AFRICAN JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND LEISURE
2026, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 336 – 348
https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.743

AJHTL
OPEN ACCESS

Research article

Branding Zimbabwe through tourism and events: A systematic review

Talent Moyo* [1] and Janice Hemmonsbey-Lodewyk [2]

[1] Department of Management, Business and Marketing, Business School, Birmingham City University, Birmingham, United Kingdom

[2] Sport Management Department, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Event tourism is arguably a key imperative for destination brand development because of the socio-economic benefits attached to event related travel and tourism spending. This study aimed to address these knowledge gaps for Zimbabwe as a host destination to a series of annual events and festivals. This paper sets out a systematic review of research published about the event tourism industry in Zimbabwe and academic publications from 2012 to 2022 were sourced from various peer reviewed publications (n=98). Atlas ti. was used to code and theme the key findings from these articles to understand the influence of events tourism on emerging destinations such as Zimbabwe. The findings revealed that Zimbabwe's destination brand has been developed and changed three times, however, it appears that these branding efforts have not been too successful as there is no evidence either way, thus highlighting the gaps in the research scope in event tourism and destination branding in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. The recommendations of this paper are set out to guide stakeholders at various levels of government (institutional) and private (industry) on the potential for event tourism. Moreover, this study implicates existing tourism policies into the key opportunities for Zimbabwe's destination brand development.

KEYWORDS

Destination branding; Zimbabwe, event tourism; tourism development; systematic review

Introduction

There has been a recent increase in tourism and destination branding research, particularly in the context of developing countries (Boisen et al, 2018; Filo et al, 2013; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017), however, there appears to be a dearth of knowledge on tourism in developing countries as most of the published research on tourism in developing countries was done in South Africa (see Gozini & Tseane-Gumbi, 2017; Muresherwa et al., 2017; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2015; Scholtz et al., 2018), and Tanzania (Batinoluho & Basera, 2022). Generally, research in other developing African countries appears to focus on politics, economics and development (see Mhlanga & Ndhlovu, 2023; Mutongoreni et al., 2023; Nwanko, 2020; Simbao, 2017). On the contrary, destination branding and tourism research in developed countries has been prevalent since researchers like Boo et al. (2009), Konecnik & Gartner (2007), Pike et al. (2010), Pike and Page (2014) began to apply branding concepts as proposed by Aaker (1996) in the context of places. While Europe and other developed nations have been a contextual focus area for such research, the findings from such research does not translate well in developing nation settings due to the unique perspectives of African countries derived from their past. Researchers (Adeola et al., 2018; Ofori et al., 2021; Osinubi et al., 2021) argue that Africa has an advantage when it comes to tourism because the countries on the continent have wildlife, beautiful landscapes, and rich cultural heritages that attract tourists to the continent. Despite this advantage, findings show that Africa's tourism industry is less developed when compared to other developing continents, namely, Latin America and Asia (Adeola et al., 2018; Adeola and Evans, 2020). Multiple causes have been proposed for this discrepancy ranging from geopolitical instability to the lack of infrastructure and corruption (Osinubi et al. 2021). These causes are unique to the African context and thus present a unique perspective to Tourism and destination branding. This paper seeks to

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR'S CONTACT: Talent Moyo Talent.Moyo@bcu.ac.uk
HOW TO CITE: Moyo, T. & Hemmonsbey-Lodewyk, J. (2026). Branding Zimbabwe through tourism and events: A systematic review. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 15(2), 336-348. https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.743

ISSN: 2223-814X (Online) | © 2026 AJHTL

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encourage research in destination branding and tourism in developing countries in Africa and Zimbabwe has been selected as a case study that this paper focuses on.

Zimbabwe is a developing country in Southern Africa, that has been experiencing some Geo-political and economic challenges since the land reform in the year 2000 (Chibaya, 2013; Ndlovu & Heath, 2013). Economic sanctions, subsequent droughts and political instability have hounded the country and impacted negatively on Zimbabwe as a tourist destination (Gohori & Van der Merwe, 2020; Hammer et al, 2003). These challenges are however prevalent in multiple African countries, albeit at different levels and in different forms (Vines, 2023), thus similar geopolitical and development challenges can be observed in other developing African countries. Interestingly, there is some evidence of attempts to re-brand the country on the ZTA's official website (ZTA, 2022). However, there is no information on the success or failure of these re-branding attempts and there is no information on the strategies used to re-brand Zimbabwe, hence the need for academic inquiry and recommendations of processes that can produce beneficial outcomes. It is from this backdrop that this paper presents a clear outline of the extant research conducted on tourism in Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe's destination branding and the research gaps and opportunities thereof. The objectives of this paper were thus: to demonstrate the brand identity and brand image of Zimbabwe; to highlight what existing literature reports on the Zimbabwe brand; to establish the tourism impacts on the Zimbabwe brand; and to propose recommendations for brand stakeholders into best practices for brand Zimbabwe.

Literature review

Destination branding theory

An apparent increase in interest in destination branding in the context of tourism marketing has led to several ideas emerging in literature (Boisen et al, 2018; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019). Filo et al. (2013) are of the opinion that destination branding is a means to strategically position the destination to gain competitive advantage in the global tourism market. Developing a clear brand identity then becomes essential to attain differentiation for the destination brand (Camilleri, 2018). Furthermore, Kumail et al. (2022) and Shi et al. (2022) confirmed the relationship between brand equity of a destination brand and revisit intention as well as brand authenticity and revisit intention. Kumail et al. (2022) particularly revealed that brand authenticity is built by the consumers and more importantly consumers appeared to focus more on brand authenticity. Brand equity is often discussed as a product of its dimensions which include brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, and perceived quality (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Kumail et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2015; Phung et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2022). Moreover, arguments have been presented by Chen et al. (2020), Currie (2020) and Kumail et al. (2022) that destination branding is important for the overall success of the tourism sector, including socio-economic performance. To that end, Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa (2020) concluded that brand messages such as good climate, a stable money exchange rate and perceived safety were key destination branding elements that had the most influence on tourism for developing nation contexts and therefore, the destination under investigation. Additionally, Chigora & Zvavahera (2015) concluded that the brand image was the most important element in building a destination brand. They argued that the brand image was important in influencing the decision making of potential tourists. While brand image is argued to be a difficult element for marketers to manage (Lehto et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014), Currie (2020) concluded that exposure to the brand, had an influence on the brand image. Brand image is often developed in the mind of the consumer based on their own perception and experiences (Tegegne et al., 2016); the marketer therefore can only ensure that the destination's marketing communications present an appealing and authentic brand image as a key factor in destination branding.

Discourse on the engagement of events and events tourism in destination branding identifies co-branding between events and the destination as a tool that can be used to effectively reinforce or rebuild a destination's brand image, thus making an impact on the destination's brand (Bazzanella et al, 2019; Hemmonsbey et al., 2018; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2020). Chalip & Fairley (2019) identify an opportunity for host destinations to leverage events to positively influence the host destination's brand image, however this relies on a strategic approach to the planning, implementation, and the leveraging process of the destination (Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019). A study conducted on a developing African nation revealed that there is a need for strategic alignment between the government and the tourism industry's objectives as well as brand messages (Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019). This is supported by Ruiz-Real et al. (2020) who further propose that the destination ought to have a strategic plan to sustain brand loyalty through destination branding. Figure 1 below conceptualises the role of tourism towards destination brand building and particularly identified event tourism as it is a key phenomenon under discussion in this paper.

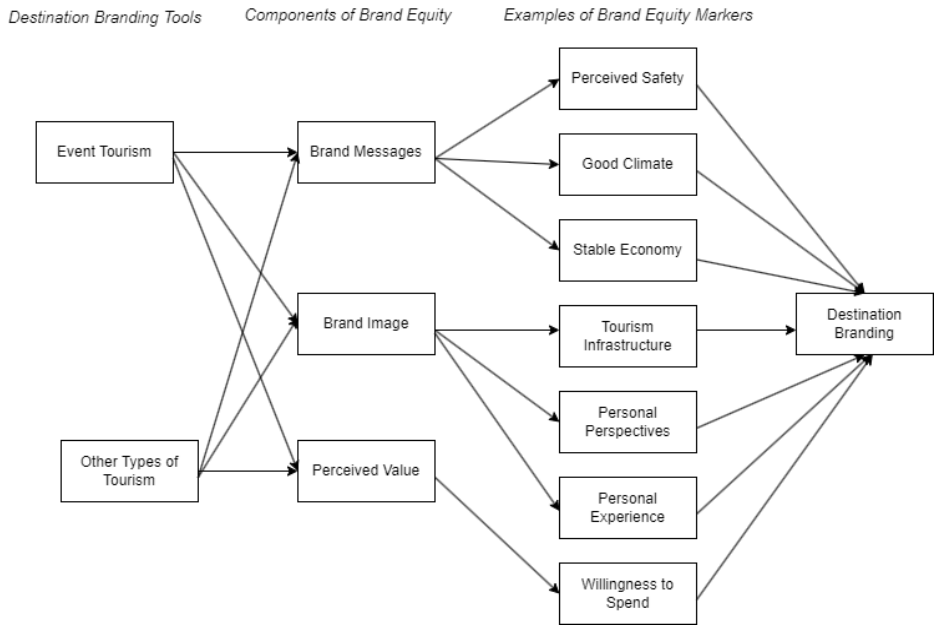

Figure 1: A conceptualisation of Destination branding process
Source: (Chigora & Zvavahera, 2015; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2020; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Kumail et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2015; Phung et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2022)

Tourism in Zimbabwe

The tourism industry, which is widely acknowledged globally as a sector that makes significant contributions to the global economy (Gohori & Van der Merwe, 2020; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2013) is arguably a sector that is important for the Zimbabwean economy. In the context of African developing countries, it is argued that tourism plays an important role in reducing poverty and promoting development in the local communities (Gohori & van der Merwe, 2020; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017). Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (2022) asserted that the tourism sector contributed 7.2% to the nation's GDP. Making it the third largest industry in the country behind mining and agriculture (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2022). Like many African countries, Zimbabwe was colonised in 1890, the country obtained political independence in 1980. Post-independence, the government focused on rebuilding the war- ravaged country and what was perceived as the key industries for the economy at the time namely, Agriculture, mining, and manufacturing (Nangati & Nyaruwata, 1994). The tourism industry was neglected and there was a sharp decline in tourism between 1980 and 1990. To revive the industry and market Zimbabwe's tourism destinations locally and globally, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority was formed in 1996 (ZTA, 2022). In 2013, Zimbabwe and Zambia co-hosted the United Nations World Tourism Organisation General Assembly (UNTWO). This event brought together world tourism leaders from 120 countries to discuss tourism development and had significant impacts on Victoria Falls which was the host destination in Zimbabwe (Njerekai, 2014). However, the highest recorded number of tourists visits was in 1995 when the country hosted the All-Africa Games (Chibaya, 2013).

Despite the realisation of the potential impact of events on branding Zimbabwe, only two major annual events were prevalent throughout the 1990s, namely the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) as well as the Harare Agriculture Show. The primary objective of these events was to increase tourism and create and develop business opportunities in the country, therefore they were hosted for purely economic reasons (Pindula, 2014). Similarly, the Zimbabwe Agriculture show is an annual event that is hosted by the country's capital city and was designed to promote farming in Zimbabwe and its related practices. Very Similar to ZITF is the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo. This event is organised by the ZTA and is held annually in Bulawayo. It is an opportunity for tourism industry businesses from all over the world to come together, showcase their products and services and build relationships and partnerships (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2023). The only difference between Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo and ZITF is that Sanganai is industry specific, in that it only focuses on businesses in the tourism industry. The Fair is the successor of Shanyai/Vakatshani, the Zimbabwe International Travel Expo (ZITE) that was held annually at the Harare International Conference Centre. ZITE started as a small expo in 1982 and grew over the years to become one of Africa's leading tourism showcases by 2007. While this paper acknowledges annual events related to national celebrations such as Independence Day celebrations, such events are not designed to generate a profit or entertain, they are therefore excluded from this paper. Other annual events

and festivals that are hosted in Zimbabwe include the Victoria Falls Carnival, the Victoria Falls Marathon, the Zambezi Cycle Challenge, Sip and Munch food festival and various sport events, most notably, the Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League (ZPSL).

Methodology

This study applied a systematic review into the investigation of the Zimbabwean brand through event tourism, in line with known practices of a systematic review process by Tawfik, Dila, Mohamed, Tam, Kien, Ahmed, and Huy (2019) in Figure 2 below.

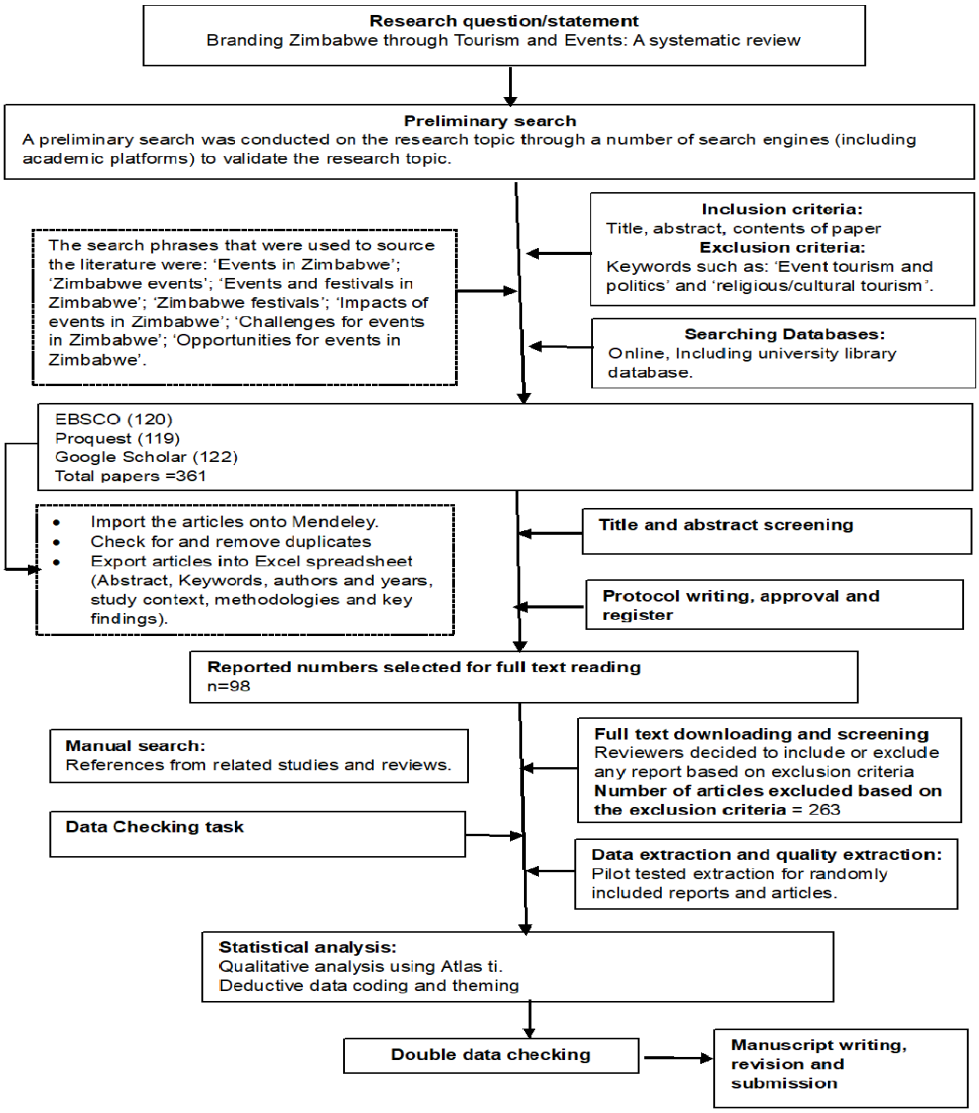

Figure 2: Systematic review flow diagram
Adapted from Tawfik et al. (2019: 2)

The study applied a preliminary search on the topic under investigation. This was to determine whether the research idea had previously been conducted in any journal article or related research publications. Subsequently, databases were identified where inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to develop appropriate keywords for searching the main research topic. To illustrate, the databases where the in-depth literature searches were performed were namely, EBSCO; ProQuest; and Google Scholar. The search phrases that were used to source the literature were: 'Events in Zimbabwe'; 'Zimbabwe events'; 'Events and festivals in Zimbabwe'; 'Zimbabwe festivals'; 'Impacts of events in Zimbabwe'; 'Challenges for events in Zimbabwe'; 'Opportunities for events in Zimbabwe'. Inclusion criteria were used to identify and select the specific articles that were reviewed. The articles selected were peer-reviewed papers published in academic journals, published between 2012 to 2022, the analysis of the articles for this study was completed in 2023, thus articles published after 2022 are not included in this systematic review. The search phrases excluded

were linked to 'event tourism and politics' and 'religious/ cultural tourism' as the focus of the investigation was on sport-specific related event tourism. The search criteria led to the identification and selection of 98 articles. Considering the protocol writing and abstract screening stages as outlined by Tawfik et al. (2019), the total number of articles uploaded and transferred to Mendeley software to screen for duplications and eliminate irrelevant journals was 98. There were no duplications and irrelevant journals which totalled the final usable articles to 98, which were then used for data analysis. The authors recognised the limited articles published on the topic in the said period of 10 years. However, it was important to keep to the theme of brand development though sport specific related events, to determine the direct impact of this industry for destination brand development. Abstracts, keywords, authors and years, study context, methodologies, and key findings of full articles were summarised in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as an initial analysis of the main areas of interest. The spreadsheets were subsequently loaded onto Atlas ti. software programme and coded through a deductive top-down approach. The inclusion criteria search made up the predetermined set of codes applied to the transcripts. From the codes, clear themes emerged that could be grouped as follows: 'Tourism in Zimbabwe', 'Events in Zimbabwe', 'Event Tourism in Zimbabwe', 'Zimbabwe's destination Brand', 'Events and Tourism in destination branding', and 'Stakeholders in Zimbabwe tourism'. These themes then guide the findings and discussion section.

Results and discussion

The findings of this study are discussed using the prevalent themes identified in the systematic review. Seven papers addressed tourism in Zimbabwe, while nine papers focused on events in Zimbabwe. A total of six papers discussed event tourism in Zimbabwe, and a further six articles addressed Zimbabwe's destination brand. The last two themes, events and tourism in destination branding as well as stakeholders in Zimbabwe tourism were prevalent in four and fourteen articles respectively. Table 1 below presents a summary of the articles that presented each of the themes.

Table 1: Themes emerging from systematic review

Theme	Articles
Tourism in Zimbabwe	Moyo & Tichaawa (2017); Gohori & van der Merwe (2021); Woyo, & Woyo, (2018a); Saarinen & Rogerson (2015); Woyo & Woyo (2018b); Makoni et al. (2021); Dube & Nhamo (2020); Bare et al. (2021); Kanokanga et al. (2014); Tirivanhu et al. (2016); Sai et al. (2015); Siwadi & Chapondera (2012); Mutanga et al. (2017); Mugunzva (2016); Saidi (2017); Matiza & Perks (2022); Sinamai (2018); Chigora & Vutete (2015 a); Trivedi (2013); Mandina & Du Preez (2022); Labuschagne (2015)
Events in Zimbabwe	Shereni et al. (2018); Batinoluho & Basera (2022); Chipangura (2018); Heinicke (2021); Chiweshe (2019); Tirivanhu et al. (2016); Banga (2021); Zigomo & Hull (2018); Bare et al. (2021); Daimon (2012); Manyonganise (2012); Novak (2012); Sadd & Musikavanhu (2018); Tshube & Feltz (2015); Kazembe (2019); Samhere (2017); Ngondo & Kiyueva (2020); Chiweshe (2020); Chiweshe (2019); Ncube & Chikuta (2020); Charumbira (2013); Nhamo & Magonde (2014); Straume & Hasselgard (2014); Zvapano (2017); Chiweshe & Dandah (2021); McDowell (2017)
Event tourism in Zimbabwe	Shereni et al. (2018); Labuschagne (2015); Batinoluho & Basera (2022); Boudjedra et al. (2016); Ncube & Chikuta (2020); Siwadi & Chaderopa (2012); Gwerevende & Rwaendepi (2019); Zigomo & Hull (2018); Nkwatsi (2019); Njekerayi (2014); Shereni et al. (2021)
Zimbabwe's destination Brand	Mirimi et al. (2014); Chigora et al. (2020); Chibaya (2013); Ndlovu & Heath (2013); Woyo & Woyo (2018b); Gohori & van der Merwe (2020); Vines (2023); Chigora & Zvavahera (2015); Chigora et al (2019); Mandina & Du Preez (2022); Chigora & Katsande (2021); Muguwu (2012); Chikafu et al. (2014); Nyambi (2020); Heinecke (2021); Garcia-Ponce & Pasquale (2015); Hossain et al. (2018); Woyo et al. (2019); Chigora & Vutete (2015b); Ncube (2014); Novak (2012); Zvanaka et al. (2017)
Events and Tourism in destination branding	Shereni et al. (2018); Sadd & Musikavanhu (2018); Banga (2021); Eluwole, et al. (2022); Shereni et al. (2021); Chibaya (2013); Kladou & Kehagias (2014); Kumail et al. (2022); Lu et al. (2015); Phung et al. (2019); Shi et al. (2022); Peta (2016)
Stakeholders in Zimbabwe tourism	Jesca et al. (2014); Zvapano (2017); Ngondo & Klyueva (2020); Straume & Hasselgård, (2014); Sai et al. (2015); Mirimi et al, (2014) Mapira & Hood (2018); Mazhambe (2017); Chikure (2020);

Source: Authors

There is a general increase in interest in event tourism and destination branding as Figure 3 below shows an increase in the number of publications in the field over the last 10 years (2012-2022). The analysis of these articles was completed in 2023, thus articles published after 2022 are not included in this review. The research represented in this figure covers the themes of interest in this research.

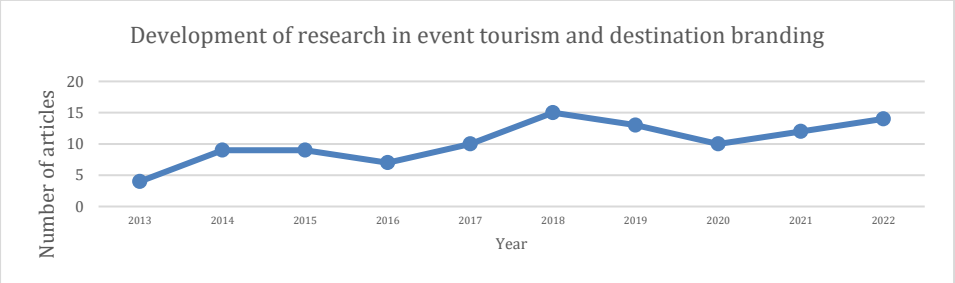

Figure 3: Development of research in event tourism and destination branding
Source: Authors

Zimbabwe's destination brand

A total of 14 articles were identified that focused on Zimbabwe's destination brand. The articles all highlighted that Zimbabwe's brand is viewed negatively, noting that there has been a significant change in

Zimbabwe's brand image sighting geopolitical challenges (Chibaya, 2013; Ndlovu &Heath, 2013; Woyo & Woyo, 2018a), continuous draughts (Gohori & van der Merwe, 2020; Hammer et al., 2003) and economic challenges (Chibaya, 2013; Ndlovu & Heath, 2013; Vines, 2023), as the causes of the negative change in the brand image. Meanwhile, Chigora & Zvavahera (2015) point out that Zimbabwe as a tourism destination has undergone rebranding three times, in 1980, 1996 and 2011, however, there appears to have been little success with the three brands that were created for the country. Post-colonial Zimbabwe in 1980 used the brand 'Discover Zimbabwe', however this brand was not very successful as Mirimi et al. (2014) recognised that this brand was characterised by images of economic challenges therefore the brand messages relating to the destination/ tourism appeal were not attractive to potential tourists. Chigora & Zvavahera (2015) further highlighted that there was a general lack of synergy between the authorities and the industry stakeholders, which led to the failure of this re-imagined brand. Moreover, Chigora et al., (2019) found that while the brand personality of Zimbabwe as a tourism destination was accommodating as it catered to a large variety of tourist needs, tourists' perceptions of the destination brand personality were different and contradictory and ranged from hostile to friendly and accommodating. This highlighted the need for improved brand management. Traditionally Zimbabwe's tourism industry has revolved around natural tourist attractions such as the Victoria Falls, the Chinhoyi Caves and the national parks which host wildlife, this in addition to historical monuments like the Great Zimbabwe ruins (Ndlovu & Heath, 2013) drove Zimbabwe's brand image. Based on these natural tourist attractions, in particular the Victoria Falls which was classified as one of the world's seven wonders and the wildlife, Zimbabwe was branded 'Zimbabwe, Africa's Paradise' in 1996. This new branding attempt was not very successful as discussed above (see: Mirimi et al., 2014) resultantly the country went through a third re-branding process in 2011 (Chigora & Zvavahera, 2015).

Prior to the 2000 land reform, the country's tourism industry was developing steadily, however, after the land reform, the country's image became one associated with violence and instability which led to a sharp decline in tourist visits (Chibaya, 2013; Ndlovu & Heath, 2013). Interestingly, recent research (Mandina & Du Preez, 2022) proposes that effective brand awareness and competitiveness have more impact on brand messages, thus can be used to alleviate perceived risk factors and influence a positive brand image. Chigora & Katsande (2021) further propose that improved services, strategic partnerships with global travel agencies, engaging e-customer service systems and improved facilities in addition the traditional tourist offerings are key in defining what they have termed 'brand attitudes' and these then influence brand image. The ZTA attempted to change the country's image to attract tourism business, the country hosted a few Cricket World Cup games in 2006 as well as the Miss Tourism World event which gained the country some positive publicity (Chibaya, 2013). These impacts were however not sustainable as the violence surrounding the 2008 elections led to a further decline in the tourism in the country (Chibaya, 2013). Muguwu (2012) proposed that in 2011, the International Tourism Expo provided the ZTA with an opportunity to re-brand the country. The new brand 'Zimbabwe a world of wonders' was then launched along with attempts to change the brand image as well as upgrading the tourism experiences and products offered by the country (Muguwu, 2012). Mirimi et al. (2014) investigated the perceptions of industry stakeholders on this re-branding of Zimbabwe as a tourism destination. Their study revealed that industry stakeholders were consulted on the policy and partnerships, however the implementation was not well conducted. Furthermore, the study revealed that this new brand addressed several aspects like economic and destination accessibility, which are aspects that the previous branding process had overlooked. It appears then that stakeholder relationships were more important than individual extended aspects of the brand (Chikafu et al., 2014). While there is scarce evidence of the success or failures of these branding attempts, Chigora & Zvavahera (2015) propose that there is a lack of communication between the ZTA and the relevant stakeholders in the industry, hence the brand messages are not effectively communicated to the potential market. This premise underscores the findings of Mirimi (2014) who concluded that industry stakeholders were imperative in creating a positive brand image and increasing brand awareness as well as in managing brand value. Additionally, based on the discussion, it is apparent that sport events and festivals can be engaged towards branding Zimbabwe. As Zimbabwe is co-hosting the 2027 Cricket World Cup alongside Namibia and South Africa, this sport event has the potential to have a significant impact on the Zimbabwe brand.

The development of event tourism and branding Zimbabwe

Event tourism was a recurring theme in 19 of the examined articles with Batinoluho & Basera, (2022), Ncube & Chikuta, (2020), Shereni et al. (2018) and Shereni et al. (2021) reporting an increase not only in the awareness of the role of events in the tourism industry but identifying an increased interest from researchers. Furthermore, it was evident that events have a significant impact on tourism and by extension on the economy and brand image of the country. One quote from an article articulates this well when it says, "…festivals have enormous contribution in the growth and development of tourism sector. Festivals draw tourists, where in turn tourists spend money, which enhances the local economy equally on and off the

festival place." (Batinoluho & Basera, 2022:31). This article further argues that events present an extension on the tourism offerings of the destination therefore events play a role on the economic development of the country. In addition to international tourism, (Ncube & Chikuta, 2020) propose that events are responsible for a noted recent increase in local tourism as more people are travelling to attend events in different cities, while there is scarce research that examines these numbers as well as motivations for the travel, a news article (Ncube, 2023) on the Victoria Falls Marathon (2023) underscored that the accommodation in the tourist town was completely booked a month before the event, hence providing evidence to support the claims by (Ncube & Chikuta, 2020). Moreover, there is a lack of information on the international attendance of these events; hence there is an opportunity to address this gap in literature.

This is particularly interesting for this study as earlier research by Chibaya (2013) argue that Zimbabwe has used events to influence the nation's brand messages, thus implying that events have been used in the process of branding the destination Zimbabwe. This is in line with the literature discussed that events can be leveraged for destination branding (Bazzanella et al, 2019; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2020; Hemmonsbey et al., 2018) as they can be used to build brand image, while influencing brand perceptions. This discussion suggests a link between events tourism and branding host destinations. There is therefore a case to be made for events primarily designed to attract tourists as they can also be leveraged to build destination's brand in the absence of major or mega events, which have previously been the focus of event and branding related discussions. Banga (2021), Batonoluho & Basera (2022), Gwerevende & Rwaendepi (2019) identify events and festivals that are hosted in Zimbabwe; however, their studies do not extend to investigate brand related impacts of the events on Zimbabwe's brand. Some of these events have a local market while others like the Victoria Falls Carnival have become an international music festival, these annual events are summarised in Table 2 below, this then means there is an opportunity to use multiple events in the process of nation branding. However, to be effective, the industry must be engaged to design frameworks that can be used to brand the country as proposed by Hemmonsbey et al. (2018).

Table 2: Events and festivals in Zimbabwe

Name of Event/Festival	Event or Festival	Brief Description	Scope
Chimanimani Arts Festival	Festival	Free arts festival that showcased all forms of Art and was designed to promote local musicians.	Local
Harare International Festival of Arts (HIFA)	Festival	Biggest 7 day arts festival in Africa that was established in 1999.	International
Midlands Arts and Cultural Festival (MACfest)	Festival	Four-day festival that showcases music, dance, drama, storytelling, poetry and visual arts and crafts.	Local
Zimbabwe Culture Month	Festival	Designed to promote Zimbabwean cultural awareness and spark conversations on inclusivity.	Local
Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF)	Event	Designed to create a platform to sell and purchase books	Local
Zimbabwe International Carnival/Harare International Carnival	Festival	Aimed at advancing arts and culture of Zimbabwe. Also designed to celebrate diversity and market the country to advance tourism.	International
Victoria Falls Carnival	Festival	Biggest party of the year in Africa	International
Victoria Falls Marathon	Event	Annual scenic race that is televised around Africa.	International
Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF)	Event	Annual international business exhibition which provides an opportunity for local and international businesses to showcase their products, interact and create relationships with each other and their publics.	International
Harare Agricultural Show	Event	Designed to promote farming in Zimbabwe and its related practices.	International
Intwasa Arts Festival	Festival	Celebration of music, dance, spoken word, theatre, literary arts etc, held annually in Bulawayo.	Local
Zimbabwe International Film Festival (ZIFF)	Festival	Hosts celebrity awards, premiers, discussions, contemporary narratives, documentaries and screenings.	International
Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo	Event	An annual Tourism Trade Fair organized by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. It showcases the widest variety of Africa's best tourism products and attracts international visitors and media from across the world.	International
Mine Entra	Event	Designed to encourage mining industry professionals to interact and promote mining in Zimbabwe.	International

Source: Adapted from (Banga, 2021; Batonoluho & Basera, 2022; Gwerevende & Rwaendepi, 2019)

Stakeholders in Zimbabwe's tourism industry

A review of literature showed a lack of information on the key stakeholders involved in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe, with 2 identifying the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) (Chigora et al., 2019; Chigora & Zvavahera, 2015; Chikafu et al., 2014). The assumption made at this point is there ought to be a government authority that governs tourism in the country, interestingly, only 2 articles identify the existence of this authority and in their conclusions identify the ineffectiveness of the governing authority due to lack of communication with industry stakeholders (Chikafu et al., 2014). However, The ZTA strategic plan (2020) identified the private sector, government, targeted potential tourists and the community as key stakeholders in the tourism industry. This is particularly concerning as it was previously highlighted that lack of communication with stakeholders was the main cause of previous failed branding attempts. (Chigora et al., 2019) makes the argument that tourism stakeholders should include tour guides and other tourism industry stakeholders.

Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality

In 1981, The government of Zimbabwe formed the Zimbabwe Tourism Development Committee (ZTDC) whose goal was to develop and manage tourism in the country. The committee was designed to manage the marketing of tourism products that the country offered both internationally and domestically. They were further responsible for the brand management of Zimbabwe's destination brand. In 1996, the ZTDC was transformed into the current Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), which is the organisation that governs tourism in Zimbabwe. The ZTA works with the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality to develop the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. The ZTA has made several attempts to create a recognisable brand identity and a positive brand image for the country in order to improve tourism as discussed earlier in the paper. Despite the importance of this governing entity, as mentioned above, only three papers (see: Chigora et al., 2019; Chigora & Zvavahera, 2015; Chikafu et al., 2014) allude to the involvement of the ZTA (formerly known as ZTDC). There is thus scarce knowledge in existing literature on the ZTA's policies and actual role in branding Zimbabwe which calls for further research to better understand their role and policies. Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry formulated a national tourism policy in 2012 to guide the tourism sector's development. The policy recognizes that the entire Zimbabwe is a potential tourism development zone. This opens up new opportunities to develop new tourism niche products such as cultural tourism, culinary tourism, medical tourism, industrial tourism, mega-eventing, agro-tourism, sports tourism, religious tourism, township tourism and historical and heritage tourism. This will overall enhance the competitiveness of the destination in the region (National Tourism Policy, 2012). The ZTA has managed to implement some aspects of the National Tourism policy through the introduction of township tourism in 2012. A search revealed no information about the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality except that it was renamed the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality in 2019. This is evidence of a lack of engagement by the tourism governing body with the tourism industry, to remedy this, the current study proposes that event and tourism stakeholders ought to be actively engaged with these authorities towards a comprehensive branding process for Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe destination branding process framework

Based on the discussed findings, the current study proposes that tourism and events can be actively used in the Zimbabwe destination branding process. There is a need for strategic planning that involves the necessary authorities namely, ZTA and the Ministry of Environments, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality; Events stakeholders (e.g. venues and facilities, event planners); tourism stakeholders (e.g. tour operators, tourist destinations, hotels). Strategic planning as discussed by Chigora & Zvavahera (2015), Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa (2020), Kladou & Kehagias (2014), Kumail et al. (2022), Lu et al. (2015), Phung et al. (2019), Shi et al. (2022) is necessary to effectively leverage events for destination branding. This will lead to a streamlined strategic branding process that can be used to design unified brand messages, and a brand image that can be delivered by all stakeholders across the event and tourism industries because their involvement in the strategic planning process means that they understand the brand messages and can communicate them more effectively in their respective spaces to potential consumers. This means the tourist will get the same experience in the event and in the tourist spaces, thus solidifying the unique Zimbabwe destination brand in the context of a developing nation. This framework is conceptualised in figure 4 based on the discussion above. The framework identifies Tourism and Events as the elements that can be strategically used to build event tourism. The engagement of government authorities and event and tourism stakeholders is shown to be necessary in this process, the discussion above has shown that this has been a failing in previous attempts to build a strong Zimbabwe brand. If this both these parties are engaged in the strategic planning phase then the brand messages from both tourism and event elements will be streamlined towards a sustainable and effective brand encompassing the brand elements (brand image, brand identity, brand value and other brand messages).

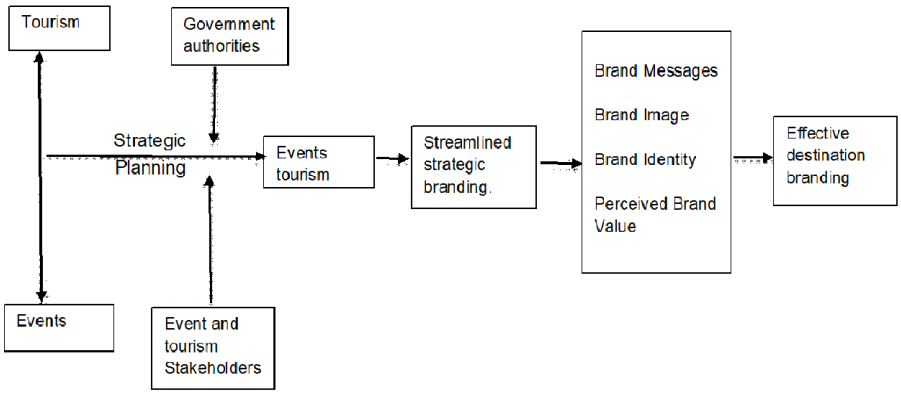

Figure 4: The Zimbabwe Destination Branding Framework
Source: Authors

Recommendations

The study revealed that three attempts had been made to brand Zimbabwe, and the lack of evidence of the success or failure of these branding efforts highlights the gap in the scope of existing literature and research. One of the reasons for the failure of the multiple destination branding attempts were revealed to include a lack of communication between the governing bodies and the tourism and event stakeholders. The current paper proposes that events and tourism should be engaged strategically in the Zimbabwe destination branding process. The paper further argues that based on the findings, the event tourism stakeholders must be strategically engaged and managed in all stages of the destination branding process. The key industry actors that influence or are influenced by the proposed value of event tourism based on the discussion can be identified to include the necessary authorities namely, ZTA and the Ministry of Environments, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality; events stakeholders (e.g. venues and facilities, event planners); tourism stakeholders (e.g. tour operators, tourist destinations,); hospitality stakeholders (accommodation, restaurants, shopping facilities); transport suppliers and safety and security. Moreover, the current study makes the argument that events play a significant role in tourism and thus can and should be strategically leveraged in the destination branding process for Zimbabwe and similar countries. The event leveraging activities must communicate a cohesive message to the consumers. Engaging the players in the event tourism industry in the destination branding process as shown in the proposed framework will lead to a streamlined strategic branding process that can be used to design unified brand messages, and a brand image that can be delivered by all stakeholders across the event and tourism industries because their involvement in the strategic planning process means that they understand the brand messages and can communicate them more effectively in their respective spaces to potential consumers. Unified brand messages communicate to the tourist that they will get the same experience throughout their interaction with the event and other tourist spaces they may choose to visit beyond the event, thus solidifying the unique Zimbabwe destination brand in the context of a developing nation and creating a sustainable brand image to influence re-visit decisions.

There is a need for future research on event tourism and destination branding in developing countries. The current study identifies gaps and proposes that they present an opportunity for future research. The study identified that there is a need for future research to focus on the implications of Geo-political situations on destination branding in the context of developing countries. The findings showed that there is a need to investigate the factors that influence the success of destination branding for developing countries. In the context of this study, it was apparent that poor communication between the governing bodies and key industry stakeholders led to ineffective branding attempts, however there is a need to explore if effective communication of unified brand messages for destination branding in developing countries will have any impact on the destination branding of developing countries. Furthermore, there was very little information and a few studies that identified key stakeholders and none that explored the role of stakeholders in effective destination branding for developing countries.

Conclusions

There is an apparent increase of interest in event tourism and destination branding, however, there is an opportunity for increased inquiry in the context of developing countries. The findings revealed that Zimbabwe's destination brand has been developed and changed three times, however, it appears that these branding efforts have not been too successful as there is no evidence either way, thus highlighting the gaps in the research scope in the event tourism and destination branding in developing countries such as

Zimbabwe. Moreover, the current study makes the argument that events play a significant role in tourism and thus can and should be strategically leveraged in the destination branding process for Zimbabwe and similar countries. The study therefore concludes that there is a need for scholars to engage in more rigorous empirical enquiry to inform practice and policy towards the development of the Zimbabwe destination brand.

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