AN EVALUATION OF THE VALUE ADDITION ASSOCIATED WITH EXHIBITING AT SANGANAI / HLANGANANIWORLD TRAVEL AND TOURISM AFRICA FAIR IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE: RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE 2011 FAIR HELD AT RAINBOW TOWERS IN HARARE

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Key Words

- Value addition
- Exhibition
- Travel Fair

1.0 Introduction

This paper presents the findings of a research carried out for the purposes of establishing the extent to which tourism and hospitality stakeholders enjoy value addition from their participation at the Sanganai/HlangananiWorld Travel and Tourism Africa Fair. This annual event, which is held in Zimbabwe in the month of October, attracts exhibitors from around the world the majority of which are from the African continent.The objective of the research was to establish the views and perceptions of exhibitors with regards to the significance of the event in enhancing their marketing efforts. Key questions focused on value the addition associated with exhibiting at the fair, the quality of logistical services and the appropriateness of the venue for the annual event. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of the research will help the organisers

to add value to the event and provide guidelines for the establishment of best practices in event management in Zimbabwe.

2.0 Literature review

Tourism travel fairs and exhibitions areamongst the wide spectrum of tourism events that are used by destination management organizations (DMOs) to promote their countries as tourist destinations of choice. Travel fairs are a major component of destinations' marketing mix. Both public and private sector organizations in tourism endeavour to include participation at travel fairs in their overall marketing strategy.

Getz (2008) in his bid to discuss the value and role of tourism events in the tourism sector developed a simplified typology as indicated in table 1below:

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS	BUSINESS TRADE	SPORTS COMPITION
Festivals Carnivals Religious events	Meetings Conventions Consumer and Trade shows Fairs	Amateur/professional Spectator/participant
POLITICAL AND STATE	EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC	RECREATIONAL
Summits Royal occasions Political events VIP visits	Conferences Seminars Clinics	Sports and games for fun
ART AND ENTERTAINMENT		PRIVATE EVENTS
Concerts Award ceremonies		Weddings Parties Socials

Table 1 Typology of planned events; adapted from Getz 2008

He points out that the systematic study of tourism events by academics within the industry has been minimal. He gives a detailed chronological review of the research undertaken in the area with the following categories:

- The early years;1960and 1970s where there were very few articles published on events tourism
- The 1980s which showed a noticeable growth of articles on the subject

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- The 1990s which were the "take off" period for academic focus on events tourism including travel fairs
- The current decade(2000s) which has a seen dramatic mushrooming of literature on the subject(Getz p 410)

It is important to note that the chronological review given by Getz hardly gives any indication on how much academic research has been devoted to travel fairs.Similary BeierandDombock (2005) traces the growth and development of fairs, expositions and exhibitions with hardly any specific mention of travel fairs. This is indicative of the level of the knowledge gap that still exists on the topic.

The number and size of travel fairs has grown dramatically in recent years indicating the importance attached to them by stakeholders in the tourism industry as a viable platform for conducting business. For example a quick internet search resulted in a total of 52 tourism and travel fairs listed in the 2012 worldwide calendar of Tourism and Travel events (www.tradefairsservices.com). These range from major international travel fairs like World Travel Market (WTM) in held in November in London, the United Kingdom, the International Tourist Bourse (ITB) held in March in Berlin, Germany, the World Travel Fair (WTF) held in May in Shanghai, Chinato small ones like Abu Dhabi Business Travel show held in the United Arab Emirates in March and Sanganai/Hlanganani travel fair held in October in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The growth of travel fairs worldwide is a direct response to market demand. Stakeholders in the tourism industry perceive travel fairs as a major platform for business networking. For example a survey carried out by Messe Berlin, the organizers of ITB, in March 2012 indicated the following results:

Goal for participation	Degree of Achievement %
New contacts to tourism Industry	83.7
Care of existing business relations	77.2
Competitor/market observation	46.8
Prepare for business transaction	44.9
Advertisement /information for the public	44.5
Publicity in the media	40.

Business transaction	39.9
Participation in congress/conference	19.2
Acquisition of new employees	18.9
Investor relations	13.4

Table 2 Exhibitor goal achievement at 2012 ITB travel fair: www.itb-berlin.de

Mihai (2010) points out that travel fairs represent major opportunities to meet travel professionals in a single place. These sentiments are reflected in the promotional messages of the travel fairs worldwide. For example the World Travel Market claims that "It is a unique opportunity for the whole global travel trade to meet, network, negotiate and conduct business under one roof"Given that the travel fair attracted some 47777 participants in 2011and generated 1.425 billion pounds in travel industry contracts in 2010(www.wtmlondon.com) there is sound evidence to back up the organizers claim that this a major platform for doing business in tourism. Whilst there has been an explosion of research articles on tourism events since the 1990s(Getz 2008)tourism fairs has attracted very limited interests from researchers hence the research undertaken on the Sanganai/Hlanganani Travel Fair makes a meaningful contribution to the knowledge gap on the subject.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Strategy

The researchers employed the survey research strategy and the questionnaire technique to gather data to fulfil the study's objectives. Surveys gather data by asking questions to respondents guided by underlying hypotheses and the literature review. Questionnaires were distributed at random to exhibitors and their representatives. From the total number of questionnaires distributed 65% were returned while 35% of them could not be accounted for. This could have been due to the dynamic nature of proceedings during the event where in some cases people could just collect questionnaires and forget about them due to their busy schedules. The researchers designed the questionnaire in a manner that ensured that it would not take the respondent more than five minutes to complete it.

3.2 Data Gathering Technique: Questionnaire

The questionnaire was informed by the major issues around fairs and exhibitions as cited in the literature reviewed prior to the study. The questionnaire comprised three sections with close

ended and open ended questions which sought views and opinions from respondents. This was necessary to enable the research team to generate results which could easily be generalised to the population when using a random sample.

The first part of the questionnaire sought to gather demographic information about the respondents including the nature of business they were involved in. The second part of the questionnaire had eleven questions based on statements informed by the literature. Attitudes on the eleven statements were measured on a five-point Likert scale with possible answers ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). The last part of the questionnaire consists of three (3) slots requesting the respondent to give suggestions and finally any general comments regarding the fair.

4.0 Findings

The following tables and charts present the findings of the study as extracted from the research questionnaire used by the research team. Data generated by the study were inputted into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analysed using percentages, descriptive statistics (i.e. mean scores and standard deviation), reliability tests and factor analysis. The data analysis process enabled the researchers to draw conclusions and recommendations which call for protracted action from Government and stakeholders in the energy sector while proposing areas for further in-depth research.

4.1 Designation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		24	66.7	66.7	66.7
	Administrative Officer	1	2.8	2.8	69.4
	Administrator	1	2.8	2.8	72.2

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Director	1	2.8	2.8	75.0
Driver	1	2.8	2.8	77.8
Intern Retosa	1	2.8	2.8	80.6
Marketing Officer	1	2.8	2.8	83.3
Operations Manager	1	2.8	2.8	86.1
Pharmacist	1	2.8	2.8	88.9
Sales Manager	1	2.8	2.8	91.7
Student	1	2.8	2.8	94.4
Tours Consultant	1	2.8	2.8	97.2
TourConsultant	1	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 designation

Table 3 above shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of designation. It is clear that respondents in the research are at different levels of authority and influence with the lowest being students. This distribution helped make findings as balanced as expected by the researchers.

4.2 Distribution in Terms of Sex

Sex
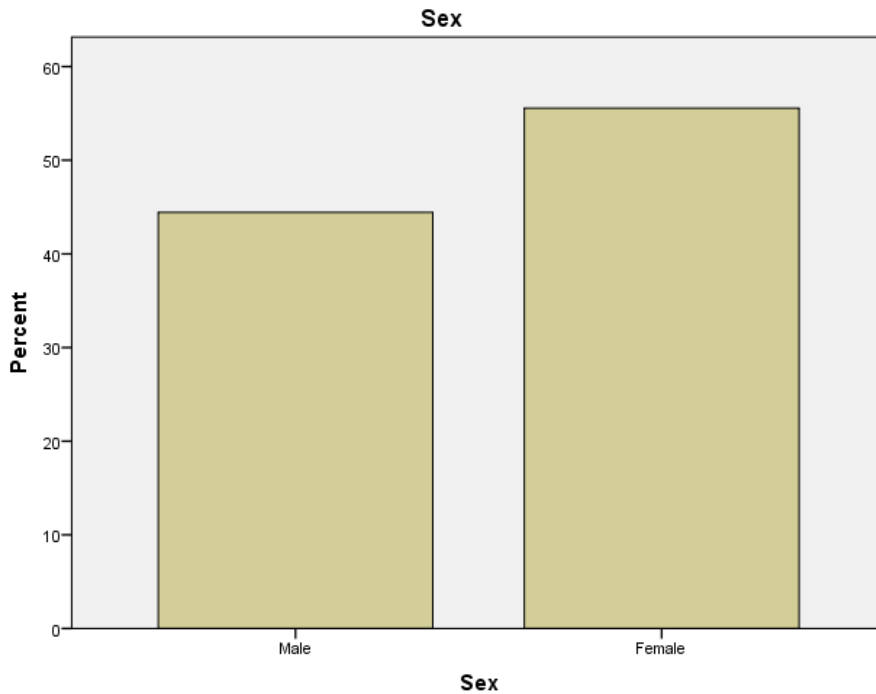
There were more female respondents who returned completed questionnaires than men. This was probably due to the fact that amongst the respondents women were less mobile as they coordinated the public relations efforts of their organisations. Men were more mobile and unpredictable when we visited their stands to collect the questionnaires.

4.3 Nationality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		3	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Dutch	1	2.8	2.8	11.1
	Iranian	1	2.8	2.8	13.9
	South African	2	5.6	5.6	19.4
	Tanzanian	2	5.6	5.6	25.0
	Zimbabwean	27	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 Nationality

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents according to nationality. 75% of the respondents were from Zimbabwe meaning that the findings from the research predominantly present perspectives from Zimbabwe.

4.4 Nature of Business
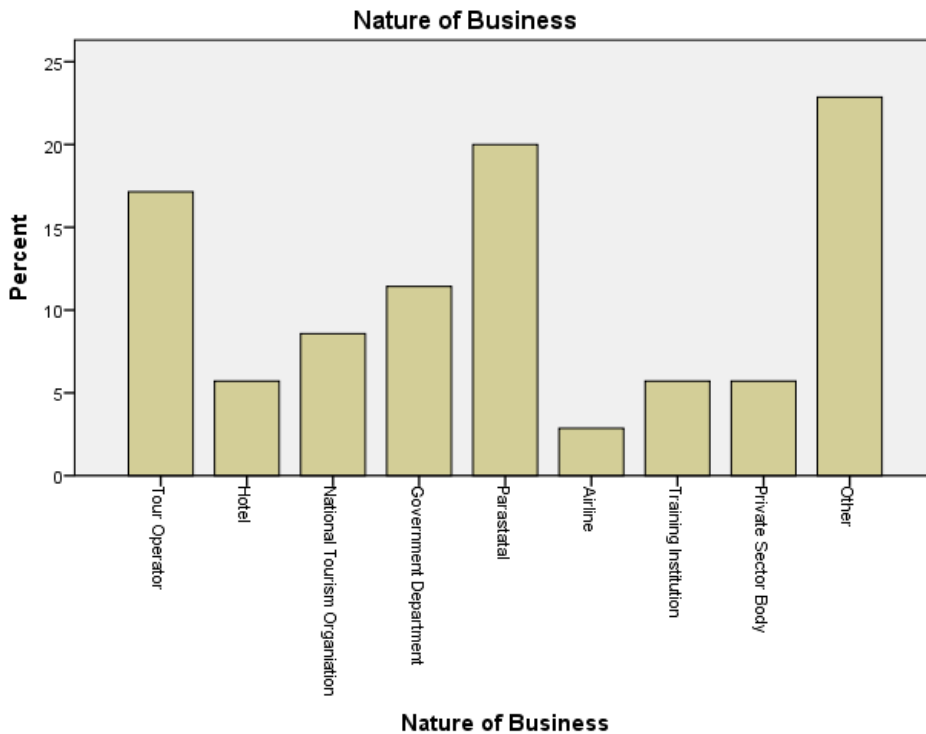
The bar chart shows that respondents were drawn from a wide range of operators directly and indirectly linked to tourism. The distribution helps enhance the validity of conclusions and especially against any criticism related to responses having come from respondents who do not understand tourism marketing and promotion fundamentals.

4.5 This is my Organisation's First Time to Exhibit at the Fair

This is my organisation's first time to exhibit at the expo

The majority of respondents were from organisations that have exhibited at the fair before meaning that responses were from a largely informed audience who have the capacity to compare the trends.

4.6 Significance of the Fair on Company Calendar

The travel and tourism fair is an important event on your company's calendar
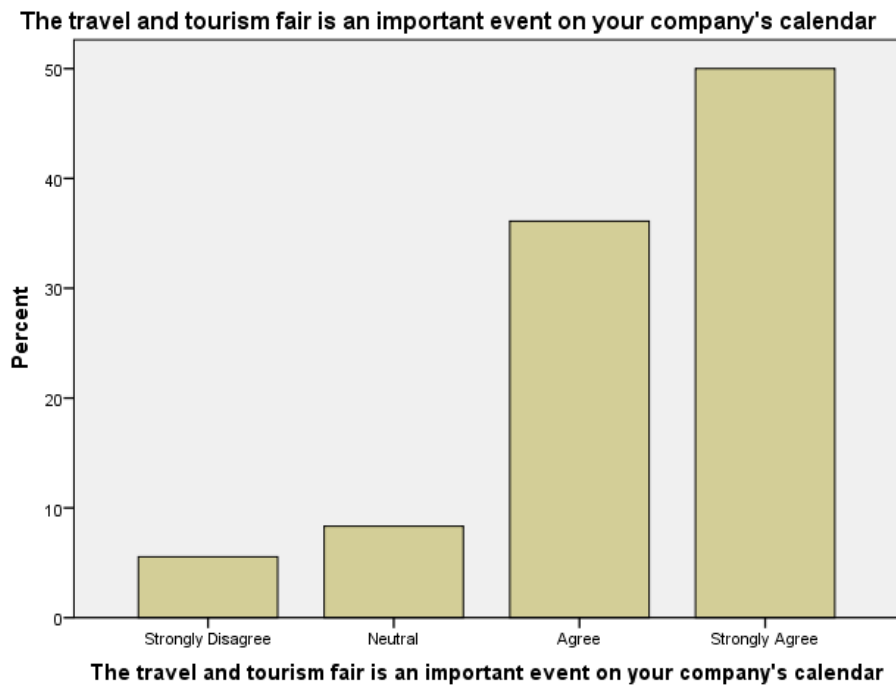
Results here show that the fair was highly regarded and respected by the respondents as more than 80% of them took it to be an important event on their calendars.

4.7 Organisation of the Fair versus Expectations
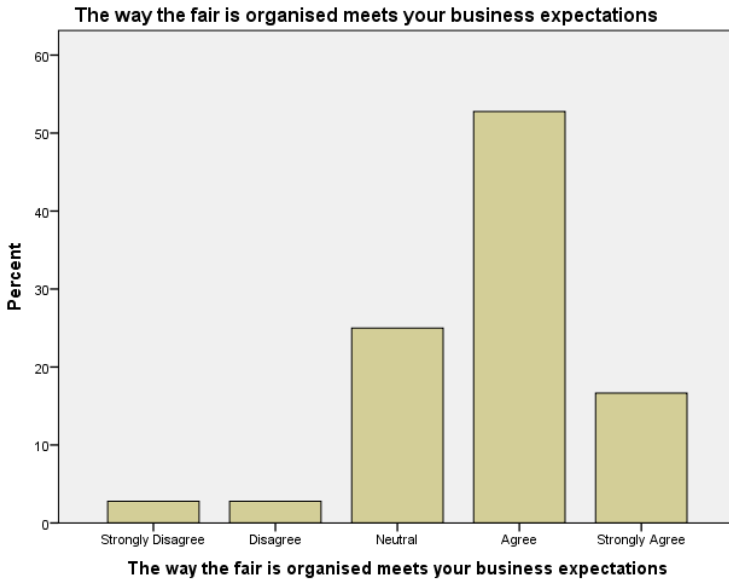
The majority of respondents agreed with this statement, which is a good sign for the organisers of the fair. Its however important to interrogate the meaning of the few who disagreed with the statement or were neutral. Further research would help establish the meaning such a message from the respondents.

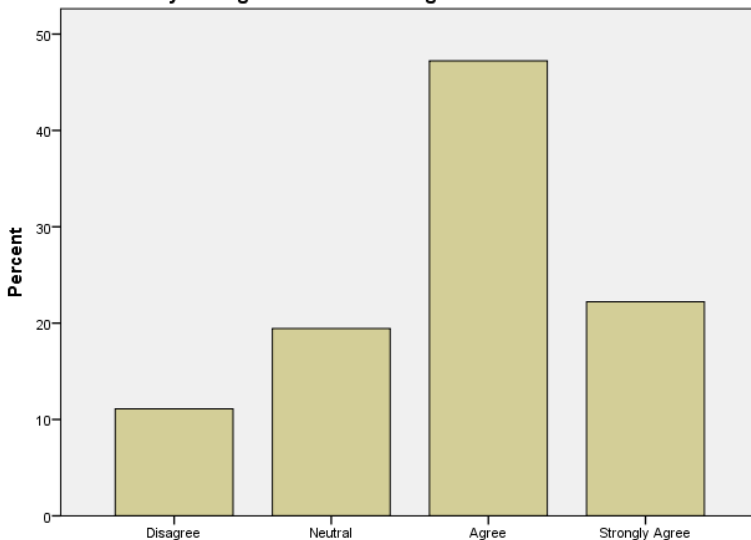## 4.8 The Fair as a Platform for Networking

The fair effectively links of your organisation with new local and international business partners

The results of the survey here are quite encouraging in view of the fact that more than 70% of the respondents believe that the fair effectively links their organisations with national and international business partners. The almost 20% who were neutral and 10% who disagreed with the statement need to be further investigated to establish what this means. This would help stakeholders establish if there are any underlying problems.
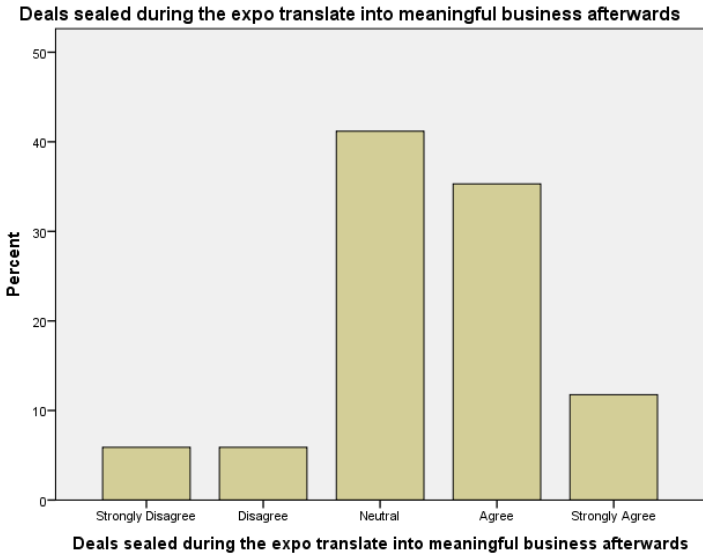
4.9 The Fair Helps Your Organization Realize Significant Increase in Business

The fair hels your organisation realise significant increase in business

4.10 Deals Sealed During the Expo Translate into Meaningful Business Afterwards

Deals sealed during the expo translate into meaningful business afterwards

The response rate tilts to the positive in terms of the value associated with participating at the fair. It is however worrying that more than 40% of the respondents were not keen to express their position with regards to this statement. This could mean that some deals do not get effectively finalized for the benefit of respondents or that respondents have higher expectations.

4.11 The Fair and Value Addition to the Business

The fair is just an event on the calendar which adds little value to my business
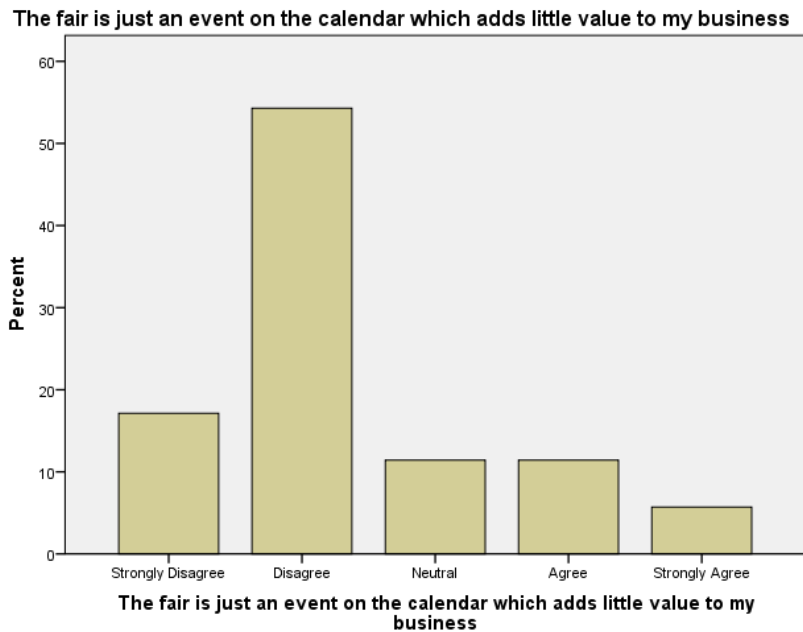
The response pattern here validates the view that the fair is appreciated and valued by exhibitors and stakeholders in the industry. It is however important to research on the meaning of the 15% or so who disagreed with this statement to establish what it means practically.

4.12 Deals Sealed During the Fair Get Forgotten and Abandoned Soon After the Event.

Deals sealed during the fair get forgotten and abandoned soon after the event
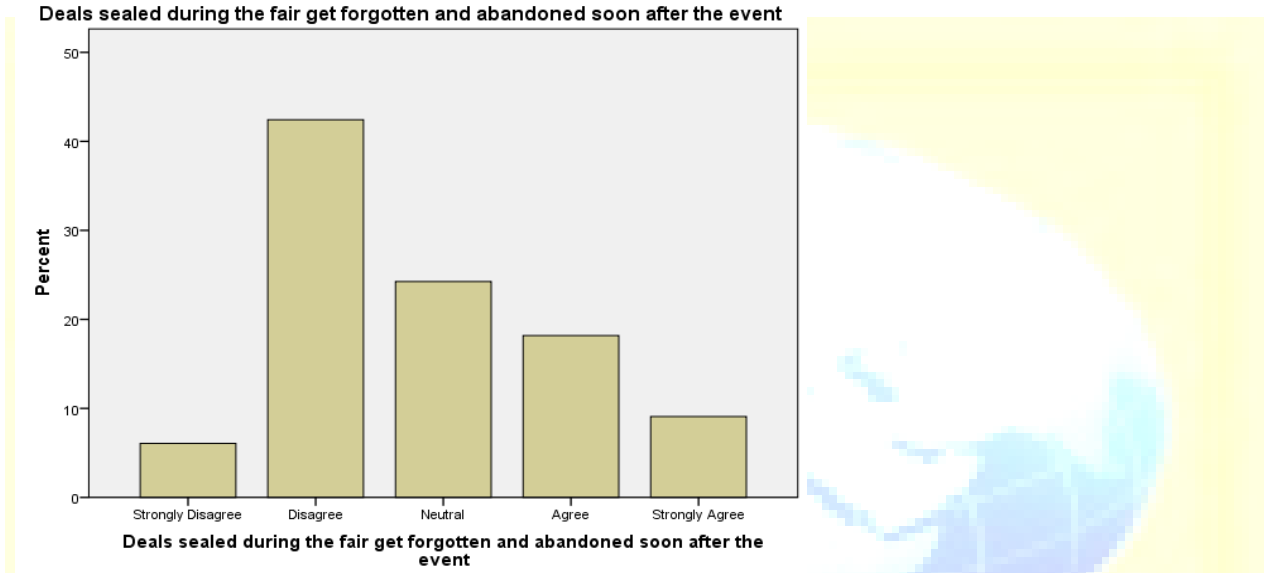
The response pattern here shows that there are cases where deals sealed during the fair get forgotten and abandoned soon after the fair. Stakeholders in the industry need to review this trend to ensure that operators take full advantage of the fair by riving maximum benefits from it.

4.13 The Venue is Most Ideal for the Event

The venue is most ideal for the event

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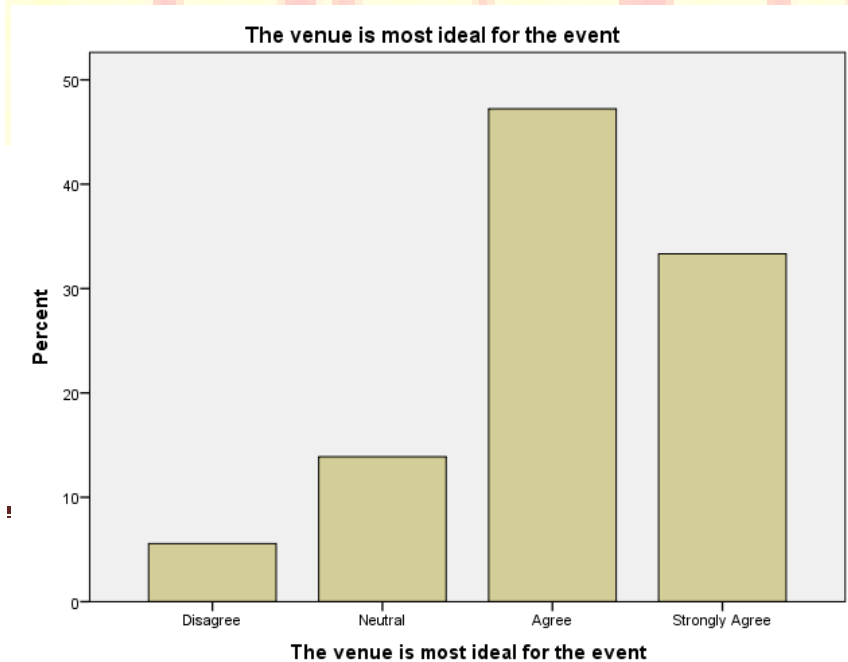
The majority of respondents, which is more than 75%, agrees that the venue is ideal for the event, which is generally encouraging. It is however important for organisers to establish the views and suggestions of the 5% or so who disagree and those that are neutral to see how they could be used to improve the venue.

4.14 The Venue is too Crowded and Inflexible
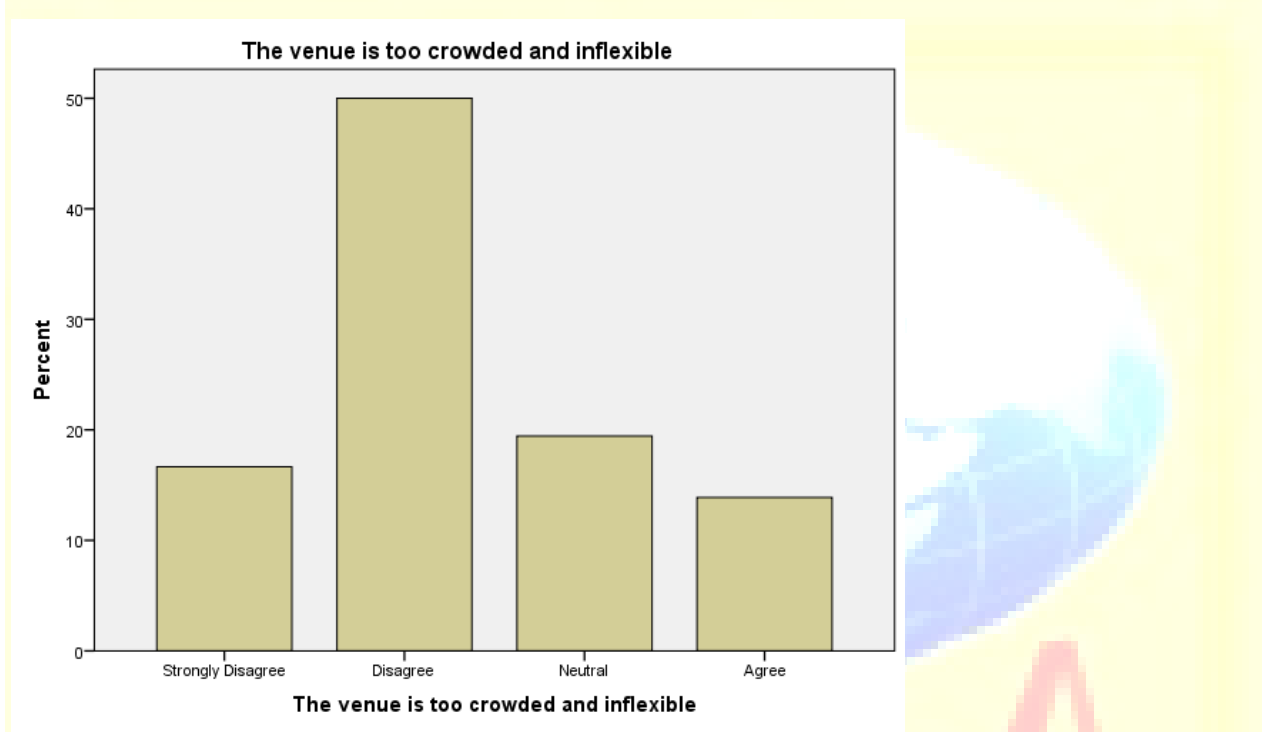
Though the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement more than 10% agreed with it and slightly fewer than 20% were neutral. This response pattern shows that constant research needs to be carried out to establish the appropriateness of the venue and the perceptions of exhibitors.

4.15 Exhibition Stands are Well-priced in View of the Returns

**Exhibition stands are well priced in view of the returns**
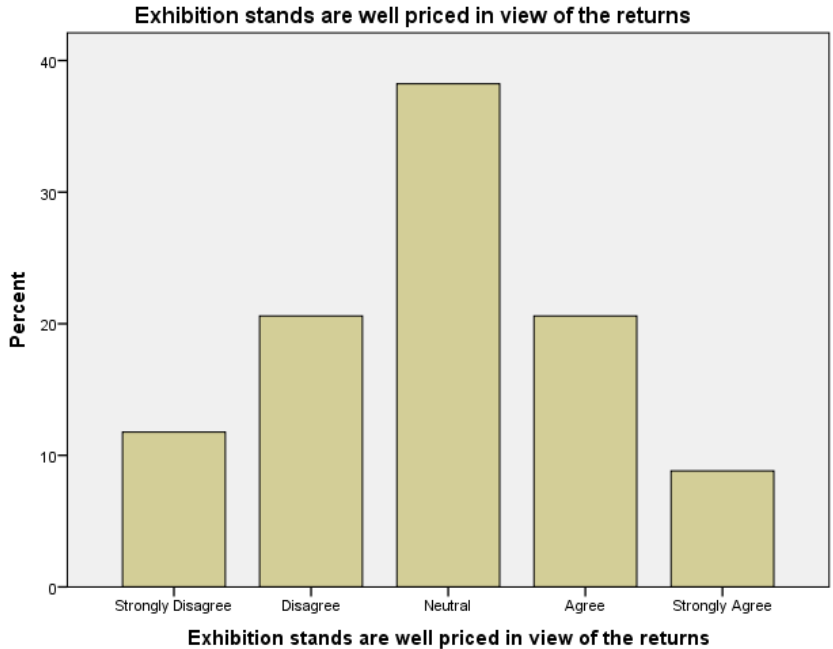
Responses were almost balance on both sides here which is often the case when it comes to issues of pricing, which are often analysed with a lot of subjectivity. The organisers need to constantly carry out research in this area to avoid pricing that inhibits smaller players who still need support and empowerment.

4.16 The Price of Stands is Too High
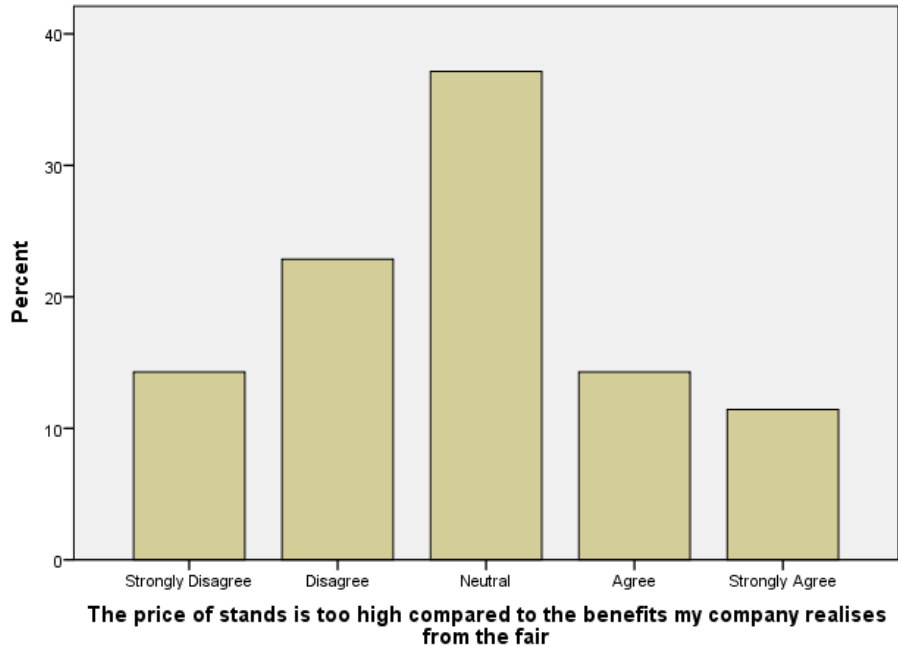
This question sough to test the validity of responses regarding pricing and somehow the pattern is almost similar to that in the previous question.

4.18 Extract of Recommendations from Respondents

Table 5 presents the range of recommendations extracted from the questionnaires

Recommendations from respondents
All fixtures should be in place before the fair starts
Avail buyers' list well in advance
Before planning the event, the hotel needs renovations or the venue should be changed.
Communicate with trade frequently; take advice from industry; ensure there are foreign buyers
Contact exhibitors frequently
Conduct enough advertising.
I do not like the way stands are allocated.
Improve planning; engage participants.
Improve setting up of stands.
Inform all agents on time.
Invite prospective buyers 2 months before the event.
Involve more participants in the planning process to get more ideas.
Must invite small-scale businesses.
Organisations should plan well before the event.
Provide floor plan beforehand.
Should consult various stakeholders who participate in the exhibition.
The private sector should assist and be included in the planning process and ZTA should take advice from the private sector.
There are so many events; we only had 2 days to set up our stands.
Write names and place carpets before the event.
ZTA has to practice more awareness campaigns.
ZTA should promote many travel and tour operators to come and participate in the event.
The place is not good, especially in stand layout; one of our vehicles did not fit at the stand.

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Table 5 Extract of Recommendations from Respondents

5.0 Conclusions

From the findings of the research it can be concluded that:

- The Fair is an important event for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry which brings a lot of benefits to their value chains.

- The Fair provides an ideal platform for stakeholders to network and create business partnerships that enhance competitiveness.

- Although deals sealed during the Fair translate to meaningful business for a number of exhibitors more work needs to be put into ensuring that that all exhibitors enjoy maximum benefits from their participation.

- Stakeholders expressed the need to be involved in a more meaningful way in the planning and organization of the event.

- Stakeholders feel that the organisers could do more to effectively involve them in the planning of the event.

- Logistical issues, such as the setting up of stands and provision of electricity need to be addressed more efficiently and timeously.

- The venue needs to be renovated in preparation for the event for it to effectively meet the needs and expectations of exhibitors.

6.0 Recommendations

- The organisers should effectively screen participants to events hosted by industry practitioners so as to ensure meaningful interaction between buyers and sellers. This will also eradicate gate crushers who tend to cause confusion and overcrowding of venues.

- Organisers need to adhere to the fundamentals of effective event management and emphasise time keeping event logistics planning monitoring and evaluation. This could be enhanced by the appointment or identification of a professional event manager to coordinate and mage the fair.

- Further research needs to be carried out to address the gaps identified in the findings of this research, specifically focusing on value addition and a general cost benefit analysis to aid futuristic planning.

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- Organisers should organize workshops to sensitiseand educate stakeholders on how they could effectively benefit from the fair given some operators seem to be incapable of following up and sealing deals once the Fair is over.

- Organisers should timeously distribute contact details of source market tour operators to local distributors to enable them to make arrangements for appointments ahead of the fair dates.

- The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority needs to partner with a media company to produce a daily newsletter during the travel fair period. Such a daily publication will give exhibitors exposure to the local market and an opportunity to market their products and services as ensuring effective information dissemination in accordance with international best practices.

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