendations

The study recommended that there should be a composite framework that connects legacy issues and reality in the formation of a vibrant destination brand. Also destination marketers should consider local people as the main branding element through high participation in the brand building exercise. There is need for effective sustainable management of natural resources so as to preserve landforms, animals and culture. The tourism destination brand should show a connection with the national flag of the country.

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