



# Sustainable destination image recovery for enhancing the performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

The main aim of this paper was to contribute to the development of a robust destination image (DI) recovery model for enhancing performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe. While the developed world generally enjoys both a strong DI and sound economic performance of the tourism sector, many destinations especially in the developing world desperately require sustainable DI recovery so that they can maximize tourism's contribution to GDP, employment creation, exports generation, poverty alleviation and the destination's happiness index. DI is thus an important antecedent of destination performance. In fact, evidence exists to suggest a link between DI and travelers' purchasing habits. Africa's image and tourism's economic performance, like Zimbabwe's have been negatively affected by disease, the perception of serious corruption, political instability, violent conflicts, underdevelopment, severe droughts, and extreme poverty. These dimensions have contributed to Zimbabwe's weak DI and poor performance of the tourism sector over the years. A structured and semi-structured questionnaire as well as a semi-structured interview guide were used respectively to collect data from international tourists, service providers and key informants in Zimbabwe. Data was collected from various locations from a sample of 311 and NVivo, AMOS and SPSS were used to analyze the data. The study revealed the major causes of the unfavorable DI and poor tourism performance and also proffered turnaround strategies. The implications of the study were that the overall value attached by the tourist to a destination was pivotal, together with the cognitive and affective images, in developing a sustainable model for DI repair which would be instrumental for the enhancement of performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** Sustainable destination image recovery, model, performance, tourism sector, Zimbabwe.

## Introduction

The Travel and tourism industry is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO, 2015). Globally, the sector contributes 1 in 10 jobs and US\$1, 6 trillion in exports, which is equivalent to 7 per cent of the world's exports and 10 per cent of the world's GDP (UNWTO, 2018). In 2017, the travel & tourism industry continued to make a real difference to the lives of millions of people by driving growth, creating jobs, reducing poverty and fostering development and tolerance (World Economic Forum, (WEF), 2017). Thus, the travel and tourism industry is a very important industry. It therefore requires urgent attention when things are not right and generally demands to be well looked after. Its importance also demands that governments invest time, money and other resources to ensure that their countries are competitive tourist destinations. In tourism, a strong destination image (DI) tends to be associated with a sound performance of the tourism sector and destination competitiveness (DC) (Hanafiah, Hemdi & Ahmad, 2016). Gallarza, Saura and García (2002: 59) claim that "there are almost as many definitions of image as scholars devoted to its conceptualization". DI refers to a total sum of beliefs and impressions about the destination derived from various sources of information over time (Xu, Elaine and Pratt, 2018). Destination image is defined as "a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing"



from various sources over time that result in a mental representation of the attributes, benefits, and distinct influence sought of a destination” (Zhang, Fu, Cai & Lu, 2014: 215). This definition recognizes not only the multiplicity of components (that is, cognitive and affective) but also the formation process of a destination image by the interaction between these components. However, this study used Crompton’s (1979) definition which regards destination image as the sum of all those emotional and aesthetic qualities such as experiences, beliefs, ideas, recollections and impressions, which a person has of a destination. Image recovery is often used to mean the same as “reputation repair”, “reputation management”, “image restoration”, and “recovery marketing” (Avraham & Ketter, 2016). It refers to the efforts to repair the reputation of organizations, companies, brands, and related entities. In this study, the term image recovery refers to the process of strengthening the image of Zimbabwe as a tourist destination resulting in a significant improvement in the performance of the country’s tourism sector.

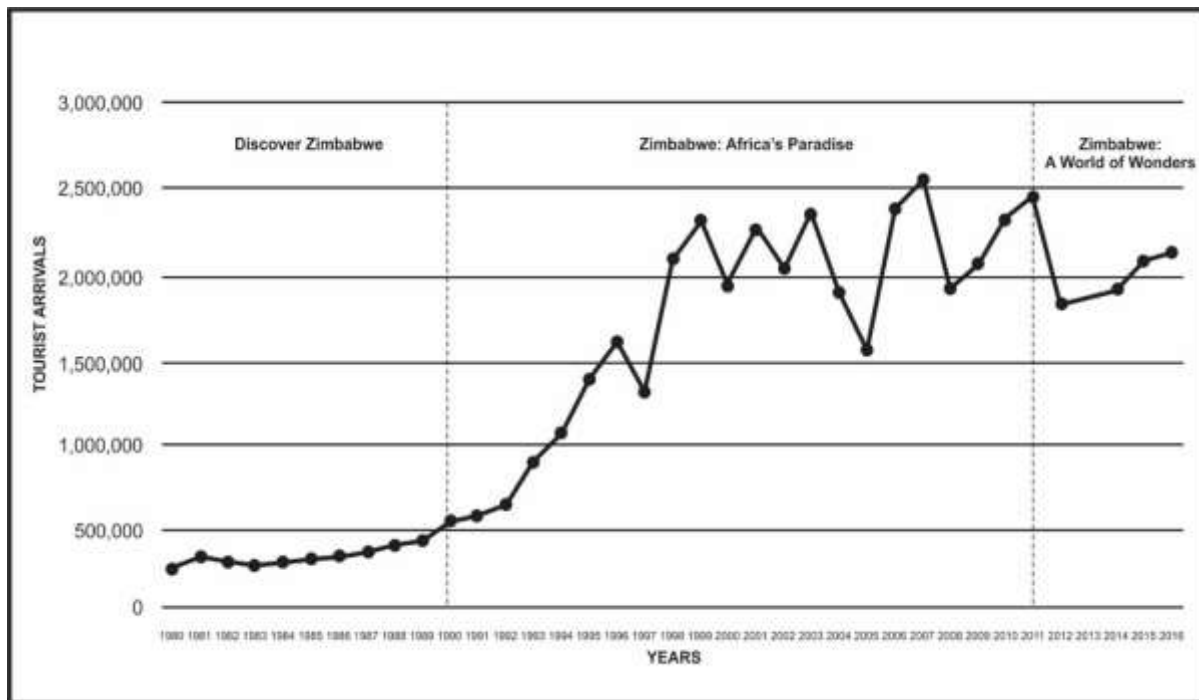
In the field of tourism, different authors have proposed different definitions of sustainability and sustainable development (Butler, 1999; Page & Dowling, 2002; Matsiliza, 2017; Baker & Mearns, 2017, UNWTO, 2017), but the most well-known is the definition proposed by the World Trade Organization (WTO) (2001) establishing that sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future (Diaz & Rodriguez, 2016). Baker and Mearns (2017) noted that the UNWTO (2015) has reinforced the drive towards sustainable development through initiatives such as the ‘2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development’; which places intense focus on improving industry performance within a number of areas, namely social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction; resources efficiency, environmental protection and climate change; cultural values, diversity and heritage; and mutual understanding, peace and security and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Sustainable tourism portrays an overall positive image for the industry (McDonald, 2016). In this study, sustainable DI recovery refers to a significant improvement in DI such that if there any variations, they are only as is the case with Mauritius, the Seychelles, South Africa and other similar destinations.

Performance is difficult to define (Dobrin, Popescu, Popescu & Popescu, 2012). “The notion of performance has an abstract character and its definition is made by reference to other concepts, on which we believe that performance is built” (Dobrin *et al.*, 2012: 311). In general terms performance can be seen as the result of activities (for example, of an organisation) over a given period of time (Illmer, 2011). In this study, performance refers to economic performance.

The idea of DI was introduced into tourism studies by Hunt (1975), Gunn (1972) and Mayo (1973) in the early 1970s, and has since become one of the most researched topics in tourism-related research (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). This is as a result of its link with tourism performance (Xu and Ye, 2016). DI plays an important role in determining how consumers make travel and purchase decisions. DI could affect his or her destination choice during their pre-trip decision making, overall experience and satisfaction level with the destination after the visit (Xu *et al.*, 2018). While a number of scholars have researched on DI (Sonnleitner, 2011; Kassaye, 2013; Ning & Lui, 2014). Rajesh, 2013; Moreira, 2014, Pratminingsih, 2014; Blazquez-Resino, Park, 2015; Muhoho-Minni, 2016; Rodriguez & Jimez, tourist’s 2016; Chen, 2018), there is limited research which has interrogated DI recovery particularly in the developing world where tourism performance is generally weak (Putra, 2010; UNWTO, 2010, Mann, 2012; Avraham & Ketter, 2013, 2016, 2017; WEF, 2015; 2018).

The developed world which is represented by Europe, the Americas and several parts of Asia is associated with a favourable DI and sound economic performance of the tourism sector while the developing world which is epitomized by the Middle East and Africa tends to be the opposite. Europe enjoys 51 per cent and 39 per cent market share in terms of international arrivals and receipts respectively and Asia/Pacific enjoys 24 per cent and 29 per cent market share respectively (UNWTO, 2018). The Middle East controls 4 per cent and 5 percent market share respectively while Africa enjoys 5 per cent and 3 per cent market share respectively.

Zimbabwe is yearning for sustainable DI recovery as partly evidenced by its failure to maintain a consistently sound DI and a decline in its travel and tourism competitiveness index (ranking) (WEF, 2011, 2013). It was 3.3 out of 7 in 2011, 3.3 out of 7 in 2013, 3.1 out of 7 in 2015 and 3.1 out of 7 for 2017 (WEF, 2017). Zimbabwe's tourist arrivals in 2017 (2 422 930) are basically the same as those of 2011 (2 423 280) and 2012 (2 422 930) (ZTA, 2016). This suggests lack of growth. Tourist arrivals for the year 2014 was 1 880 028 (ZTA, 2016), suggesting a lack of sustainability in arrivals and by implication, in DI recovery too. Contrast this with South Africa's tourism performance. South African tourism witnessed a turnaround with more than 10 million international tourists arriving in South Africa in 2016, representing a 12.8% growth in arrivals when compared with 2015 (National Tourism Sector Strategy (South Africa, 2016). The growth was equivalent to 8.9 million international tourist arrivals. South Africa has had a reasonably stable tourism performance and a sustainable and sound DI and hence was not really seeking image recovery. However, it seems to be ahead of Zimbabwe in terms of DI recovery endeavors.



**Figure 1.** Destination Image-Performance Nexus  
**Source:** Adapted from Butler's S-Shaped Lifecycle Graph (1980)

### Destination Image and Tourism Performance in Zimbabwe from 1980-2016

The period 1980-1990 was a time when the National Tourist Organisation (NTO)-the Zimbabwe Tourist Development Corporation (ZTDC), which was later to become the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), used the slogan: 'Discover Zimbabwe' to attract visitors to Zimbabwe. The 1980-1990 period was arguably an era when the NTO emphasized the cognitive attributes of DI. The cognitive component of DI refers to a person's beliefs and knowledge about a destination and its attributes, which together help to form an internally accepted mental picture of the place (Stylidis, Shani & Belhassen, 2016). Martens and Reiser, (2017) argued that tourism destination image research on potential first-time visitors should focus on cognitive attributes. Tourism DI research on potential first-time visitors should focus on cognitive attributes (Martens & Reiser, 2017). Therefore, the ZTDC was justified in drawing the world's attention to the country's attractions such as Victoria Falls, wildlife, Great Zimbabwe, Kariba Dam and others because most of the visitors were largely first-time visitors to Zimbabwe. This approach seemed to have been quite effective as DI seemed to be very positive and tourist arrivals continued to rise during the 'Discover Zimbabwe' phase (Figure 1).



The country had just attained independence from white-minority rule after a protracted liberation struggle. Most probably a good number of tourists were visiting Zimbabwe for the first time and hence were doing 'product trial'. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found cognitive images to be the differentiating factors for non-visitors. Hence, the likelihood of non - visitors to mention affective image attributes is lower as they are only influenced by secondary sources (Martens & Reiser, 2017). In fact, Martens and Reiser, (2017) argued that tourism DI research on potential first-time visitors should focus on cognitive attributes. It would appear that the period 1990-2011 saw repeat visitors coming to Zimbabwe.

Thus, it appears that the affective image played a notable role to lure tourists to Zimbabwe as well as to deter tourists from visiting Zimbabwe. The affective image dimension refers to the positive or negative feelings generated by a destination (King, Chen & Funk, 2015). The affective dimension also mediates the relationship between the cognitive image and the overall DI (Stylidis *et al.*, 2016). Abel *et al.*, (2014) posited that available statistics from ZTA show that during the period 2000-2010, Zimbabwe's tourism sector was negatively impacted by numerous challenges hence the lower than expected performance. Abel *et al.* argued that the major cause of the decline in the performance of Zimbabwe's tourism sector was the negative publicity the destination received which emanated from the land reform programme. Some of the reasons included the economic meltdown characterized by high inflation, price controls and exchange rate distortions. Thus, the strong DI which ZTDC sought to create and use to propel tourism performance could not be realized. In fact, Ndlovu (2009) seemed to have summed it up well when he said whilst Zimbabwe had branded itself as "Africa's Paradise", her brand equity was negatively affected by political chaos which marred the tourists' perceptions of the brand.

The period code named 'Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders' which started from 2011 did not see much in terms of the turning around Zimbabwe's DI and putting the tourism sector on a sound trajectory (ZTA, 2016). Some of the arrivals were even worse than those of 2006 and 2007. The combined effect of the NTOs learning curve and the cognitive and affective images could possibly have a strong conative image but this was not to be. In fact, ZTA (2016) noted that even its efforts to grow domestic tourism riding on 'Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders,' did not achieve much. The conative image refers to the behavioural intention of DI (Alvarez & Campo, 2014, McDonald, 2015). This refers to the action stage which includes destination visit and word of mouth which includes use electronic word of mouth (social media) (Kanokanga *et al.*, 2018). It is the end result of the decision making process where tourism marketers, destination managers and tour operators may initially influence potential tourists cognitive evaluations via information agents and encourage their affective images via emotional marketing techniques (McDonald, 2015).

A comparison may be drawn between Zimbabwe and Seychelles. Unlike Zimbabwe, Seychelles arrivals and receipts have generally shown an upward trend. Although Seychelles tourism, like Zimbabwe's, had some valley periods, they were only marginal. For example, between 2007 and 2008 Seychelles tourist arrivals fell by 1.4% (from 161 273 to 158 952) (The World Bank, 2016). In comparison to Zimbabwe, it would appear that Seychelles affective image between 2003 and 2011 was better than Zimbabwe's during the same period. Various authors propose that tourists use the cognitive image dimension to form the affective component of image which is expected to lead to the formation of the conative image (Matos, Mendes & Valle, 2012; Chen & Phou, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2014; Guzman - Parra *et al.*, 2016).

For these researchers conation is part of the image formation process which is "analogous to behaviour evolving from cognitive and affective images" (Gartner, 1994) denoting the "intent or action component" (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Understanding tourists' intention or the likelihood of visiting a destination is crucial for destination marketing managers. According to McDonald (2015), this information assists not only in performance forecasting of the destination but also the logistics of managing a destination. The conative component is arguably the motive of destination image; it is the end result of the decision making process where destination managers and tour operators may initially influence our cognitive evaluations via information agents and encourage our affective images via emotional marketing techniques (McDonald, 2015). However it is the behavioural intent to visit that positively influences the destination's performance.





## Research Objectives

The major research objective was to establish stakeholders' evaluation of the sustainability of DI recovery and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe. The specific research objectives were to establish the sustainability of DI recovery and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe; to assess stakeholders' views regarding sustainability of DI recovery and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe; and to recommend strategies for enhancing sustainability of DI recovery and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe.

## Research hypotheses

*H1 There is a significant positive relationship between destination image and the performance of the tourism sector.*

*H2 The affective dimension of destination image mediates the relationship between the cognitive dimension and the performance of the tourism sector.*

*H3 Determinants of destination image have a positive relationship with the performance of the tourism sector.*

## Methodology

This study adopted the pragmatism research philosophy. This philosophy is a position that contends that the research question is the most important determinant of the research philosophy adopted (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Thus, pragmatism is preoccupied with addressing the research question. In order to achieve this purpose, pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality (Creswell, 2017). (Creswell (2017) asserted that pragmatism applies a practical approach, integrating different perspectives to help collect and interpret data. In view of this, (Creswell, 2017) indicated that it is possible to work within both positivist and interpretivist positions if one is using pragmatism. The study used a mixed methodology and a convergent parallel mixed methods research design. The convergent parallel mixed methods design supported the research requirements. It was the most appropriate research design in that it allows for the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data separately (Creswell, 2017). The mixed methodology is quite appropriate when assessing the image of a tourist destination (Molina & Font, 2016). The convergent parallel mixed methods design helps to improve the quality of the study especially given that it is well suited to situations in which the researcher needs to rule out the possibility that something about the methods themselves produced the results (Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge & Wagner, 2014). The research methodology and research design therefore add value in terms of increased confidence in the research findings (Rodrigues, Correia & Kozak, 2016).

A combination of structured and semi-structured response formats was used to reduce interviewer bias, enhance clarity of responses and provide a broader scope for respondents (Kyalo & Katuse, 2013). Qualitative data from service providers and key informants was collected concurrently with quantitative data from international tourists. The study was conducted between May 10 and October 8, 2018.

Purposive sampling, specifically judgement sampling was used to select both service providers and key informants. Tourism and hospitality service providers interact intensely with tourists and the tourism authorities and the sampling technique was appropriate for a research such as this one which was exploratory in nature (Blumberg, Cooper, Du Toit, Masenge & Wagner, 2014). Systematic random sampling was used to select international tourists. Systematic random sampling selects every nth unit after a random start (Morgan, 2014). It allows for recreating the data collection environment thus it produces credible results while offering flexibility (Morgan, 2014).



There were 62 tourism and hospitality service providers, who included managers, supervisors, ordinary employees and entrepreneurs. There were 17 key informants and 237 international tourists giving a total of 316 respondents which corresponded to 90% of the targeted sample size. Data from service providers was drawn from hotel staff and management, travel agents, tour operators, transport providers, dry cleaners, event organizers, restaurant employees, helicopter and other air service providers (Victoria Falls), bankers, curio and artwork sellers, cruise and game drive firms, houseboat firms and lodges. The key informants who were interviewed were from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAAZ) (4 respondents), the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) (4 respondents), Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality (2 respondents), Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (2 respondents), Zimbabwe Association of Airlines (1 respondent), Association of Zimbabwe Travel Agents (1 respondent), Zimbabwe Council for Tourism (1 respondent), Air Zimbabwe (1 respondent), Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (1 respondent).

A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to tourism and hospitality service providers and semi-structured interviews of key informants were conducted. In line with ethical considerations, interviewees were tape-recorded after they were made aware of and had consented to the tape-recording. All interviews were conducted in Harare because head offices of the key tourism stakeholders such as CAAZ, ZTA, Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality, Air Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe and others, are housed in Harare. Data from service providers and international tourists was obtained from Victoria Falls, Bulawayo, Kariba, Gweru, Masvingo, Chinhoyi, Zvishavane, Chegutu, Kwekwe and Harare. About half of the number of the structured questionnaires for international tourists were distributed at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport in the international departure lounge while the tourists waited to fly out of the country.

Potential respondents were asked if they were non-Zimbabweans to ensure that they were indeed part of the sampling frame. For the avoidance of double counting, potential respondents were also asked if they had completed the questionnaire before, for example, at a hotel or at some tourist attraction or some other place in Zimbabwe. As part of ethical considerations, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the research at any stage. Confidentiality of their identities was guaranteed and they were informed that the study was purely academic. The key informants who were keen to know the study results were told that the results would be made available to them.

## **Data Analysis**

After transcribing, the interviews were sent to key informants who had provided them so they could assess and establish whether or not they had been accurately recorded. All interviewees confirmed that the interview was a true record of what they had said. NVivo version 12 (content analysis) was used to analyze qualitative data while SPSS version 23 (descriptive statistics, factor analysis, regression analysis and structural equation modelling) were used to analyze quantitative data from international tourists and some from service providers.

## **Findings**

### **Response rate**

From the seventy six questionnaires which were distributed to tourism and hospitality service providers, sixty two usable questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 83% which was very good. Normally, the lower the response rate, the greater the concern that the resulting sample will not adequately represent the population (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Adhikari & Griffin, 2016). That concern was not relevant in this study. All the targeted seventeen interviews with key informants were conducted giving a 100% response rate. Two hundred and thirty nine usable tourist questionnaires were returned.



**Gender (International tourists)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	129	53.8	54.0	54.0
	Female	110	45.8	46.0	100.0
	Total	239	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	0.4		
Total		240	100.0		

**Table:** 1. International tourists **Source:** Primary data

In the case of international tourists, males (54%) slightly dominated the females (46%) (Table1). This scenario was repeated in the case of key informants (59%) males and (41%) females (Table 2). It was the opposite in the case of service providers where females (52%) (Table 3), marginally dominated their male counterparts (48%). Overall, however, the ratio of females to males for each of the three categories was almost equal. This suggests very little bias with regards to the composition of the sample in terms of gender. This further points to serious endeavours by the researchers to generate credible results.

The finding regarding gender especially as it pertains to service providers and key informants, tends to contradict findings by the World Bank Group (2017) that female labour force participation is low around the world. However, the World Bank further noted that tourism provides better opportunities for women participation in the workforce, women’s entrepreneurship, and women leadership than other sectors of the economy. According to Baloglu and McCleary (2000), one’s age influenced their perceived image of tourist destinations. A study of the image of Pennsylvania as a rural tourism destination which was conducted by Ragavan, Subramonian and Sharif (2014) revealed that the tourists’ gender significantly influenced their DI. Marketing research scholars have postulated that socio-demographic dimensions could play moderating roles in consumer behavior (Ravagan *et al.*, 2014).

**Key informants**

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	7	41.2	41.2	41.2
	Male	10	58.8	58.8	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2.** Gender-Key informants **Source:** Primary data (2018)

**Service providers**

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	30	48.4	48.4	48.4
	Female	32	51.6	51.6	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3:** Gender-Service providers **Source:** Primary data (2018)



South Africans comprised the modal category of tourists (19%), Americans (18%) and the British (13%). This finding resonated with that of ZimStat (2016) which found South African leading in Africa (38.1%) and UK leading in Europe (38.3%). However, in terms of regions, the tourists were constituted as Europe 30%, Africa 28%, the Americas 20%, Asia/Pacific 13% and Middle East 9%. This finding contradicted the one by ZimStat (2016) which found out that Zimbabwe received 80.7% of its arrivals from Africa followed by Europe (9.8%) and then the Americas 5.7%. This variance is explained by the fact that ZimStat used country of usual residence while this study asked for nationality. The implication of the findings is that Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia/Pacific should be given serious attention since they are Zimbabwe’s leading source markets. Africa’s tourist growth rates are yet to match those of other regions owing to the relatively low disposable incomes associated with it (Njiraini, Mwongera, Kiarie & Wangombe, 2015). However, Asia/Pacific appears to be a high-growth region in terms of outbound tourism, while Europe and the Americas have high net-worth tourists due to the relatively high disposable incomes. It is therefore important to lure these markets to Zimbabwe.

### Service providers

		Nationality		Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
		Frequency	Percent		
Valid	Algerian	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Angolan	1	1.6	1.6	3.2
	Egyptian	1	1.6	1.6	4.8
	South African	4	6.5	6.5	11.3
	Zambian	5	8.1	8.1	19.4
	Zimbabwean	50	80.6	80.6	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4:** Nationality-Service providers **Source:** Primary data (2018)

There may be need to establish each category’s sensitivity to price and product preferences so that tourism product developers can design the right tourism products and the corresponding pricing regimes. Prayag (2011) postulated that of socio-demographic dimensions, nationality remains the most popular proxy for measuring and comprehending cultural differences in image perceptions. Nationality tends to influence the structure of DI, particularly affective and cognitive dimensions, and hence pull attributes (Prayag & Ryan, 2011).

The increase in arrivals in 2017 was driven by the growth in arrivals from all source regions and most of the major markets (ZTA, 2017). European, North American and Asian markets championed the growth in overseas arrivals into the country. However, such growth is not new to Zimbabwe. See-saw performance of this nature in Zimbabwe’s tourism has been experienced before. For example, the phase ‘Zimbabwe: Africa’s Paradise’ had many sharp rises and falls in terms of arrivals and receipts (ZTA, 2007). The challenge is to achieve sustainable DI recovery and sustainable tourism performance as is the case with South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles and others.

Most of the service providers (80.6%) were Zimbabwean. This suggested that they were conversant with the business environment and the key issues which were influencing DI and performance of their businesses. This tends to resemble the one which was conducted by Styliadis, Shani and Belhassen (2017). Two tourism stakeholder groups, namely residents and tourists were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with a list of attributes which were used to describe Eilat as a tourist destination. Local residents tended to have less positive images of the place as a tourist destination than the tourists who actually had favorable impressions of





several attributes. Generally, most respondents had fairly positive (mean score over 5) images of Eilat with regards to aspects such as scenery, climate, quality of hotels, restaurants, beaches and the friendliness of the host community. In the current study however, service providers and key informants who are equivalent to residents largely shared the same views with international tourists. For example, stakeholders agreed that prices were generally prohibitive (mean 4.23) and that quality of roads was poor (mean 3.90). The high means indicated agreement.

Residents of destinations may have images of their own place of residence which influences the word-of-mouth, which can be interrogated in comparison with those of tourists (Agapito, Mendes & Valle, 2017). Furthermore, Agapito *et al.*, (2017) noted that the residents are normally viewed as part of the DI, being that their attitudes towards the tourism industry whether favorable or otherwise, is likely to affect tourists' perception of the destination. Residents are indeed part and parcel of the tourist's visit experience, and consequently needed to be taken into account in the process of DI recovery. This view is in line with the concept of inclusivity in tourism. The achievement of inclusive growth is the objective of most development strategies (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, 2017). The concept of inclusive growth "allows opportunities for everyone to participate in the growth process while making sure that benefits are shared" (UNCTAD, 2017: 81).

The majority of the international tourists were between 25 and 54 years of age. Most of the international tourists (25.2%) were aged between 25 to 34 years of age followed by those aged between 35 and 44 years of age. This finding supports that by ZimStat (2016) which conducted a Visitor Exit Survey on Zimbabwe. It established that visitors to Zimbabwe were mostly aged 30 to 34 years (17.1%) and 35 to 39 years (16.4%). Taken together, the results suggest that Zimbabwe is mainly visited by the young to middle-aged tourists. These prefer adrenaline-pumping activities such as white water rafting, bungi jumping, scuba diving and others (UNWTO, 2018). However, given that those aged from 55 to 64 years comprised a notable 15.1% and those aged 65 and above constituted a notable 13.4 percent of international tourists, this could explain the need for tourist product developers and marketers to cater to the needs of a wide spectrum of international tourists as part of the sustainable DI recovery strategy.

#### International tourists

		Education			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School Certificate	33	13.8	14.5	14.5
	Bachelor's Degree	91	37.9	39.9	54.4
	Diploma	38	15.8	16.7	71.1
	Masters' Degree	52	21.7	22.8	93.9
	Doctorate	14	5.8	6.1	100.0
	Total	228	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	12	5.0		
Total		240	100.0		

**Table 5:** Education level of international tourists  
**Source:** Primary data (2018)

The modal group of tourists held bachelor's degrees (40%) followed by master's degree holders (23%) and doctorate degree holders constituted (6%) of the tourists (Table 5). This result shows



that the tourists were quite educated and education is associated with enlightenment. This trend was largely duplicated among service providers. Sixty one per cent of them held first degrees while 20% held master’s degrees. The key informants also showed the same scenario. Seventy seven percent of the key informants were master’s degree holders and 24% held first degrees (Table 6). This suggests that the majority of respondents were well educated suggesting that their responses were given from a position of knowledge and enlightenment. Kanokanga *et al.*, (2018) argued that the respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics including education, were an important determinant of the quality of the research output. This was because poorly educated respondents who cannot read and write well may skip open-ended questions to which they are to write out their answers (Zikmund *et al.*, 2016). Respondents were generally well educated hence responses were quite useful.

**Key informants**

		Highest Education			Cumulative Percent
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	
Valid	Master’s Degree	13	76.5	76.5	76.5
	Undergraduate Degree	4	23.5	23.5	100.0
Total		17	100.0	100.0	

**Table 6:** Education level of key informants      **Source:** Primary data (2018)

Education is often associated with the demand side. However, education from the supply side is important too. Educating the tourist through a superior awareness and consideration of the impact generated, to improve personal attitudes towards the environment and reducing impact on the same (Muzapu & Sibanda, 2016). It should include an ecological education component (for visitors, locals, local administration, rural and urban population. This approach was used as part of the Blakeley model to restore Haiti’s DI. Seraphin, Gowreensunkar and Ambaye (2016) . They advocated for the use of lifelong learning in tourism as a way of turning around DI and performance. Lifelong learning is defined as any kind of continuing education in shorter or longer courses, and includes formal, non-formal and informal education and learning (Seraphin *et al.*, 2016). It focuses on key features such as human skills and aptitude development, and contextualised learning that can enhance the ‘competency and confidence to cope with the urgent tasks and changes arising throughout a lifetime’. They argue that existing research on informing and educating tourists focuses on the visit itself but generally ignores the pre-visit stage.

Learning, according to the Blakeley model, comprises four key processes: paying attention to a cue, experiencing emotions, sense-making and generating behaviour in a way that results in new or changed beliefs, behaviour or emotional orientations (such as increased self - confidence or openness to change) (Blakeley,2007). Learning is said to have occurred when the individual notices new and different cues, or makes sense of cues in a way that generates new constructs, beliefs, emotions or behaviour.

The educational model for visitors to Haiti: Dale and Robinson's (2001) ‘three domains model of tourism education’ contends that in order for a tourism education programme to meet the needs of the industry and stakeholders involved, it should: (a) develop interdisciplinary skills for a broad understanding of the industry; (b) provide expertise in a specific area in terms of skills; (c) explore niche markets (Seraphin *et al.*, 2016). This is an avenue which Zimbabwean tourism marketers may want to pursue. Lifelong learning is generally related to skills of tourism service providers and the economic efficiency for tourism suppliers. However, since Krippendorf's (1987) call for tourists to be educated about the destinations which they visit in order to create a more ethical



tourism, those who advocate for ethical tourism have argued that this is a moral goal for the industry.

Education tends to be positively related to income level. For travellers with very high incomes, the most reliable source of information is word of mouth (WOM) and the Internet (Djeri, Armenski, Jovanovic and Dragin, 2014). Collecting information about the destination is crucially important for this group of people. This group is up-to-date with the travelling offers all year long, as opposed to just prior to travel (Djeri et al., 2014). The same scholars noted that although this category of persons prefers to actively use the Internet to collect information about a destination, they make their final destination choice usually after liaising with their friends or family members (WOM). The most reliable sources of information for respondents with medium incomes are marketing sources, especially economic propaganda and WOM. The most reliable source of information for customers with low incomes is customer information sheets because these are free and widely available publications. The opinions of their family and friends, and their personal experience with the destination are also stated as reliable sources. Price and means of payment have the strongest influence on purchasing behaviour.

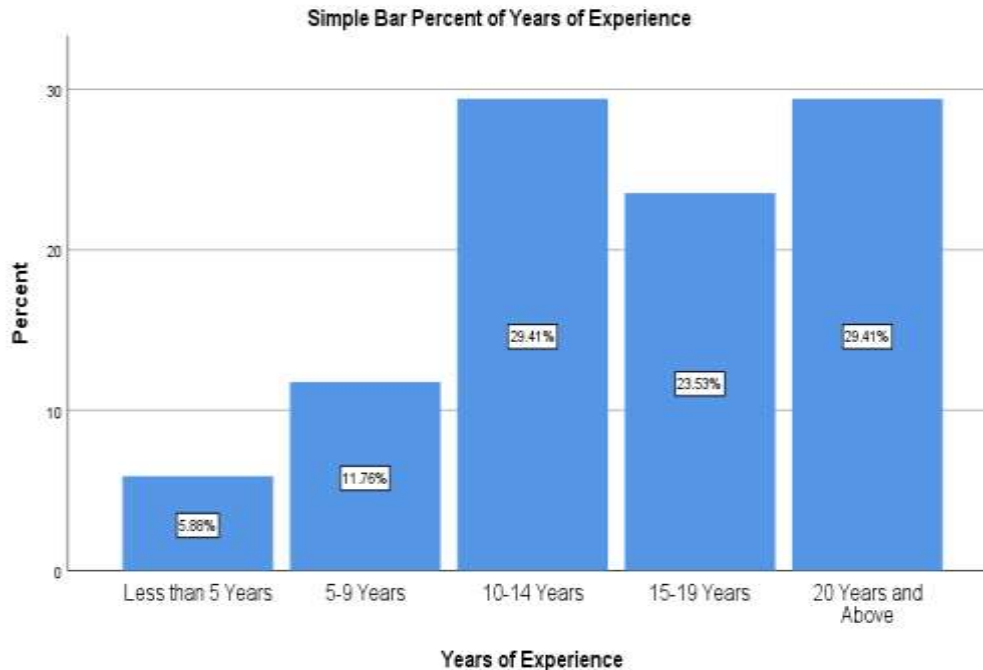
**International tourists**

**Annual household income before tax in US dollars**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10000 and Less	32	13.3	14.2	14.2
	10001-20000	41	17.1	18.1	32.3
	20001-30000	25	10.4	11.1	43.4
	30001-40000	22	9.2	9.7	53.1
	40001-50000	20	8.3	8.8	61.9
	50001 and more	86	35.8	38.1	100.0
	Total	226	94.2	100.0	
Missing	System	14	5.8		
Total		240	100.0		

**Table 7:** International tourists’ annual household income **Source:** Primary data (2018)

Fifty five per cent of the tourists were married while 31% were single while a notable percentage (38%) were from households which earned at least US\$50,000.00 (Table 7). A link may be drawn between income and marital status. Mahasuweerachai and Qu, (2011) conducted a study in which the moderating effects of tourists’ characteristics were tested using a multiple group analysis. The Chi-square ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) test indicated that the moderating effects of gender and age were not significant, while the  $\Delta\chi^2$  test of annual income and marital status were statically significant. The scholars inferred that the structural relationships among tourist satisfaction, revisit intention, and WOM depended on annual income and marital status. Based on these findings, tourism policy makers and planners can design different promotional strategies for different educational levels and marital statuses.



**Figure 2.** Key informants years of experience in the tourism sector **Source:** Primary data (2018)

Eighty two percent of the key informants had more than 10 years' experience in the tourism and hospitality sector (Figure 2). More than 29% of key informants had at least twenty years' experience. The key informants' views were therefore highly credible because their experience suggested that they had dealt with ZTA and the TBCZ for a long time. They were therefore aware of the strengths and weaknesses of these organizations. Ninety per cent of service providers had been in the tourism and hospitality sector from a period of between one year to more than 16 years, making their contribution to the study very relevant and dependable.

### **Determinants DI and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe**

The Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe (TBCZ) and the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) were central in DI recovery (Kanokanga *et al.*, 2018). The TBCZ represents the interests of the private sector in tourism and hospitality while ZTA represents government. While both the TBCZ and ZTA were doing well in terms of providing fora for tourism stakeholders to interact, and the ZTA's efforts as destination marketer were acknowledged and appreciated, the performance of the two bodies was being hampered by their shoe-string budgets.

One of ZTA's mandates, according to the Tourism Act-Chapter 14:20 (1996) is to train manpower in the tourism and hospitality sector, however it has not been quite visible on this front owing to a shortage of funds. Kanokanga *et al.*, (2018) noted that lack of funds negatively affected DI recovery although literature tends to be silent on this issue.



### Importance Ratings

	Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Accessibility	237	4.0499	.64626	-.505	.158	-.180	.315
Attractions	237	4.1885	.51042	-.675	.158	.793	.315
Ancillary Services	237	4.1795	.51731	-.728	.158	.739	.315
Amenities	237	3.8142	.73387	-.448	.158	.106	.315
Price	237	4.1473	.76269	-1.233	.158	2.312	.315
Value	237	4.2166	.62509	-.820	.158	1.047	.315
Affective Image	237	4.0430	.80553	-1.110	.158	1.732	.315
Valid N (listwise)	237						

**Table 8:** Rating importance of DI determinants **Source:** Primary data (2018)

### Assessment of stakeholders' views regarding sustainability of DI recovery and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe

Attractions were judged by international tourists to be the most important (Mean 4.19) followed by ancillary services (Mean 4.18) and price (Mean 4.15) (**Table 8**). Tourist attractions were judged to be of a very high quality (Mean 3.9), ancillary services were good (Mean 3.6), while price was found to be poor (Mean 3.4). The implication of this is that ancillary services and pricing require urgent attention. The affective image, with a Mean of 3.7, was found to be good. Sustainable DI recovery is achievable when the important destination attributes are of a high quality and price is competitive. The finding that pricing is an important determinant of tourism performance resonates with the finding by Assaf and Josiassen, (2012) who ranked pricing number four out of eight. However, Buhalis' (2003) 'A's which influence tourism, namely Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility, Ancillary services, Available packages and others have not been empirically interrogated as determinants of DI recovery other than that they have been assessed as part of the cognitive image.

### Regression Analysis-Importance (Affective Image)

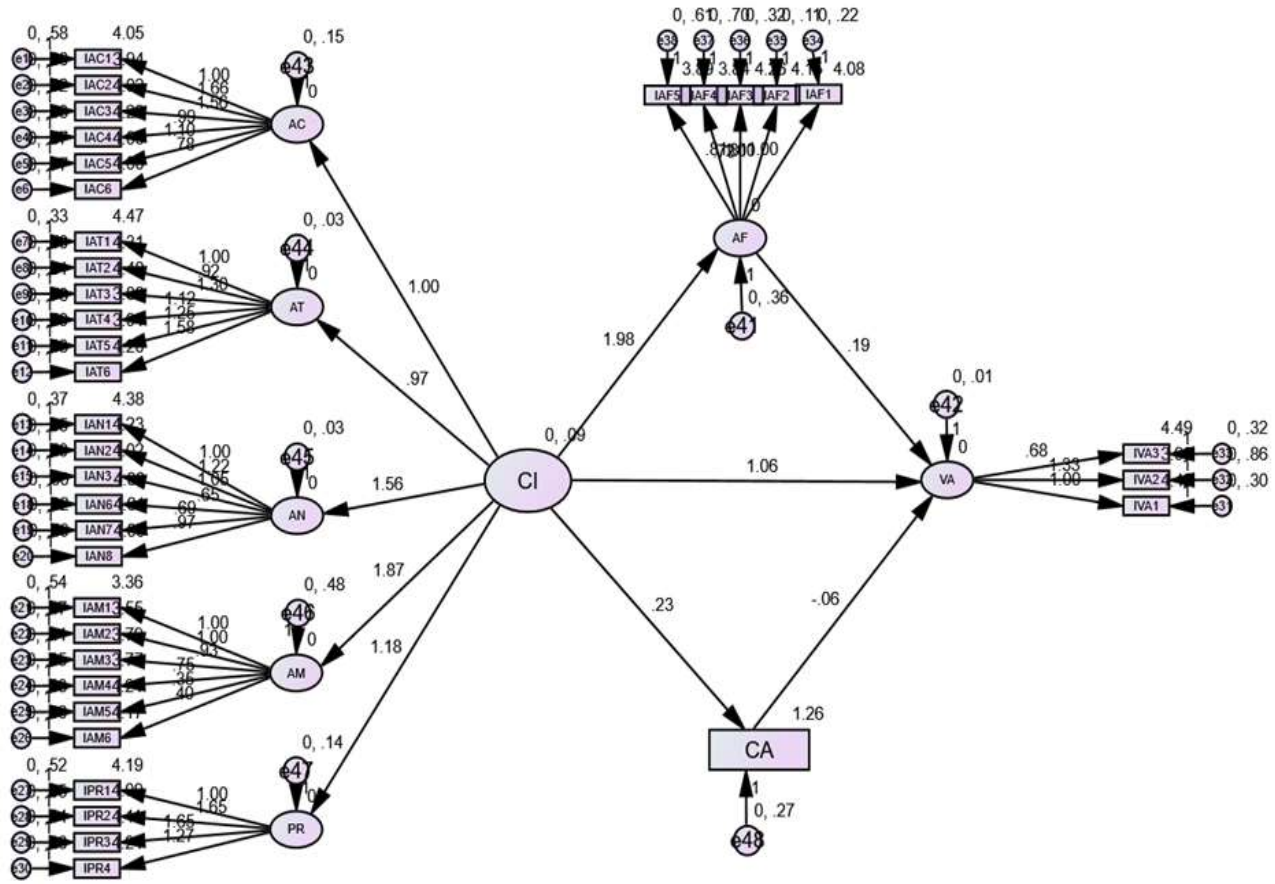
Model Summary <sup>b</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.689 <sup>a</sup>	.475	.463	.59019

a. Predictors: (Constant), Price, Accessibility, Attractions, Amenities, Ancillary Services  
 b. Dependent Variable: Affective Image

**Table 9:** Model Summary **Source:** Primary data (2018)

Regressions were 0.689 which was acceptable because according to Field, (2016), regressions should be about a minimum of 0.7 (Table 9). The result of 0.689 suggests less error and more meaningful interpretation. When the regressions are squared (0.475), they give the proportion of observed variables attributed to the latent variable (Field, 2016).





**Figure 3:** Model for sustainable DI recovery and enhancement of destination performance  
**Source:** Primary data (2018)

While the study sought to test three hypotheses, it actually went on to test four more. The model ppp indicates that the dimensions of cognitive image have a significant impact on performance of the tourism sector in the context of Zimbabwean tourism. The cognitive image (CI) is perceived as second order factor which has implications for affective image (AF, conative image (CA) and performance of the tourism sector (VA). The (CI) is positively related to (VA) hence hypothesis H1: There is a significant positive relationship between destination image and the performance of the tourism sector is not rejected. Hypothesis 1.5.2: The affective dimension of destination image mediates the relationship between the cognitive dimension and the performance of the tourism sector is not rejected since indeed AF mediates the relationship between (CI) and performance (VA). Hypothesis 1.5.3: Determinants of destination image have a positive relationship with the performance of the tourism sector is not rejected since the dimensions of image proved that they had a significant impact on tourism performance.

Determinants of CI were specifically shown as accessibility (AC), attractions (AT), ancillary services (AN), amenities (AM) and pricing (PR). The other hypotheses which were originally not part of the study but were tested included the relationship between affective image and tourism performance. AF was found to be positively related to tourism performance in the Zimbabwean context. Conative image (CA) was found to be positively related to tourism performance. The conative image was found to be mediating the relationship between CI and tourism performance. Literature is silent on these relationships. Ahmadora (2018) developed the common/unique and cognitive/conative model of DI, Guzman-Parra, Villa-Oblitas and Maqueda-Lafuente (2016) interrogated tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty, Slabbert and Martin (2017) explored aspects influencing cognitive, affective and conative images, Yacout and Hefny (2015) focused on information sources as antecedents of cognitive and affective DIs for Egypt.

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability tests support the study's results with regards to hypotheses tests. Affective image 0.863, overall destination value (performance) 0.748, accessibility 0.720, attractions 0.676, ancillary services 0.756, amenities 0.730 and price 0.879. Cronbach's Alpha measures the reliability of the constructs (Field, 2016). The high figures suggest a high reliability level.

**Affective image**

**Reliability Statistics**

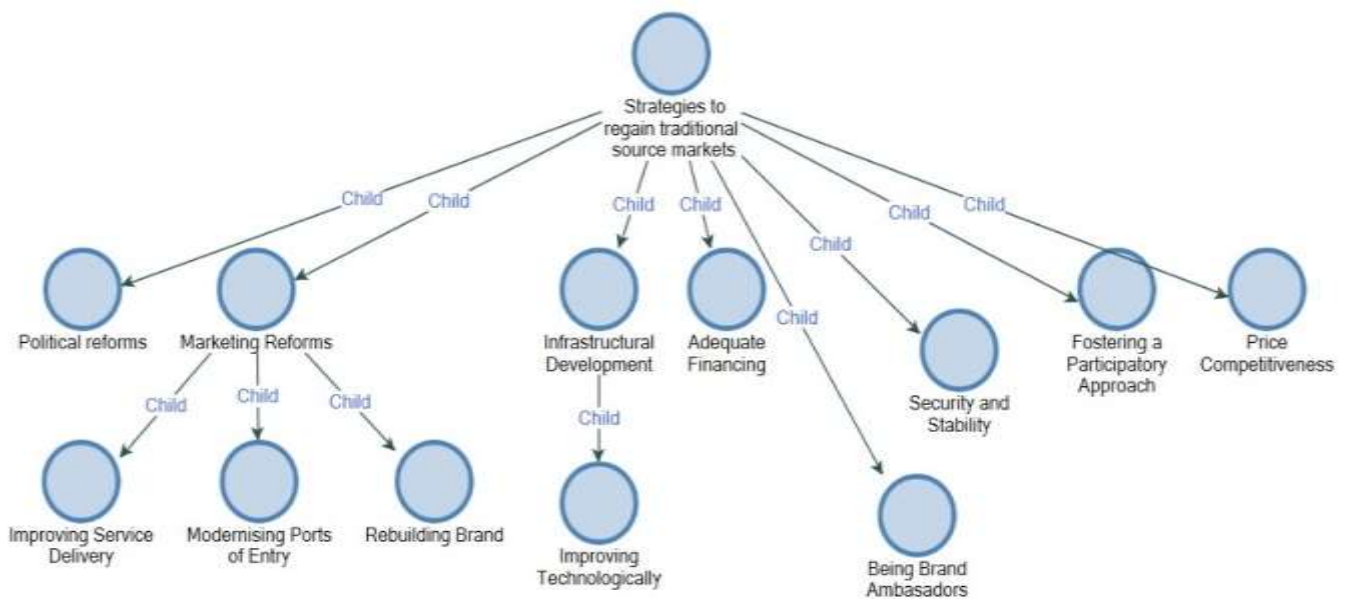
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.863	5

**Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Destination as Stress Reliever	15.16	8.427	.665	.840
Destination as a Provider of Relaxation	15.00	8.393	.763	.814
Destination as Pleasant Place	14.94	8.618	.716	.826
Destination as an Arousing Place	15.23	9.002	.625	.848
Destination as a Provider of Excitement	15.11	8.675	.650	.843

**Table 10:** Reliability statistic for affective image **Source:** Primary data (2018)

**Strategies for improving destination image and performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe**



**Figure 4:** Strategies to regain traditional source markets

**Source:** Primary data (2018)



Figure 4 depicts an aggregate of strategies which were suggested by respondents for achieving sustainable DI and enhancing the economic performance of Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. When asked what Zimbabwe should do in order to attract new market share, one respondent remarked: “Fix roads. Refurbish facilities at resorts. Drop prices. Political facelift.”(Service provider 17, August 16, 2018). This view was shared by another respondent who noted that: “Zimbabwe needs to be stable politically and economically to attract new market share” (Service provider 7, 27 August, 2018). In response to the same question, one tourist commented: “Get foreign investment. Improve political environment” (Tourist 223, 28 September, 2018).

We have tourists who do not want to come because they can't drive from here to Mutare because of the bad roads, infrastructure bust most importantly we have to have a solution to our air travel because what happens is that, the tourists, when they come, yes has a lot of money but is very poor when it comes to time so he needs to travel, many places in a short space of time. So you need for example in Zimbabwe we need flights going to Mutare, we need flights going to Masvingo, we need flights going to Kariba, we don't have that.

When asked about how Zimbabwe could regain traditional markets, one key informant was concerned with internal accessibility, noting that:

We have tourists who do not want to come because they can't drive from here to Mutare because of the bad roads, ... infrastructure... but most importantly, we have to have a solution to our air travel because what happens is that, the tourist, when they come, yes... has a lot of money but is very poor when it comes to time. So, he needs to travel to many places in a short space of time. So, in Zimbabwe we need flights going to Mutare, we need flights going to Masvingo, we need flights going to Kariba, we don't have that.

When asked about their opinion of the pricing of goods and services in Zimbabwe, one key informant highlighted that:

You find that the prices of goods and services in Zimbabwe are what makes Zimbabwe an uncompetitive destination with regards to tourism. If you go to South Africa, their goods are probably 40% or 50% less than the price of goods...or even 60% less than the prices of goods in Zimbabwe.(Key informant 14, 20 September, 2018).

This opinion was contradicted by another key informant who felt that prices should be determined by demand and supply. They indicated that “the pricing model is the prerogative of the operator” (Key informant 13, 8 September, 2018).

However, the strategies above require a stakeholder approach to be meaningfully implemented. Tourism development cannot be separated from the participation of stakeholder groups (Liu & Ma, 2016). The core stakeholder groups include community residents, domestic and foreign tourists and tourism practitioners.

Political and economic factors are pivotal are pivotal in DI recovery (Kanokanga *et al.*, 2018). The sub-categories of these dimensions include political tendencies, economic development, prices, among others (Li, Ali & Kim, 2015).

## Conclusions and recommendations

Exploratory factor analysis revealed that accessibility, attractions, ancillary services, amenities and price were critical to cognitive image (CI) in the Zimbabwean context. Their respective Cronbach's Alpha reliability tests were accessibility 0.720, attractions 0.676, ancillary services 0.756, amenities 0.730 and price 0.879. The high figures suggest a high reliability level. While the study set out to test three hypotheses, it actually went on to test four more. The model indicated that the dimensions of CI had a significant impact on performance of the tourism sector in the context of Zimbabwean tourism. The CI is perceived as second order factor which has implications for affective (AF), conative image (CA) and performance of the tourism sector (VA). The (CI) is positively related to (VA) hence hypothesis H1: There is a significant positive relationship between destination image and the performance of the tourism sector<sup>16</sup>



is not rejected. Hypothesis 2: The affective dimension of destination image mediates the relationship between the cognitive dimension and the performance of the tourism sector is not rejected since indeed AF mediates the relationship between CI and performance VA. Hypothesis 3: Determinants of destination image have a positive relationship with the performance of the tourism sector is not rejected since the dimensions of image proved that they had a significant impact on tourism performance.

The other hypotheses which were originally not part of the study but were tested included the relationship between affective image and tourism performance. AF was found to be positively related to tourism performance in the Zimbabwean context. Conative image (CA) was found to be positively related to tourism performance. The conative image was found to be mediating the relationship between CI and tourism performance. Literature is silent on these relationships. Ahmadora (2018) developed the common/unique and cognitive/conative model of DI, Guzman-Parra, Villa-Oblitas and Maqueda-Lafuente (2016) interrogated tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty, Slabbert and Martin (2017) explored aspects influencing cognitive, affective and conative images, Yacout and Hefny (2015) focused on information sources as antecedents of cognitive and affective DIs for Egypt.

The study recommends that in order to achieve sustainable DI recovery in Zimbabwe, a stakeholder approach was required. The TBCZ-ZTA partnership was critical and hence required strengthening. There was need to interrogate the tourism value-chain with a view to reduce prices to competitive levels. The political and economic environments needed serious improvement. There was need to seriously look into the issue of sustainably funding the ZTA and the TBCZ, infrastructural development and modernizing the ports of entry and embarking on marketing reform.

Future research should consider focusing on specific determinants of DI recovery for example, the extent to which the availability of a sustainable pool of funds is likely to contribute towards sustainable DI recovery and enhancing performance of Zimbabwe's tourism sector. This is likely to provide a perspective on why and the extent to which Zimbabwe should invest in each of these determinants.

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