PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON TOURISM TURN-AROUND STRATEGIES IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Several studies carried out by different researchers on turnaround strategies for tourism have not explored the perceptions of stakeholders on these strategies as they are employed by national tourism organisations (NTOs). Given the strong relationship between positive perceptions and socio-economic viability in areas of high tourism dependence, it is considered prudent to ensure that all stakeholders are included in this concerned partnership (Bierman 2003). If lack of knowledge of stakeholder perceptions on NTO turnaround strategies is not addressed, public-private partnerships will remain very difficult to harness and national tourism organizations such as the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) will continue to fight lone battles. The study therefore sought to address the question: how do Zimbabwe's tourism and hospitality stakeholders perceive the strategies being employed by the ZTA in turning around Zimbabwe's tourism industry. The study adopted a qualitative approach. Data was collected during the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Travel and Tourism Africa Fair 2013. It was generally discovered that the ZTA does not consult widely when coming up with its strategies. The study also found out that ZTA's strategies are quite visible in the market as they try hard to turn around the fortunes of Zimbabwe's tourism. However, most of the strategies are not effective as they lack stakeholder support, therefore, the study recommended that the ZTA engages its stakeholders more widely.

Key words: stakeholders, stakeholder perceptions, turnaround strategies, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority.

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry in Zimbabwe experienced rapid growth after the country's independence in 1980 to the extent that it became the third largest foreign currency earner after mining and agriculture (Ndlovu, 2009). Until 1999, tourist arrivals increased at an average annual rate of 17.5%, whilst tourism receipts increased at an average annual rate of 18% in US dollar terms (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2002). However, due to economic, political and social hardships the country experienced after the year 2000, the tourism sector produced its worst performance than any other period in the country's post-independence history (Muleya, 2002).The country experienced an 11% drop in tourist arrivals in the year 2000 and an 8% fall in tourist receipts during the same period (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2002). Efforts to turn around the fortunes of the industry as spearheaded by the national tourism organisation, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), have failed to yield positive results.

Quite a number of tourist destinations have been in the position of Zimbabwe, but have managed to work their way out of the problem. Bali was bombed by terrorists in October 2002, but 18 to 24 months later, signs of recovery could be noticed (Classen et al, 2011, Guttner, 2004). Other examples are The September 11 of 2001 (9/11) terror attacks in Washington and New York (2001), Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (2005), Bahrain political unrest (2011), Tunisia political unrest (2011), Thailand Red Shirt revolution (2010) and Great Britain's health epidemic in 2001. These destinations managed to turn around their industries by studying what was broken first, and it was established that at the macro level, what is broken is perception and demand, and what is broken within the complex formula of demand is very fundamental: the sense of safety (Classen et al, 2011). Studies on the Zimbabwean problem have not focused on the importance of stakeholder perceptions and therefore stakeholder buy-in to problem solving has been difficult to get. This study therefore sought to find out the perceptions of stakeholders on strategies being employed by the ZTA. Understanding these perceptions may help the national tourism organization to use the stakeholder approach in implementing turnaround strategies for the industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study the following key concepts must be defined and further explored:

Perceptions and Tourism

Perception or social perception has been defined in many different ways since its first use (Unumeri, 2009). The Chambers Dictionary defines perception as an act of being aware of "one's environment through physical sensation, which denotes an individual's ability to understand." This definition however fails to recognize that the world is not psychologically uniform to all individuals. Nelson and Quick (1997) define social perception as the process of interpreting information about another person. "Opinions you form about another person depends on the amount of information available to you, and the extent to which you are able to correctly interpret the information you have acquired" (Unumeri, 2009). Therefore, different stakeholders have different opinions due to individual differences in the capacity to interpret the information that they all have. These definitions however seem not explain the role authenticity of sources of information plays in the formation of perceptions, and the differences in perceptions different stakeholders have depending on the type and source of information they have access to.

Rao and Narayan (1998) concur with Nelson and Quick (1997) but emphasize that perception ranks among the "important cognitive factors of human behaviour" or psychological mechanism that enable people to understand their environment. To quote directly from Rao and Narayan (1998): "perception is the process whereby people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulations into meaningful information about their work environment. Perception is the single most important determinant of human behaviour, and "there can be no behaviour without perception" (Unumeri, 2009). The importance of source of information again seems not to be of paramount importance in this perspective of perceptions. Observations seem to suggest that perceptions are formed basing on the credibility of the source of information. Some sources of information are not credible and biased such that they lead to misperceptions of destinations.

Social perception can also refer to "the process by which we form impressions of other people's traits and personalities" (Michener, Dehameter and Myers, 2004). Social perception refers to constructing an understanding of the social world from the data we get through our senses. This definition emphasizes "our senses" as the means of data collection. Therefore, perceptions arise from what people see, smell, hear, taste and feel. Packaging is therefore very important in tourism management and marketing so that positive perceptions can be made. In order to shed

more light on this concept, it's important to pay attention to the following elements of perception listed by Rao and Narayan (1998): Our attention, feelings and the way we act are influenced by our environment, Perception helps you to gather data from your surroundings; process the data and make sense out of it. In perception, it is sometimes difficult to separate the information from the action, it's basically a process of gaining mental understanding, and perception guides the perceiver in harnessing, processing and channelling relevant information towards fulfilling the perceiver's requirements. This definition is more encompassing as it includes all senses as sources of information. Perceptions need to be based on a variety of sources of information for them not to be half-truths.

In tourism marketing, perceptions may be derived from objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, experiences or emotional thoughts. Tourism promoters must analyze stakeholder perceptions of their strategies. If these perceptions do not fit that of their own, tourism promoters and service providers may project totally different images and messages to the market. It's the perceived image that determines whether or not the stakeholder decides to participate. Understanding how stakeholders evaluate different strategies is therefore vital (SNV Rwanda).

Perceptions and Stakeholder Participation

One main key to the success and implementation of sustainable tourism development in a community is the support of stakeholders (e.g. citizens, entrepreneurs, and community leaders) (Gunn, 1994, Kruja and Hasaj, 2010). A stakeholder is identified as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by" tourism development in an area (Freeman 1984). The general idea of the Stakeholder concept is a redefinition of the organization. In general the concept is about what the organization should be and how it should be conceptualized. Friedman (2006) states that the organization itself should be thought of as grouping of stakeholders and the purpose of the organization should be to manage their interests, needs and viewpoints. This stakeholder management is thought to be fulfilled by the managers of a firm. The managers should on the one hand manage the corporation for the benefit of its stakeholders in order to ensure their rights and the participation in decision making and on the other hand the management must act as the stockholder's agent to ensure the survival of the firm to safeguard the long term stakes of each group.

The definition of a stakeholder, the purpose and the character of the organization and the role of managers are very unclear and contested in literature and has changed over the years. Even the "father of the stakeholder concept" changed his definition over the time. In one of his latest definitions Freeman (2004) defines stakeholders as "those groups who are vital to the survival and success of the corporation". In one of his latest publications Freeman (2004) adds a new principle, which reflects a new trend in stakeholder theory. In this principle in his opinion the consideration of the perspective of the stakeholders themselves and their activities is also very important to be taken into the management of companies. He states "The principle of stakeholder recourse. Stakeholders may bring an action against the directors for failure to perform the required duty of care" (Freeman 2004).

All the mentioned thoughts and principles of the stakeholder concept are known as normative stakeholder theory in literature. Normative Stakeholder theory contains theories of how managers or stakeholders should act and should view the purpose of organization, based on some ethical principle (Friedman 2006). Another approach to the stakeholder concept is the so called descriptive stakeholder theory. This theory is concerned with how managers and stakeholders actually behave and how they view their actions and roles. The instrumental stakeholder theory deals with how managers should act if they want to flavour and work for their own interests. In some literature the own interest is conceived as the interests of the organization, which is usually to maximize profit or to maximize shareholder value. This means if managers treat stakeholders in line with the stakeholder concept the organization will be more successful in the long run. Donaldson and Preston (1995) have made this three-way categorization of approaches to the stakeholder concept kind of famous.

The focus on more stakeholder participation emphasises its ability to handle multiple perceived issues. The first issue is that tourism development decisions are made from the top down, where "experts" make decisions. Often decisions made in this manner are perceived by the local community as not being reflective of community interests and opinions. The second issue is that the decision making system is perceived to have competing interests within it, and therefore, the decisions made are again not reflective of the public's interests (Beierle and Konisky, 2000). Participation leads to avoidance of major conflicts between stakeholder groups (Healey, 1998). Robson and Robson (1996) postulate that stakeholder management holds the potential to help

maintain the balance between tourism activity and social and environmental concerns and thus provide a fundamental framework within which sustainable tourism can be delivered.

Proper stakeholder involvement has multiple outcomes depending on the process used and the stakeholders. The outcomes of involvement include: Information and education of the public about the topics and issues (Kruja and Hasaj 2010; Beierle 1998; Simrell, King and Feltey 1998); Public values and opinions are incorporated in the decision making process (Beierle 1998; Carmin, Darhall and Mil-Holmens 2003); the improvement of the quality of the decisions (Beierle 1998; Fiorino 1990); New ideas are generated (Carmin, Darhall and Mil-Homens 2003; Fiorino 1990; Steelman 2001); and ensuring that stakeholders in tourism are treated fairly (Beierle 1998; Carmin, Darhall and Mil-Homens 2003; La Porte and Metlay 1996; Simrell, King and Feltey 1998). Stakeholder participation/involvement is achieved through understanding stakeholder perception first.

Turnaround Strategies

Before a tourism company can do business, before they can market their tourism product, before they can even plan their tourism product, they must first plan their strategy (Moutinho, 2000). A strategic plan contains decisions regarding the type of business the organisation desires to be in, segments of the market they wish to pursue, and the type of tourism product they wish to develop for their markets (Holtzhausen, 2004). According to Johnson and Scholes (2002) strategy can be defined as the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantages for the organisation through its configuration of resources, within a changing environment and to fulfil stakeholder perceptions. Chandler (in Evans, Campbell and Stonehouse 2002) defines strategy as 'the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of a course of action and the allocation of resources for the carrying out of these goals.' Coulter (2002) defines strategy "as a series of goal-directed decisions and actions that match an organisation's skills and resources with the opportunities and threats in its environment."

Renewal strategies are designed to halt the organisation's declining performance and to return it to a more desirable performance level (Coulter 2002; Wheelen and Hunger 1990; Pierce and Robinson 1995). Two types of renewal strategies are identifiable and these are retrenchment and turnaround strategies. This study focuses on turnaround strategies. A turnaround strategy is a

renewal strategy designed for situations in which the organisational performance problems are serious and the organisation has to be "turned around" or its survival is in jeopardy (Holtzhausen 2004). Turnaround strategies involve the adoption of new strategic position for a product or service, resource re-allocation from one strategic thrust to another (e.g. re-allocation of managerial talent), revenue-generating strategies and product modification (Thompson 1993).

Hill and Jones (1995) state that in most successful turnaround situations, a number of common features are present: they include changing leadership, redefining the company's strategic focus, divesting or closing unwanted assets, taking steps to improve the profitability of remaining operations and occasionally, making acquisitions to rebuild core operations. However, there is no guarantee that a turnaround strategy will accomplish the desired results and make the organisation a stronger competitor once again, but without it the organisation is doomed to fail (Holtzhausen 2004).

The foregoing review has shown that perceptions are determined by information and impressions at the disposal of the perceiver. It also revealed that partnerships and stakeholder involvement is best achieved when stakeholders perceive organisational goals and objectives from the same perspective. Strategies were also reviewed and it was established that an organisation/destination with serious performance problems require turnaround strategies. All stakeholders should work together to come up with strategies that work for their organisation. The top-down approach is often viewed suspiciously. Therefore, this study looked at the perceptions of stakeholders on ZTA's turnaround strategies. The objective was to assess how the ZTA comes up with its strategies and whether it uses the stakeholder approach or not.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Several studies carried out by different researchers on turnaround strategies for tourism have not explored the perceptions of stakeholders on these strategies as they are employed by national tourism organisations (NTOs). Given the strong relationship between positive perceptions and socio-economic viability in areas of high tourism dependence, it is considered prudent to ensure that all stakeholders are included in this concerned partnership (Bierman 2003). Karambakuwa *et al* (2011) studied the impact of ZTA strategies on tourism performance in 2008 and 2009. Ndlovu (2009) looked at branding as a strategic tool to reposition a destination. Putra (2007) looked at how Public Relations (PR) can be utilized as an effective communication strategy for

tourism destinations in crises. Such studies, however, leave more questions than answers, for example, how one can attribute increase in tourist arrivals and receipts solely to strategies employed by the ZTA, or to branding, or to PR. Serious scientific research will show that to attribute any increase or decrease in tourist arrivals and receipts to such strategies is an assertion not based on facts. If lack of knowledge of stakeholder perceptions on NTO turnaround strategies is not addressed, public-private partnerships will remain very difficult to harness and tourism organizations like the ZTA will continue to fight lone battles. The study therefore sought to address the question: how do Zimbabwe's tourism and hospitality stakeholders perceive the strategies being employed by the ZTA in turning around Zimbabwe's tourism industry. The study adopted a qualitative approach and findings from this study were meant to help the ZTA to craft and implement strategies that have private sector support. Results from this study were also meant to ensure that resources are effectively and efficiently utilized in strategies that ensure a quick turnaround.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The major research objective that guided this study was: to explore stakeholder perceptions of ZTA's turnaround strategies for tourism in Zimbabwe.

SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To assess ZTA's perceptions of Zimbabwe's tourism challenges.
- To assess stakeholders' perceptions of Zimbabwe's tourism challenges.
- To identify strategies being employed by the ZTA to address the challenges.
- To explore stakeholder perceptions of ZTA's turnaround strategies.
- To develop a participatory approach model for crafting and implementing turnaround strategies for tourism in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following major research question: what perceptions do stakeholders have towards ZTA's turnaround strategies for tourism in Zimbabwe? Specific research questions were as follows:

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SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What's the perception of the problem facing Zimbabwe's tourism industry, according to the ZTA?

- What's the perception of the problem facing Zimbabwe's tourism industry, according to stakeholders?

- What strategies are being used to address the problem?

- What perceptions do stakeholders have towards the strategies?

- What needs to be done to ensure more partnership between the ZTA and stakeholders?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised of close-ended questions. The population for this study was all registered tourism and hospitality operators who were present during the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Travel and Tourism Africa Fair 2013.

Data was classified into meaningful categories, which were derived from the study's specific objectives. These categories were in fact codes or labels that were used to group the data. This approach was adopted for this study because it provided the researchers with an emergent structure that was relevant for the research to organise and analyse the data further, and for discussion of findings. This approach to data analysis was also relevant because the 'categories or labels were developed and used to indicate analytical linkages between, and interpretation of, the data emerging (King, 2004; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The questionnaire had two sections. The first section basically looked at respondents' characteristics and the second part of the questionnaire had ten questions based on the perceptions of the stakeholders towards ZTA strategies. Attitudes on the ten statements were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with possible answers ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). The questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of 100 respondents during Sanganai/Hlanganani World Travel and Tourism Africa Fair 2013. Quantitative data was analysed using simple descriptive statistics and qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis. All exhibitors constituted the targeted population. The team distributed the questionnaire to exhibitors at their stands and collected them later. A purposive sampling technique was used. "Purposive sampling involves handpicking cases to be included in the

sample on basis of judgement of their typicality", (Cohen & Manion1989:103). The cases under study were picked by virtue of their typicality, that is, by virtue of their being exhibitors at Sanganai/Hlanganani World Travel and Tourism Africa Fair 2013. The team took advantage of the expo due to the fact that many operators will be housed under one roof. The results of this study are based on the 80 questionnaires returned to the researchers. The data analysis process enabled the researchers to draw conclusions and recommendations.

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

An analysis, presentation and discussion of findings follow:

RESPONSE RATE AND RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

An 80% response rate was achieved for this study. The study seemed to concur with various past researchers that the tourism industry is dominated by males as they constituted 70% of the respondents. The respondents came from a cross-section of players within the tourism industry with 6.25% being lecturers, 33.75% being administrators, 41.25% being managers, 12.5% being students, and another 6.25% being other players within the industry. 45% of the respondents had at least a University degree, 20% had Masters' Degrees, 2.5% were PhD holders, 31.25% had diplomas and 1.25% had other qualifications such as certificates and professional achievements. Most of the researchers were of appropriate educational standing to warrant some level of consultation by the ZTA when crafting turn-around strategies. The age distribution of the respondents showed that the majority (38.75%) were between 31 and 39 years old. The findings also seem to suggest that players within the industry are well experienced as all of the respondents had served more than 2 years and 20% had been in the industry for more than 16 years. 22.5% of the respondents came from educational institutions, 51.25% came from private organisations (such as hotels, tour operators, airlines and travel agencies) and 21.25% represented government institutions.

THE PROBLEMS FACING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE

The solution to any problem is to first understand the cause of the problem. The problems bedevilling the tourism industry in Zimbabwe are understood from different perspectives, depending on respondents' background. Most of the respondents felt that the problems facing Zimbabwe are political (75%) and economic (63.75%). This seems to concur with Muleya

(2002) and Ndlovu (2009) who stated that Zimbabwe's problems are political and economic. The study also concurred with Kabote *et al*., (2013) that Zimbabwe's tourism industry seemed to perform much better after the adoption of the multi-currency regime in 2009 and the operationalization the Government of National Unity in 2009. Table 1 below presents the findings on this finding:

Table 1: The problems facing the tourism industry in Zimbabwe

Problems	Response (%)
Political	75%
Economical	63.75%
Image/brand building	25%
Other	6.25%

The respondents mentioned that other problems faced by the tourism industry in Zimbabwe include poor confidence in the destination's security and safety, corruption, negative publicity, and unskilled labour force. However, one might safely conclude that the problems facing the industry fall under the huge banners of economic and political performance.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS FACING ZIMBABWE BY THE ZTA

Figure 1 below shows that most respondents (37%) agree that the ZTA understands the problem facing the destination. This means that the respondents felt that the ZTA understands that most of the problems facing the destination are political and economic. Therefore, the ZTA needs to come up with political and economic solutions to the destination's problems. The government seemed to have responded well with the formation of a Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry and some economic incentives such as duty-free importation of equipment and vehicles to use in the industry (Newsday, 2013).

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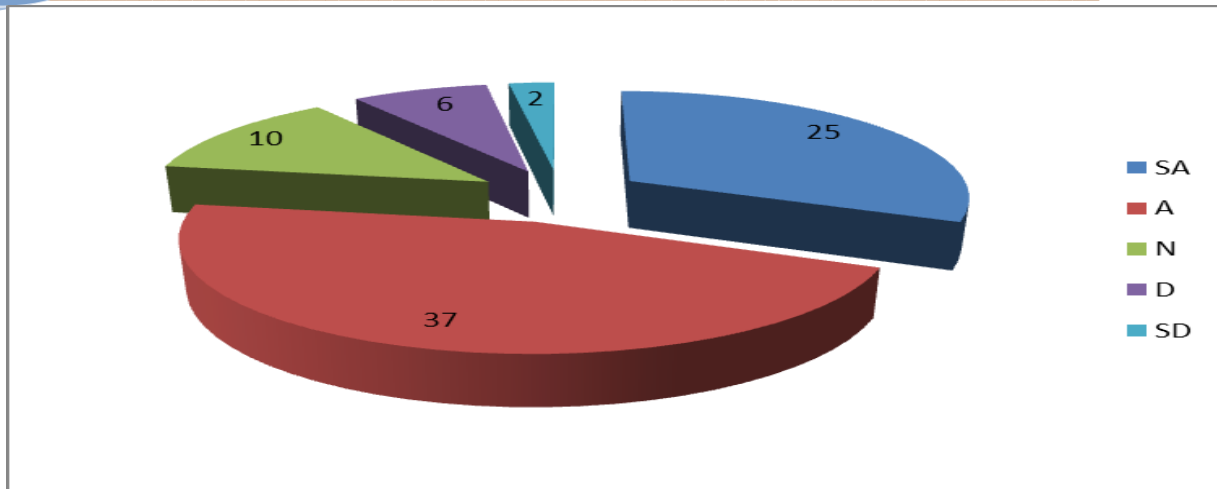http://www.ijmra.us

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Figure 1 Understanding of the problems facing Zimbabwe's tourism by the ZTA

SOLVING OF PROBLEMS BY THE ZTA

The respondents seem to be divided in their confidence in ZTA's ability to solve the problems faced by the destination. As Table 2 below shows, the majority of the respondents (61.25%) chose not to commit themselves. However, 32.5% of the respondents agreed that the ZTA has failed to solve problems faced by the destination. This is real cause for concern as it shows lack of confidence in the Destination Management Organisation (DMO). Reasons for lack of this confidence include lack of consultation by the ZTA when coming up with strategies or even projects within the destination. This concurs with past researches on the branding of Zimbabwe as a "World of Wonders". Findings from the study showed that the ZTA does not consult its stakeholders when undertaking turnaround strategies (Mirimi *et al*, 2013).

Table 2: Problem solving capabilities by the ZTA

		SA	A	N	D	SD
Q3	The ZTA has failed to solve Zimbabwean destination problems	0%	32.5%	61.25%	6.25%	0%

KEY: **SA**- Strongly agree, **A**- Agree, **N**, - Neutral **D**- Disagree, **SD**- Strongly disagree

CONSISTENCE IN BRANDING OF THE COUNTRY

One turnaround strategy for a tourism destination is re-branding. The ZTA has re-branded the destination several times since independence beginning with "Zimbabwe: A Gateway to Africa", followed by "Zimbabwe: Africa's Paradise", and currently "Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders".

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This lack of consistency seems to be quite noticeable with 56.25% of the respondents disagreeing with the notion that the ZTA is consistent with the re-branding strategy. However, 18.75% agree that the ZTA is consistent in its branding strategy. This lack of endorsement of ZTA again shows that the stakeholders view ZTA's strategies in a negative light.

Table 3: Consistence in Branding Of the Country

		SA	A	N	D	SD
Q4	ZTA is consistent in the branding of the country as a prime destination	0%	18.75%	17.5%	56.25%	7.5%

KEY: **SA**- Strongly agree, **A**- Agree, **N**, - Neutral **D**- Disagree, **SD**- Strongly disagree

CONSULTATION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN CRAFTING STRATEGIES

Freeman (2004), states that to ensure stakeholder buy-in, it is very important that stakeholder consultation is done effectively. Whenever stakeholders take part in coming up with strategies, they view the strategies positively and in most cases contribute to the successful implementation of such strategies. This study therefore sought to find out if the ZTA consult stakeholders when coming up with strategies. Table 4 below shows that 77.5% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed to the notion that ZTA consults its stakeholders when coming up with turn-around strategies. However, 7.5% strongly agree and 8.75% agree which means that the ZTA consult a few stakeholders leaving the majority out of the stakeholder consultation process.

Table 4: Does the ZTA consult its stakeholders?

		SA	A	N	D	SD
Q5	The ZTA consults stakeholders when crafting strategies to market Zimbabwe as a destination	7.5%	8.75%	6.25%	63.75%	13.75%

KEY: **SA**- Strongly agree, **A**- Agree, **N**, - Neutral **D**- Disagree, **SD**- Strongly disagree

Still on the aspect of consultation, most respondents felt that the ZTA should increase its consultation. 25% strongly agreed and 62.5% agreed that the ZTA should improve on its consultation. Only 2.5% of the respondents felt that the ZTA was consulting widely enough and there is nothing more that can be done. As observed earlier, this group of respondents form part

of the stakeholders that are consulted by the ZTA. Respondents generally recommended the ZTA to make use of think-tanks to come up with good strategies. The country is endowed with several universities and colleges that offer many tourism and hospitality courses. The ZTA should therefore make use of the students, lecturers, doctors and professors in these learning institutions to form a think-tank for the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. 93.5% of the respondents agreed that this is a very noble idea.

There seems to be duplication of duties since the introduction of the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry. The coordination of tourism activities used to be the preserve of ZTA but now stakeholders now seem to be confused as to who is responsible for policy issues between the two entities. However, respondents seem to be very clear on the issue with 65% of the opinion that the ZTA and the Ministry are not discharging the same mandate. Respondents also felt that there is no confusion as to the responsibilities of the two entities. Only 26.25% of the respondents felt some confusion between the roles of the Ministry and the ZTA.

VISIBILITY OF ZTA'S TURNAROUND STRATEGIES

The respondents seemed to appreciate the roles and effort being put by the ZTA in turning around the fortunes of tourism in Zimbabwe. The respondents (12.5% strongly agree and 43.75% agree) felt that ZTA's strategies are clearly identifiable. Such turnaround strategies include image building exercises such as the Zimbabwe International Carnival, the annual Sanganai/Hlanganani World Travel and Tourism Africa Fair and participation at international tourism exhibitions such as ITB, Indaba and WTB. The authority has also engaged celebrities such as Joe Thomas and Akon to act as Zimbabwe's tourism ambassadors. Tourism attaches have been appointed in various source markets to promote Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. However, respondents felt that the ZTA is not doing enough to turnaround the industry through the promotion of domestic tourism. 6.25% of the respondents strongly recommended that the ZTA should focus more on domestic tourism; therefore they indicated that ZTA's turnaround strategies are not clearly identifiable.

Table 5: Visibility of ZTA's Strategies

		SA	A	N	D	SD
Q8	Are the strategies being used by ZTA clearly identifiable	10 12.5%	35 43.75%	30 37.5%	5 6.25%	0 0%

KEY: **SA**- Strongly agree, **A**- Agree, **N**, - Neutral **D**- Disagree, **SD**- Strongly disagree

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ZTA'S STRATEGIES

The tourism industry in Zimbabwe experienced negative growth as we entered into the new millennium due to political and economic melt down (Ndlovu, 2009 & Muleya, 2002). The ZTA has been working hard to restore the fortunes of the industry through implementing various strategies such as re-branding, celebrity programs, participation at and organising travel expos, and hosting of events such as the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013 and the Zimbabwe International Carnival. Are these strategies working? 10% of the respondents strongly agreed that the strategies are working whilst 12.5% agreed. Whilst most of the respondents (46.25%) refused to commit themselves to this question, quite a number of respondents (31.25%) felt that the strategies are not working. This seems to disagree with the ZTA who felt that the strategies are working. "Zimbabwe recorded a 17% increase in tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2013 with all major markets registering increases. Tourist arrivals currently stood at 404 282 up from 346 299 in 2012. This growth is clearly a witness of the country's improved destination image, resuming competitiveness in the region" (ZTA, 2013:4). Who is right then, and who is wrong? The stakeholders consulted in this study form part of the industry that operate the hotels, airlines, travel agencies and tour operators. Their perceptions were informed from what was happening in the field. The contrast in perceptions as to the performance of the industry between the stakeholders and the ZTA is a real cause for concern.

Table 6: Effectiveness of ZTA's Turnaround Strategies

		SA	A	N	D	SD
Q9	Strategies being used by ZTA to turn around the country destination competitiveness are working	8 10%	10 12.5%	37 46.25%	20 25%	5 6.25%

KEY: **ST**- Strongly agree, **A**- Agree, **N**, - Neutral **D**- Disagree, **SD**- Strongly disagree

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study clearly demonstrated the importance of stakeholder consultation as advocated by Freeman (2004). When all stakeholders (key, primary and secondary) are involved in coming up with turnaround strategies for any organization, chances of success are very high. The findings from this study seem to suggest that the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority does not consult widely when coming up with its strategies. The study also finds it safe to conclude that the stakeholders have a lot of faith in ZTA's ability to turn around the fortunes of the country's tourism industry. This is evidenced by the understanding exhibited by the respondents into the responsibilities of the ZTA and the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry. Respondents also indicated that ZTA's strategies are quite visible in the market. However, there is a sad observation that is made by this study that the stakeholders, to a larger extent, felt that the turnaround strategies are not working whilst the ZTA felt that the strategies are working. The study therefore recommends the following:

- The ZTA should learn to engage all its stakeholders when coming up with turnaround strategies for the industry.

- The ZTA should make use of intellectual resources within the country by forming a think-tank made up of students, lecturers, doctors, professors and industry practitioners.

- Lastly, this study recommends that the collection of tourism statistics in the country be improved so that what the regulatory bodies see is similar to what is really happening on the ground.

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