

Critical Success Factors for Sustainable Agritourism Development in Zimbabwe: A Multi-Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish critical success factors that could enable sustainable agritourism development in Zimbabwe. This study was premised on the fact that there has been underutilisation of agricultural attractions for tourism purposes, despite the country being agro-based and having several farms that could be developed into agritourism farms. The study adopted a qualitative approach and a multi-case study design was applied. In-depth interviews were carried out with 59 participants that were purposively selected from Manicaland and Mashonaland West Provinces. The interviews were conducted between October 2020 and June 2021. The participants included 34 farmers, 10 officials from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement, five (5) from the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry and 10 tour operators. The in-depth interviews were triangulated with observations in order to improve the reliability of the findings. Analysis of data was conducted using thematic content analysis. NVIVO 12 was used to manage, analyse data and to allow easy grouping of a theme for weighting purposes. The results revealed five (5) Critical Success Factors for the development of sustainable agritourism in Zimbabwe which are: development of agritourism products, education of farmers, funding, marketing as well as collaboration and partnerships. This implies that the government and other relevant stakeholders have a critical role to play in the development of this tourism concept through provision of capacity building programs as well as start-up funding. The study was carried out in two of the ten provinces of the country which poses a limitation on the generalisability of results. Future studies which use more than two provinces as case studies are imperative.

Keywords: Agritourism, critical success factors, destination, stakeholders

Introduction

Agritourism can be defined as being a holiday concept that involves visiting an agribusiness operation for the purpose of entertainment, learning (Van Zyl & Merwe, 2021) and purchase of farm products (Chase, 2020). For the farmer and the communities, agritourism represents a means of diversifying farming activities and is an alternative source of income (Chatterjee &

Prasad, 2019; Colton and Bissix, 2005). The concept is a sustainable strategy that benefits everyone involved by creating entertainment and leisure activities for visitors (Tugade, 2020), and several socio-economic benefits for farmers and communities (Ciolac et al., 2019; Tugade, 2020). The synergetic relationship within agritourism is a key component of an ecologically and socially responsible tourism that uses and controls traditional resources (tangible or intangible) (Palmi & Lezzi, 2020). As a result, the nexus between agriculture and tourism is inevitable and there has been growing interest in the development of this emerging tourism concept (Awan & Saeed, 2016; Adom et al., 2021).

The growth of agritourism has been fuelled by trends in contemporary tourism, which have seen many visitors shunning conventional tourism and preferring instead, farm-based holiday experiences such as picking their fresh fruits and vegetables, experiencing authentic farm life and getting involved in tasting organic foods grown at the farm (Comen, 2017; Prasanshakumari, 2016). A growing segment of the tourist market consists of the health conscious, the culture conservationists and ecologists who desire to connect with local people and get involved in their activities (Ciolac et al., 2020). Visiting an agritourism destination provides an opportunity for tourists to indulge in meaningful experiences that are different from the typical holiday experience (Chase et al., 2018; Comen, 2017; Stokovic & Grzanic, 2016; Chikuta & Makacha, 2016). Moreover, there has also been an increase in fora (e.g., 1st World Congress on Agritourism 2018, Agritourism and Sustainability Conference 2018) that aimed to discuss sustainable agritourism development. The forthcoming 2022 International Workshop on Agritourism is evidence of efforts being put to promote agritourism development globally.

Developed countries have well embraced agritourism as evidenced by the volume of studies done in a developed world context (Baipai et al., 2021). Most of the studies on agritourism development have been conducted in economically strong countries, with focus on already established agritourism destinations (Bhatta et al., 2019). In the United States of America (USA), agritourism has been an important economic driver and it contributed a total income of about \$3.7 billion in 2017 from 28,575 farms. In Vermont alone, total income from agritourism was estimated at \$51.2 million for the same year (Chase, 2020). Other successful agritourism destinations in the developed countries include but are not limited to the South Carolina mountain region–USA, Italian mountainous regions, Santa Catarina State–Brazil (Chiodo et al., 2019) and some European regions, e.g., Bavaria and South Tyrol (Bosmann, Hospers & Reiser, 2021). The concept continues to gain popularity as it has become a travelling trend during the COVID-19 era which has seen long distance travelling being restricted (Adom et al., 2021; Bosmann et al., 2021).

In Africa, agritourism is still under developed and under researched (Baipai et al., 2021). Although studies on agritourism and its development in developing countries are increasing gradually, more attention is still needed (Bhatta et al., 2019). Some of the studies that have been conducted in Africa on agritourism development include studies carried out in South Africa by Rogerson and Rogerson (2014), Van Zyl (2019); Van Zyl and Merwe (2021); Eshun and Mensah (2020) in Ghana, Sawe et al. (2018) in Kenya, and Chikuta and Makacha (2016) in Zimbabwe. As the trend is settling in and the industry seems to be growing, there is need for researchers to extensively research how to strengthen the linkages between agriculture and tourism through agritourism enterprises (Chaiphan, 2016). The socio-economic benefits of agritourism: additional income, improved standards of living, creation of new job opportunities, conservation of biodiversity resources, preservation of local culture, respect for marginal rural culture and lifestyle (Leh et al., 2017; Tulla et al., 2018; Kunasekaran et al., 2018; Lago, 2017; Priyanka & Kumah, 2016) provide the developing world with a sustainable solution to woes dominant in their economies.

Agritourism has not been a subject of extensive research in Zimbabwe as evidenced by the few studies that have been undertaken on agritourism development in the country. The few studies that were found during the literature analysis include those by Chikuta and Makacha (2016); Chiromo (2016) and Tanyanyiwa (2017). The depth of literature on agritourism in the country is not sufficient to support its existence despite the attention that the concept has gained in contemporary tourism and in sustainable development circles. The tourism industry in Zimbabwe can benefit from agritourism given that the economy is agro-based and has several farms (Chitsike, 2003; Scoones et al., 2011) which can be developed and promoted as agritourism destinations. There has been an overreliance on nature-based tourism, and most of the marketing efforts are directed to the traditional tourist attractions in the country. Focussing mainly on these spectacular attractions and the continued talk of the very same attractions has led to the same being labelled as tired attractions (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016).

While agritourism has been said to be a possible alternative tourism product for Zimbabwe that has the potential to bring socio-economic benefits to farmers and rural communities (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016; Chiromo, 2016), not much has been done to promote Zimbabwean farmers to venture into agritourism. The tourism industry has dwindled since post-2000. The key driver for this economic collapse was the controversial land reform programme. The situation was worsened by a number of factors such as economic mismanagement (poor policy environment, unmanaged public sector debt), various governance issues (government controls), unpredictable exchange-rate systems, bad publicity on the international arena and economic sanctions imposed on the government (World Factbook, 2020; ZIMASSET, 2013). The average tourism growth rate decreased from 17.5 % prior to the year 2000 (ZTA, 2001) to 5.9% between 2010 and 2017 (ZTA Trends and Statistics Reports 2010-2017). The country has also not been spared from the negative effects of COVID 19 pandemic which severely affected its tourism industry as borders were closed and airlines grounded globally. This resulted in tourist arrivals declining from 2,294,259 in 2019 to 639,356 in 2020 (ZTA, 2020). Tourism growth could increase if the industry works towards utilising agricultural farms for tourism and seizing the opportunity on the market which has seen more tourists being attracted by the possibility of spending their holidays in farming environments.

The agricultural sector in the country has not been spared from natural disasters such as floods and droughts as well (Maiyaki, 2010; Mutami, 2015). This has led to a contraction of agricultural activity. Consequently, there has been excessive rural to urban migration as rural economies continue to deteriorate, leaving only the elderly to do the farming (World Bank Group, 2019; Bazier, 2018). Thus, development of this concept will not only benefit the tourism industry but will also provide the farming community with a sustainable alternative that will go a long way in creating jobs and generating income while protecting the environment and reversing its degradation. In view of this, this empirical study aimed at identifying the critical success factors that farmers, the government and private players have to concentrate on for agritourism to flourish in the country.

Literature review

The Critical Success Factors (CSFs) Framework, which was first introduced by Daniel (1961) and later refined by Rockart (1979) postulates that few factors are critical for the success of any business or project. These few factors should therefore be given maximum attention to ensure the business is successful in the attainment of its objectives. Rockart and Bruno (1981) further elaborated the framework. They defined CSFs as a limited number of areas, key areas or elements that management must concentrate on, channel resources to and skilfully manage to remain competitive in the market and ultimately become successful businesses.



The CSFs concept was formulated initially for use in the identification of CSFs in Management Information Systems (Marais et al., 2017). However, because of the effectiveness of this concept in identifying the key drivers of success, many researchers have employed it in their respective areas of study. Rockart (1979) proposes interviews as a method to obtain information on CSFs. However, a wide range of research methods that can be used by managers to collect data on CSFs have been identified and among them are, focus group discussions and literature reviews (Amberg et al., 2005).

In the tourism industry, the concept of CSFs has been employed in an effort to identify the key areas that enable tourism businesses to create a memorable experience for the tourists. Table 1 gives a summary of studies on CSFs that have been identified in literature to date. Further, table 1 show that the concept of CSFs has been extensively studied for the tourism industry as a whole and little attention has been given to the identification of CSFs for individual sectors such as agritourism.

Table 1: A summary of studies conducted on CSFs globally

#	Type of tourism	Author(s)
1	A review on CSFs in tourism	Marais et al. (2017)
2	Agritourism	Comen (2017), Chase et al. (2019), Kumbhar (2021)
3	Business tourism destination	Marais et al. (2017)
4	Emblematic hotels	Fuentes-Medina et al. (2018)
5	Entertainment tourism	Luo et al. (2021)
6	Farm tourism	Fatmawati et al. (2021)
7	Food tourism	Hiamey and Mensah (2020)
8	Hospitality industry	Jusoh et al. (2018)
9	Hotel companies	Carlo (2021)
10	Hotels	Alvarez-ferrer et al. (2018), Nazari (2018)
11	Mountain tourism	Mutana and Mukwada (2019)
12	National parks	Engelbrecht et al.(2014), Kariuki (2016)
13	Tourism	Shan and Marn (2013), Kerdpitak (2016), Chingarande and Saayman (2018), Bayona-oré and Autónoma (2021)
14	Tourism establishments	Nqosa et al. (2019)

Researchers identified four (4) studies that were conducted specifically to identify CSFs for agritourism. The studies were conducted in Indonesia (Fatmawati et al., 2021), India (Kumbhar, 2021) and USA (Chase et al., 2019; Comen, 2017). The CSFs for agritourism that were identified in these studies were human and natural resources (Fatmawati et al., 2021), location, financial analysis, profit centre management and contribution analysis (Kumbhar, 2021). Comen (2017) identified partnerships with complementary enterprises, delivering quality service, addressing customer needs and feedback, developing a strong brand identity and integration of visible value as well as value-added products into the enterprise's product/service mix. Chase et al. (2019) identified authenticity, willingness of farmers, family/staff involvement and excellent customer service as key success factors for agritourism.

It has generally been noted that previous studies on CSFs for agritourism development lack the application of the CSFs framework. Moreover, the results of these studies may not apply to agritourism destinations in Africa given the differences in their geographical, macroeconomic environments and stages of agritourism development. This present study attempted to fill this gap and contribute to literature on CSFs for sustainable agritourism in an African context with main focus on Zimbabwe.

Methods

This study employed the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) Framework to identify the CSFs for agritourism development by Rockart (1979) and Bullen & Rockart (1981). A qualitative

approach and multiple case study design were adopted. A multiple case study design enabled the researchers to analyse how certain factors affected the development of agritourism using more than one case study. Further, a multi-stakeholder approach was also adopted which allowed the researchers to have multiple perceptions of the individuals relevant to agritourism development, a broader discovery of the theoretical evolution and better understanding (Gustafsson, 2017) of the CSFs for agritourism development. In-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders. A total of 59 stakeholders relevant to agritourism development in Zimbabwe were purposively selected from Manicaland and Mashonaland provinces of Zimbabwe. The stakeholders included 34 farmers, 10 key informants from the Ministry responsible for Agriculture, five (5) from Ministry responsible for Tourism and 10 tour operators operating in the study provinces. Of the ten 10 key informants from Ministry responsible for agriculture two (2) were Provincial AGRITEX officers, two (2) were from Lands department and six (6) were District AGRITEX Officers. Of the five (5) key informants from Ministry responsible for Tourism, two (2) were Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) Area Managers, one (1) was a ZTA Research and Product Development Manager, one (1) was an Executive Director International Marketing and one (1) was from the Ministry of Tourism. The distribution of respondents' ages and gender is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' age and gender

Variable	Age (years)						Gender	
	35-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	60-65	Male	Female
Farmers	5	0	7	0	7	15	22	12
Government officials	5	5	4	1	0	0	9	6
Tour operators	2	3	4	1	0	0	8	2
Total	12	8	15	2	7	15	39	20

The interview guides were developed from the themes that emerged from the field and from the literature review. The literature that guided the development of the interview guide included studies on CSFs for agritourism development conducted by Chase et al. (2019); Comen (2017); Fatmawati et al. (2021) and Kumbhar (2021). The authors solicited the perceptions of the respondents pertaining factors that may contribute to successful agritourism development and the support required from the government. The interviews were carried out between October 2020 and June 2021.

The authors sought consent from the research participants through a consent form before conducting the interviews. The authors got approval to conduct the research from Chinhoyi University of Technology, the Ministry responsible for Agriculture and the Ministry responsible for Tourism. The participants' names were coded in order to hide their real identities and to ensure confidentiality of results. The following codes were used:

- MF-Manicaland Farmer and these were coded from MF1 to MF17,
- MWF- Mashonaland West Farmer and these were coded from MWF1 to MWF17,
- KMA-Key informant Ministry responsible for agriculture and these were coded from KMA1 to KMA10,
- KMT-Key informant Ministry responsible for tourism and these were coded from KMT1 to KMT5 and
- TO-Tour Operator and these were coded from TO1 to TO10.

The data obtained from the interviews was analysed using thematic content analysis. NVIVO 12 was used to conduct a word frequency count. The word frequency count was used to show the most frequently mentioned CSFs and their weighted percentages. Related factors were

grouped and their weighted percentages obtained from the word frequency count were combined to form one subtheme (Table 3).

Table 3: Subthemes and factors related to the subtheme

Subthemes	Related factors
Agritourism products	Attractions, activities, amenities, accommodation
Education	Skills, training, knowledge, awareness
Funding	Grants, loans, financial assistance, capital, funds
Marketing	Advertisement, promotion, promoting
Collaboration and partnerships	Collaboration, partnership

Results

Five (5) critical success factors emerged from the word frequency count that was conducted and these are highlighted in Table 4 in order of importance.

Table 4: Critical Success Factors for Sustainable Agritourism in Zimbabwe

CSF	Count	Percentage (%)
Agritourism products	56	94.9
Education and training	49	83.1
Funding	45	76.3
Marketing	36	61.0
Collaboration and partnerships	16	27.1

Agritourism products

From the word frequency count that was conducted, 94.6% (n = 56) of the participants that were interviewed mentioned the availability of agritourism products (attractions, accommodation, amenities) as the most important CSF that the farmers need to work on for successful agritourism at their farms. All the farmers that were interviewed, 100% (n = 34) were of the view that having a variety of products for tourists to see (farm based attractions) and do (farm based activities) will help in transforming their farms into successful agritourism ventures. The farmers who had farmhouses, 32.4% (n = 11) were of the view that renovating the existing farmhouses and converting them into tourist accommodation facilities was key to the success of agritourism development at their farms. Farmers who had established agritourism, 23.5% (n = 8) confirmed the importance of agritourism products. They affirmed that their success was attributed to having the products that the visitors require to enhance their farm holidays.

The key informants also confirmed the importance of agritourism products. KMA1 elaborated that farmers had to work on providing: ‘reception, ablutions, water, rest places, refreshments, accommodation and cuisines to visitors’. KMA8 and KMT1 felt that farmers should increase production thereby developing interesting attractions and activities for visitors. KMT1 noted that: ‘for an area to be attractive, it should have the attractions. This means farmers have to work on increasing production at the farm so that visitors come to witness their success stories’. KMA8 highlighted the importance of ‘unique things for people to see and availability of high value products for sale such as crocodiles’. KMT3 commented on the most important factor that led to the success of the agritourism project she has been to: ‘It’s about the product mix which should not be limited to agricultural activities only, but farmers must include other tourism activities such as horse riding, sky walks, sky run, fishing, caves and wildlife’. KMT4 expressed that: ‘Unique products on offer have contributed to the success of the agritourism project’ that he had been to.

To emphasise the importance of agritourism products, all the tour operators, 100% (n=10) indicated that they expected the farms to meet certain standards for them to start selling

their agritourism products. TO1 elaborated that: ‘We want farms with interesting attractions and activities.’ TO6 expressed the same views as TO5, intimating that: ‘We consider the farm’s degree of mechanisation and production efficiency. We would not want to take a tourist to a farm where there is nothing happening as this will give a negative image of the country as a destination’. TO7 who shared the same view with TO8 explained that: ‘the necessary amenities for example decent accommodation and safety assurance for the guest are crucial’.

Education and training

Education and training was the second highlighted critical success factor for successful agritourism development in the country as indicated by 83.1% (n = 49) of the respondents. Farmers not yet offering agritourism, 76.5% (n= 26) highlighted that they lacked the skills to develop and manage agritourism ventures. The farmers highlighted that they required awareness programs as well as workshops that would teach them about agritourism, how to start it up as well as how to manage it successfully so that they get income. MF12 explained: ‘I am not really sure what agritourism is all about’. MWF10 commented that: ‘I don’t really know about the concept. I don’t really know how I can generate income from agritourism’ and MWF7 commented ‘I am not well acquainted with the concept. I don’t have enough information about its profitability’.

All the respondents from the two Ministries also indicated that farmers who have potential to diversify into agritourism had not yet done so because of lack of knowledge of the concept. KMT4 remarked: ‘Do farmers know about this investment opportunity? Do they know that agritourism is business and they can make a living out of it?’ He affirmed that: ‘ZTA has a role to play in creating awareness and in identifying which attractions are in certain areas and what facilities are needed to complement such attractions’.

Funding

Funding was identified as the third, 76.3% (n = 45) most important factor necessary for sustainable agritourism development. An analysis of the responses given by farmers revealed that the farmers expected start-up funding from government. However, three of the farmers interviewed (8.8%) highlighted that the farmers’ own investment is crucial in the start-up phase as it shows one’s level of commitment. Four (4) of the farmers (11.8%) were of the view that funding could come in the form of partnerships with investors. The majority of the farmers, 67.6% (n = 23) felt that government should provide them with start-up funding. MWF9 pointed out that; ‘the government should set aside affordable long-term loans’. These loans would go a long way in assisting them to put up structures and other amenities as well as developing attractions and activities for tourists. MF1 stated: ‘The government is not supporting farmers who want to venture into agritourism. I have never received any form of support from government. All the developments that you see here I used my own funds and it will take me a long time to have everything in place. The bank insisted that I should put up something using my own resources before they can chip in to assist’. She also commented on the need for government to make the acquisition of operating licences from National Parks and ZTA easy and affordable. All the respondents from the two Ministries, 100% (n = 15) pointed out that government support in the form of long term loans and grants is crucial for agritourism development.

Marketing

The word frequency count indicated that 61%, (n = 36) of the respondents pointed out that marketing is a critical success factor. Farmers with agritourism at their farms had the view that they needed to increase marketing of their agritourism ventures: MF7 explained, ‘we have to work on branding and marketing so that the customers get to know about our agritourism offer’.

MWF10 shared the same view with MF7 and stated that they needed to work on marketing their farm and make it known to people. Those not yet offering agritourism were of the view that they needed assistance in marketing their agricultural produce which would in turn give them income to do other developments required at the farms. When asked to list the most important aspect that need to be addressed for him to successfully develop agritourism at his farm MF2 explained that: ‘the most important aspect to me is a market for my horticultural produce especially tomatoes because they have a very short shelf life’. All the respondents from the two ministries also identified marketing as a key factor in agritourism success. KMT2 highlighted that farmers need to ‘work on marketing so that they increase awareness to tourists on the availability of agritourism’.

Collaboration and partnerships

Collaboration and partnership(s) was the fifth CSF mentioned by respondents for sustainable agritourism development in the country. Sixteen (16) respondents (31.6%) mentioned this factor. MF2 pointed out the importance of partnerships with investors, especially for the construction of accommodation and restaurant facilities at the farm. He cited that: ‘Partnership with investors will enable the construction of chalets.’ MF16 attributed the success of their agritourism venture to their relationship with a popular lodge near the farm. KM2 also highlighted that; ‘farmers need to partner with accommodation facilities near them who can provide the clients and a market for their farm produce’. MF4 pointed out the importance of referral groups which have assisted them to get visitors coming to their farm from other provinces. She highlighted that, ‘we often get visitors coming from Masvingo who are referred to us by members of our referral group and when we get clients, we also refer them’. KMA4 mentioned that he has been to a successful agritourism project where a joint venture initiated by the farmer and a private company has led to the success of the project. KMA2 also explained that, ‘...an agritourism project in Manicaland has been successful due to their relationship with a popular lodge that is located near the Estate. The lodge has attracted a number of both local and international clients. Their partnership with other tourism operators (tour operators and travel agencies) who bring in visitors for special interest tours has also helped agritourism to grow’. KMA1 emphasised that, ‘Establishing strategic partnerships with tourism players and critical stakeholders is also important’. KMA1 also attributed the failure to have successful agritourism farms to a lack of collaboration between Ministries responsible for agriculture and tourism. The lack of collaboration contributes to conflict between focus on agriculture and focus on tourism. KMA1 explained that ‘Farms with great potential for agritourism are the same farms that have great potential for agricultural production so there is conflict of interest. Such conflict can only be resolved if the two Ministries work hand in hand with each other’.

Discussion

The results indicated that the most important CSF for agritourism was the existence of agritourism products. The importance of agritourism products is also emphasised in the existing literature. Liu et al. (2017) noted that the availability of agricultural attractions on farms has enabled farmers to transform their farms into agritourism destinations. Fanelli and Romagnoli (2020) referred to agritourism products (attractions, activities, amenities and accommodation) as satisfaction attributes that must meet tourist expectations. Chatterjee & Prasad (2019) emphasised that it is the link between travel and products, services and experiences in an agricultural setting that make agritourism. Mahaliyanaarachchi (2015) referred to these as requirements or basic principles for agritourism development which agritourism entrepreneurs must consider in agritourism planning. Although the main objectives of the studies by the mentioned authors were not to identify CSFs for agritourism development, they, however,

mentioned agritourism products as an important factor for agritourism success. On the other hand, the findings of this study differed from findings in other studies found when conducting a literature review to specifically identify CSFs for agritourism development. For example, studies done on CSFs for agritourism by Chase et al. (2019); Comen (2017); Fatmawati et al. (202) and Kumbhar (2021) did not identify agritourism products as critical. This may be attributed to the fact that the studies were conducted in already established agritourism destinations where agritourism products already exist and are well developed. It might also be because of the differences in macroeconomic and geographic environments of the study areas (Niorn, 2010). The results of this study are, therefore, important as they contribute to the literature on CSFs for emerging agritourism destinations that are still at the start-up stage.

The results indicate that education and training is the second CSF for agritourism development in Zimbabwe. The respondents expect to get education and training from the government, partnerships as well as from experts. Tugade (2020) proposes that education and training on agritourism should start from the institutions of higher learning and not simply be targeted at farmers only. Yamagishi, Gantalao and Oampo (2021) encouraged government to initiate farm tourism schools and camps where farmers can have an opportunity to gain new sights on farm diversification. The views of the farmers are in tandem with Ciolac et al. (2020) who concluded that understanding the meaning of agritourism is a priority. Ciolac et al. (2020) highlighted that this can be done through awareness campaigns, training and through creating partnerships. Dias et al. (2019) concluded that since farmers do not have the entrepreneurial skills and knowledge for non-agricultural enterprises, education and training become critical. Canovi (2019) is also of the same view as they indicated that farmers require an in-depth understanding of the economic benefits of agritourism, the satisfaction and enjoyment that it can bring and how they can develop it without threatening their agricultural activities as well as their occupational identity.

The results indicate that funding is the third CSF for agritourism development in Zimbabwe. This view by farmers that government support is critical supports an assertion by the Fortune Baines Insight report (2020) where government support is listed as an important driving factor for agritourism development. Ammirato et al. (2020) highlighted that lack of financial resources has resulted in failure to tap the agritourism potential in less attractive farms. They emphasised that use of bank loans should be accompanied by risk assessments as well as economic calculations. Although stakeholders in Pilving et al. (2019) agree that external funding is important in rural tourism development, they expressed their concerns about solely relying on such and they encouraged coming up with more sustainable income sources to fund tourism development in the rural areas. Studies that were conducted specifically to identify CSFs for agritourism development did not mention funding as critical for agritourism success, for example studies conducted by Chase et al. (2019); Comen (2017); Fatmawati et al. (2021) and Kumbhar (2021). This could be attributed to the fact that these studies were conducted in destinations with strong economies where funding can be easily accessed and where farmers have their own capital to start-up agritourism businesses. The results of this study are, therefore, of significance in geographical locations where farmers do not have capital to transform their farms into agritourism farms.

The results of this study indicate that marketing is the fourth CSF for agritourism development in Zimbabwe. Joyner et al. (2017) affirmed that marketing is a fundamental tool needed for agritourism growth. Although KMT1 indicated that they are marketing agritourism like any other product, Chikuta and Makacha (2016) are of the view that more effort is being put on the marketing of the traditional tourist attractions. Ammirato (2020) is of the opinion that there is fragmentation of promotion efforts by Destination Management Organisations. Equal promotional efforts for all attractions, including agritourism, are vital. Shembekar (2017)

and Comen (2017) affirmed that agritourism service providers must market the concept like any other service by preparing and displaying physical evidence which is the 5th P in services marketing. Melstrom and Murphy (2017) acknowledged that marketing is important, and they pointed out that focus should be on encouraging local tourists to visit farms and rural tourist destinations. This is in sync with the ZimBho campaign which focuses on encouraging residents to rediscover Zimbabwe as expressed by KMT1. Viglia and Abrate (2017) elaborated that such campaigns must include the cultural attractions that are within the same locality as the agritourism venture and the hospitality services available at the agritourism farm. However, Joyner et al. (2017), emphasised that it is important to understand the demand characteristics first in terms of preferences and motivations so that informed promotional campaigns can be developed. Failure to understand the needs of the agritourists results in the development of poor promotional and marketing agritourism campaigns (Joyner et al., 2017). Studies to identify CSFs for agritourism development conducted by Comen (2017) and Kumbhar (2021) mentioned marketing as a CSF for agritourism success. This implies that marketing is important for both established agritourism destinations and those still at start up stages.

The results of this study indicate that collaboration and partnerships is the fifth CSF for agritourism development in Zimbabwe. Gullino et al. (2018) recommends that farmers should increase their farm networks and improve on cooperation through collaborations with associations, learning institutions and public bodies. Khartishvili et al. (2019) on the other hand recommend collaboration amongst farmers themselves for effective planning and management processes. Comen (2017) mentioned that partnerships with like-minded entrepreneurs and complementary enterprises are critical for agritourism success. Farming communities can collaborate to form farm trails which require regular monitoring and maintenance by the farmers themselves (Khartishvili et al., 2019). Eshun and Mensah (2020) emphasised the importance of collaboration, sharing of resources and effort by stakeholders as being relevant in agritourism development. Such collaboration will ensure the successful development of agritourism (Kubickova & Campbell, 2020) and enhance decision making. Ammirato et al. (2017) encourage innovative forms of collaboration. However, Wezel et al. (2018) noted that collaboration does not mean stakeholders share the same notion, neither does sharing the same ideas guarantee collaboration.

The limitations of the study include use of qualitative approach only in identifying CSFs of agritourism development in Zimbabwe. Hence, use of quantitative or mixed methods would be ideal for future studies. Moreover, the study focused mainly on the supply side, that is, the perceptions of farmers and organisations relevant to agritourism development therefore there is need for studies that focus on the demand side, that is, the perceptions of tourists, their motivations and preferences. Furthermore, the study was carried out in two of the ten provinces of the country which poses a limitation on the generalisability of results. Future studies which use more than two provinces as case studies are imperative. Despite these limitations this study contributed to the broader field of agritourism. Of particular note is that the study is the first in Zimbabwe, hence will broaden the literature on CSFs for agritourism that is relevant to developing countries in Africa. Further, this study provides a baseline upon which future research on sustainable agritourism in Zimbabwe and other developing countries will be built.

Conclusion and recommendations

The present study investigated stakeholder perceptions on CSFs for sustainable agritourism development in Zimbabwe. The results revealed that the five CSFs for agritourism development in Zimbabwe are: (i) agritourism products, (ii) education and training, (iii) funding, (iv) marketing, and (v) collaboration and partnerships. The results of this research show that efforts need to be put in to ensure that agritourism products are developed at farms

and that farmers are given enough support in terms of: education and training, provision of funding and marketing. To increase agritourism products, it is recommended that farmers utilise resources that are available at their farms such as dam water to develop water-based tourism activities (like swimming, boating, fishing, diving, canoeing) and mountain features for the development of mountain-based tourism activities (including mountain tours, climbing, hiking, biking, and cycling, rock climbing and sliding). Farmers can also capitalise on heritage and culturally based activities such as local music and dance. The farmers can also conduct workshops on local food preparation, traditional preservation methods, pottery, basket-making and provide platforms for handicrafts presentations. In terms of amenities, it is recommended that farmers repurpose already existing farmhouses to develop tourism facilities such as farm restaurants and lodges (guest houses). They can also utilize outdoor space and non-arable land at their farms to develop campsites and recreational parks.

Government could consider offering grants or affordable long-term loans to farmers who wish to develop agritourism. Moreover, the Government needs to give proper recognition to the agritourism industry through providing statistics on the state of agritourism in ZTA reports, have a distinct section on agritourism on their website and setting aside an agritourism day to be commemorated nationwide. To increase education and training efforts, government parastatals such as Agricultural Rural Development Authority (ARDA) can take the lead in agritourism development by setting up model farms that provide farmers with real examples of how to set up agritourism businesses. Education and training programs for farmers could be provided for, locally through workshops and in national learning institutions.

To address issues of marketing, farmers who manage to develop agritourism are encouraged to register with ZTA so that they get marketing assistance. Farmers may utilise online marketing including farm virtual tours to put their agritourism farms on the spotlight and increase online sales of farm products. In this regard, ZTA is encouraged to develop guidelines for all agritourism ventures in terms of quality standards and facility development and provide guide books and maps of agritourism farms. To promote collaboration and partnerships, it is hereby recommended that farmers partner with other operators in the tourism industry (hotels and tour operators) who will help them to market their agritourism ventures and provide technical advice.

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