

## **Tour operators perceptions on “Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders” tourism brand.**

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**Abstract:** *Zimbabwe’s brand theme “Discover Zimbabwe” put in place soon after the country’s independence was replaced by “Zimbabwe: Africa’s Paradise” which was characterised by images of economic hardships which negatively affected tourism development resulting in the destination being rebranded to “Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders”. In today’s competitive environment, destinations have to fight for visitors and therefore strategic approaches to destination branding are essential. The failure to incorporate stakeholder perspectives in managing brands to competitively contribute to tourism development can compromise collaboration amongst different players in the tourism sector. This study used a quantitative approach to explore Tour Operators’ perceptions on Zimbabwe’s destination rebranding exercise (Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders), mainly focusing on brand coverage, stakeholder consultation and value for money associated with the brand. Findings from the study indicate that in terms of brand coverage, Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders brand covers extensive aspects (economic, heritage, and destination accessibility). Further the findings indicate that stakeholders were consulted on policy and partnership issues but implementation was the challenge. We therefore concluded that in as much as the brand covers a wide range of aspects, issues addressed during stakeholder consultation have to be implemented for the brand to succeed.*

**Keywords:** *branding, rebranding, tour operator, destination, stakeholders*

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### **I. Introduction**

Zimbabwe’s tourism sector contributed significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country for a notable period of time [1]. At that time, Zimbabwe was being marketed as Africa’s paradise targeting the Western market characterized by high spenders. This resulted in the growth of support industries for example the growth of Tour Operators, Travel Agencies as well as construction of hotels and restaurants [1]. During the same period large numbers of tourists arrived and external organizations such as hotel chains and Tour Operators had great business opportunities.

However, Zimbabwe’s image as a tourist destination was tarnished as a result of political, economic and social challenges in the past decade leading to reduced tourist arrivals [2]. Empirical evidence by [3] has shown that due to the economic, social and political situation that prevailed in Zimbabwe after the turn of the century, the tourism sector has produced its worst performance thereafter than any period since the country gained independence. During this period the country witnessed many tourism players shutting down their companies and some making losses as there was little or no business [4]. Zimbabwe had been one of the most visited countries in Southern Africa during the 1980’s and 1990’s with tourists patronizing the Victoria Falls, Inyanga, Great Zimbabwe and Kariba [4]. The Zimbabwean tourism sector shed thousands of staff as a result of the shrinking market due to concerns on political, social and economic upheavals that tarnished the destination’s image hence the need for rebranding Zimbabwe.

Since tourism is a highly competitive sector with most destinations offering more or less the same product, tourists are facing a wide range of variety [5]. In order for a destination to be recognized by potential tourists, there is need for strategic positioning establishing an acknowledged brand image [5]. Consequently, destination management has become a serious concern for Zimbabwe in trying to convince lookers to bookers [4]. Destination rebranding is important for the success of any destination whose appeal would have suffered in the targeted source markets since it allows for the growth and diversification of the tourism product [6]. Nowadays destinations are fighting for increasingly discerning tourists in search of the impressive and interesting places to visit [7] and as such it was inevitable for Zimbabwe to rebrand.

In 2010, Zimbabwe launched a new tourism brand called “Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders”. The brand “Africa’s Paradise” was marred by images of economic hardships which negatively affected tourism development resulting in the destination being rebranded to “Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders” [8]. [9]

postulates that the key to luring visitors is to differentiate the destination and to market it to potential visitors. Tourism stakeholders such as Tour Operators play a significant role in decision making as they deal directly with tourists [5]. This is supported by [10] who concluded that views of tourism players are critical in creating a brand image. In another view, the destination marketing organizations (DMO's) and the enterprises are involved in the building and marketing of destination tourist services [11]. If the tourism players are not involved, there is likely to be a gap between what is being marketed by the Destination Management Organisation and what is actually being sold on the market. It is therefore imperative to involve stakeholders in destination branding. Academics have argued that places are too complex to include in branding discussions as they have too many stakeholders with too little control [12]. The purpose of this study therefore was to explore Tour Operator perception on destination (re)branding.

## **II. Literature review**

### **2.1 Branding**

[13] propose that branding is the act of impressing a product, service, or business on the mind of a customer or set of customers. This definition reveals branding as a process not a once off event and is applied to anything that organisations want customers to notice. Thus it calls for continuous review, update and implementation. In another view, branding is not only imposing the created image; the consumers also influence the brand through their perceptions [14]. Thus the branding process aims to make sure customers perceive the product or service as desired by the company, basing the branding strategy on real facts and product strengths. Looking at Zimbabwe as a destination, destination branding therefore becomes an important component in positioning the country as a prime tourist destination. According to [15] destination branding is:-

*“the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice.”*

Another definition by [16] of destination branding is:-

*“an organizing principle that involves orchestrating the messages and experiences associated with the place to ensure that they are distinctive, compelling, memorable and rewarding as possible. Successful destinations brands resides in the customers heart and mind, clearly differentiate themselves, deliver on a valued promise and simply customer choices”*

The two definitions point to the same critical aspects i.e. creation of a positive image in the mind of the tourist and a promise for high value for money that last for longer in the customer's hearts and minds.

In a bid to create destination brand, destinations have a number of options. Destinations can be branded purely as tourism destinations without looking at other sectors of the economy. However [17] who carried out a qualitative study on branding umbrellas in Denmark concluded that cooperation in branding especially in overlapping target areas can bring positive results. [18] did a quantitative study on measuring of brand orientation in the context of destination branding and examines its relationship to brand performance and brand leadership by senior management. Using data from destination marketing organizations he concluded that brand orientation consists of five dimensions – brand culture, departmental coordination, brand communication, stakeholder partnership, and brand reality – and has a strong positive impact on brand performance. The findings also suggest that leadership by senior management is an important determinant of destination brand orientation. The results show that branding without a clear orientation leads to confusion among stakeholders and is not ideal for the industry.

In a qualitative study by [19] on nation branding carried out in India, it was concluded that it was difficult for a brand to represent vast and diverse populations. This study informs the value of diversity in coming up with a brand. Thus earlier work by [12] placed emphasis on identification of the brand's values and their translation into suitably emotionally appealing personalities and the target and efficient delivery of that message. The views of these two groups of authors place at the fore the need to cover all the essential elements that makes a brand despite the magnitude of the differences in key aspects of tourism in a particular destination. In their study [15] concluded that a destination brand should sufficiently cover image, recognition, differentiation, consistency, brand message, emotional response, and create expectations in the mind of the target market.

### **2.2 Why rebrand a destination?**

Rebranding can be done for several reasons starting from organizational issues like the need to restructure the company and the way it does business, to needing to attract a different target audience to the

brand, to changing the name that has become obsolete or just unfit for current trends or just for legal reasons [12]. Tourism is an extremely competitive industry and to compete effectively destinations have to deliver excellent value to visitors [20]. This depends on many aspects working together in unity that is, services and experiences including a range of public services, private products and community interactions and hospitality [21]. As such, it is vital that the various components of the visitor's stay are managed and coordinated to maximize customer value throughout the visit.

Effective destination management is very important during and after rebranding a destination [15] and [1]. It allows destinations to maximize tourism value for visitors while ensuring local benefits and sustainability of a destination and the tourism sector at large [22]. When (re)branding, destinations should establish a strong and unique positioning matching the current market trends [1] and [2]. This can be done by developing the destination's attractions and resources in a way that highlights the unique characteristics of the destination [2]. According to [23], re-branding brings about awareness and helps to reinforce brand positioning and desired points of difference. Furthermore, rebranding enables a destination to offer a different kind of experience compared to other destinations thereby bringing about awareness [20] and [8]. It can be used to convey the message that a wider and different range of place products are now on offer to business investors, visitors and tourists [24]. If done effectively, destination rebranding will attract investors and visitors, appeal to the government officials and engender civic pride [25].

Rebranding acts as an image builder and carries meaning and relevance to the tourist [26]. Destination rebranding helps to revive a pre-existing but outdated place image in order to make it more relevant to a target market [27] and this may lead to customer loyalty which could ultimately result in increased commercial value. An important factor to note is the issue of service delivery. Delivering excellent quality experiences and superior value for money by ensuring that all aspects of visitor experience are well coordinated creates customer loyalty and also enables customer retention [27]. Destination Management Organizations (DMO's) are increasingly realizing the value and power of a strong destination brand. Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) as a leader of the rebranding exercise in Zimbabwe has facilitated rebranding to manage loyalty and retention of visitors. Ultimately the process of re-branding should be based on reliability and credibility; otherwise the audience loses trust and confidence in the brand [28].

### **2.3 Stakeholder consultation on (re)branding**

The stakeholder perspective is, however, under theorised in branding discussion as a whole [29]. According to [30], a corporate brand needs to deal with the requirements of multiple stakeholders especially in developing a successful brand. First and foremost a brand has to be created, for instance a qualitative study was conducted in Turkey on how to market Turkey as a tourism destination. [31] argued that centralisation of destination marketing inhibits destination growth as it favours developed destinations at the expense of developing destinations. This problem could be resolved by embracing local authorities and other stakeholders in developing destinations. These views highlight the significant part played by stakeholders in developing a destination. However it does not give details on how and the extent to which the stakeholders can be involved in destination development particularly in branding.

[32] conducted a qualitative study on destination brand identity, values and community in Australia. They concluded that destination branding requires a holistic approach which is reflective of the multiplicity of the values that constitute destination places. These findings reinforce earlier work by [31] and [33] that branding is not an end but a continuous socially constructed process that accounts for local destination characteristics. In his study [31] emphasised destination values and characteristics as key considerations in destination branding. Whilst this study was significant in informing the branding process, the identified values and characteristics were not subject to scientific testing. Thus quantitative studies to test the applicability of the values and characteristics in branding a destination were deemed necessary.

Destination branding is traditionally a top down approach that starts with National Tourism Organisations, [10]. Using qualitative methodology in Finland on Brand recovery: A quick fix model for brand structure collapse, [10] argues that without proper stakeholder participation destination branding can create a brand that generates too high tourists expectations from a destination compared to what the destination can offer on the ground. This results in unsatisfied customers. Unsatisfied customers are not good for both destination marketing organisation and destination stakeholders as it limits repeat business and ability to convince future clients of your products and services. These results are in line with results by [34] who conducted a quantitative study on effects of communication on tourists' hotels reservation process and concluded that there is a strong relationship between marketing and hotel reservations. Thus a holistic approach is ideal in trying to create a realistic brand that is appealing to the clients and can be satisfied by the stakeholders on the ground when the tourists visit the destination.

Most tourism policies are developed by the central government, [10]. However when it comes to implementation, there are a lot of stakeholders involved. In a qualitative study by [35] on tourism policy and

destination marketing in South Africa, they concluded that a positive chain of influence in which a destination is portrayed in synergy with the tourism policy and objectives leads to sustainable tourism development. Although the study looked at stakeholders and policy developers other key issues on religion and culture were not tackled yet they determine the willingness of stakeholders to participate in tourism.

In a quantitative study carried out in Hawaii on role of residents in branding tourism destinations by [36], it was concluded that destination marketing organizations and tourism service providers should understand the importance of the internal branding processes among residents, and should incorporate them into their destination branding strategy. These results emphasize the importance of community ownership of the branding process and the brand. However in Zimbabwe no study has been done to look at the extent of involvement of stakeholders (whether players or community members) in the (re)branding process.

## **2.4 Role of tour operators in destination (re)branding**

The complex situation with various stakeholders is that their interests and needs demand a good understanding and management from managers in destination branding organizations and companies [37]. Stakeholder management gives directions about how to treat stakeholders, prevent conflicts and build long term relationships [37]. A critical factor lacking adequate examination is stakeholder management in the context of destination branding [37], and collaborative destination marketing in the form of tourism partnerships from both practical and theoretical perspectives [31]. It is thus imperative to look at the role of Tour Operators on issues of (re)branding a destination. Tour operators play a pivotal role in managing a brand because they have direct contact with the tourists.

Tour Operators act as intermediaries, that is, they liaise between tourists and the tourism service and as such it is important that they must be involved in (re)branding so as to sell a product they are well versed with [21]. [38] notes that, intermediaries can either be wholesalers (tour operators) who buy in bulk or travel agents who form the link chain. [10] states that making use of a Tour Operator saves costs, reduces risks, allow greater convenience as well as greater consumer protection. As a result of the mounting connotation, it is necessary to consult them on customer’s views about the destination before or even after (re)branding. [38] acknowledges that Tour Operators are important middlemen in the travel-distribution system and they are the first and most influential role players in the tourism flow chain.

More so, [21] also note that, tour operators assemble the main elements of a holiday (transport, accommodation and ancillary services) into a single package and sell it to the travel agents, airlines, hotels and car rental enterprises. Tour operators also conduct research, contact suppliers, cost the package and sell the holiday package, [10]. This implies that they are well versed with consumer needs; hence it is imperative not to shun contacting tour operators when a destination is being (re)branded. [39] note that, in order to make profit, tour operators rely on economies of scale in which regard they capitalize on bulk buying at heavily discounted rates.

Destinations also benefit from tour operators’ international networks, especially in developing countries that have a limited budget for tourist marketing [21]. Tour Operators are important stakeholders in destination marketing. Since deal directly with tourists thus they are more aware of their needs than DMO’s. Furthermore, tour operators offer information about the destination to tourists even if the tourists do not eventually use their services. [40], state that, tour operators fulfill several roles that are not limited to the carrying of traffic out of the country, but that can also influence the choice of consumers, the practices of suppliers and the development of specific buying patterns in a destination.

It is therefore crucial for DMO’s and other destination marketers to maintain good relations with tourism players as they facilitate the marketing of a destination. [40] acknowledge that the activities of tour operators have substantial benefits for the suppliers of travel - related products, consumers, travel agents and the destination to which they belong. The success of a destination lies on, but not limited to Tour Operators. Properly managed stakeholders are fundamental for successful destination branding, [41].

## **III. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Sampling Techniques**

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the following reasons: to ensure that the sample will not have by any chance undue proportion one section within the tour operating business. The population worked in different departments therefore had to be divided into strata according to operations and then the sample was picked randomly from each type of operation. Since the population included the whole of Zimbabwe we took the ZTA database of all tour operators.

### 3.2 Research design

A descriptive research design was used in conducting the research study in order to get cemented tour operators perceptions on the Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders tourism brand. Investigations were carried out with major tour operating companies in Zimbabwe. We used questionnaires in obtaining information from the tour operators. All questionnaires were written in English. The study population comprised of 100 respondents drawn from the tour operating organisations.

### 3.3 Data analysis

One way ANOVA was used to test the strength of differences in perceptions towards Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders tourism brand. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 16 and graphs were done using the Sigma Plot and MS Excel 2007 version, and related using t-tests to the literature review, and journals used in the study together with other studies elsewhere.

### 3.4 Limitations of the study

The first limitation deals with the representation of the research. In the study, samples were drawn only major tourist areas in Zimbabwe (i.e. Harare, Victoria Falls, Kariba and Inyanga). If a diversified sample were drawn from different parts of Zimbabwe, then it would be more representative and more reflective of the tour operators’ perceptions.

A total of 55 out of 100 respondents were analysed across the identified stakeholder category as well and there were a number of findings that could be seen to be repeated and replicated among respondents of different operations. As discussed, the operations categories were devised as a means of identifying those most engaged with tourism branding in Zimbabwe. There was however a great deal of blurring across operations categories. It should be emphasised that because of the individuality of the tour operators in many cases it was not possible to see findings replicated in terms of perceptions on Zimbabwe’s tourism brand.

## IV. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for the data collected are shown in the tables below;

**Table 1: Brand Coverage**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Archaeological sites and museums	2.29	1.183	1.400
Architecture (ruins, famous buildings, whole towns)	2.24	.971	.942
Art, Sculpture, Crafts, Galleries, Festivals, events	2.24	.883	.780
Religious festivals, Pilgrimages	3.16	1.053	1.110
Complete cultures and sub cultures (folk and primitive)	2.71	1.183	1.400
Zimbabwe bird	2.74	1.465	2.145
Nyaminyami	2.47	1.202	1.445
Inflation	3.39	1.220	1.489
Shortage of commodities	3.47	1.246	1.553
Dollarization	2.58	1.244	1.548
Main rivers	2.18	1.087	1.181
Land lockedness	2.16	1.053	1.110
Mountains	2.00	1.065	1.135
Wildlife and nature	1.82	1.062	1.127
Accessibility	2.39	1.175	1.381

Scale: 1= strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Not Sure 4=Disagree 5=strongly disagree

The extent to which rebranding (“Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders”) sufficiently covers natural attractions, economic factors, heritage, accessibility and activities and land lockedness was measured using fifteen items. The respondents were required to indicate their views with the help of a 5 point Likert Scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree). The mean value ranges from 1-3 implying that the responses range from strongly agree to not sure.

**Table 2: Consultation on rebranding**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Marketing	2.24	1.324	1.753
Investment	2.61	1.366	1.867
Tourism development zones	2.95	1.314	1.727
Policy formulation	2.95	1.251	1.565
Public private partnerships	2.61	1.220	1.489
The seven wonders of Zimbabwe	2.16	1.386	1.920
Immigration policy	2.61	1.443	2.083
Accommodation policy	2.26	1.349	1.821

Scale: 1= strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Not Sure 4=Disagree 5=strongly disagree

The respondents were asked the extent to which they were consulted in coming up with the new brand, “Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders”. Eight items were used for this section (Table 2, above). A five Likert Scale was also used. Mean values range around 2-3 implying, that is, “agree” and “not sure”. Standard deviation for all the variables is above 0 indicating that they are widely scattered around the mean. Tourism development zones and policy formulation (mean score=2.95) achieved the highest means followed by investment, public private partnership and immigration policy (mean score=2.61). The least mean score is the seven wonders of Zimbabwe (mean score=2.16).

**Table 3: Value for money**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Social Value	2.05	.837	.700
Emotional Value	2.45	.760	.578
Performance quality value	2.16	.754	.569
Price value	2.53	1.006	1.013
Psychological Value	2.63	.852	.725
Logical value	2.76	.714	.510
Cognitive (perceived value)	2.82	.801	.641
Acceptability value	2.68	.873	.762

Scale: 1= Very High 2= High 3= Not Sure 4= Low 5= Very Low

Tour Operators were consulted on the extent to which tourists get value for money in terms of 8 items (Table 3, above). Mean values range around 2 implying that the responses are ranging around high. The overall descriptive result is that cognitive (perceived value) has the highest mean (mean score=2.82) and social value has the lowest mean (mean score=2.05).

#### **4.2 Factor analysis and Reliability analysis**

Factor analysis was done to address the problem of analyzing the structure of the interrelationships (correlations) among a large number of variables (e.g., test scores, test items, questionnaire responses) by defining a set of common underlying dimensions, known as factors. Reliability analysis was also done to check the consistency in the measurement scale [42]. Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used for reliability analysis as it is an easy and generally acceptable estimate of reliability [42]. The recommended minimum acceptability value for  $\alpha$  is 0.70, although some studies use  $\alpha$  as low as 0.50 [43]. This study used Cronbach alpha score of 0.50 as it was a new measure. Results of the factor and reliability analyses are as shown in Table 5 below;

**Table 4: Reliability Analysis and Factor Analysis**

Construct	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Tests
<b>Brand coverage</b>							<b>Cronbach alpha .752</b>
Natural Attractions	A11	.896					<b>.863</b>
	A13	.744					
	A14	.773					
Economic factors	A2		.783				<b>.770</b>
	A8		.668				
	A9		.701				
	A10		.686				
Heritage	A1			.715			<b>.742</b>
	A4			.682			
	A5			.694			
	A6			.640			
	A7			.740			
Accessibility and activities	A3						<b>.531</b>
	A15						
<b>Consultation in rebranding</b>							<b>Cronbach alpha .928</b>
Policy	B4	.936					<b>.940</b>
	B5	.932					
	B6	.914					
	B7	.932					
	B8	.916					
Tourism Promotion	B1		.830				<b>.890</b>
	B2		.817				
	B3		.879				
<b>Value for money</b>							<b>Cronbach alpha .859</b>
Social attributes	C1	.669					<b>.786</b>
	C2	.734					
	C3	.720					
	C4	.810					
Intrinsic values	C5		.759				<b>.812</b>
	C6		.735				
	C7		.765				
	C8		.798				

Factor analysis on all items was done for data reduction and refinement. It resulted in 5 major factors in the first section dealing with brand coverage. These are natural attractions, economic factors, heritage, land lockedness as well as accessibility and activities. Overall, brand coverage had a Cronbach alpha of .752 showing a high level of consistency as it is above .5. Natural attractions, economic factors, heritage and accessibility and activities had Cronbach scores of 0.863, 0.770, 0.742 and 0.531 respectively which is significant in measuring what the study was exploring. Land lockedness was deemed insignificant.

After factor analysis was done for the second set of variables representing consultation in the rebranding process, 2 components were derived namely consultation on policy as well as tourism promotion issues. Consultation has a Cronbach alpha score of 0.928. The factors measured what they intended to measure with consultation on policy having a Cronbach alpha score of 0.940 and tourism promotion 0.890.

Factor analysis was also done for eight variables representing value for money and 2 components were derived. The overall Cronbach alpha is 0.859 which is significant. Socio-economic factors and Intrinsic factors indicated a high degree of consistency with Cronbach alpha scores of 0.786 and 0.812 respectively.

## V. Discussion and Implications

This study was attempted using both quantitative methods with one way ANOVA and t-tests being done to measure variations in respondents' views towards rebranding issues in Zimbabwe.

### 5.1 Brand coverage

Respondents were asked for their views on what the Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders tourism brand covers on a five point Likert Scale. Of the 15 variables, 5 components were derived and measured what they intended to measure with a Cronbach alpha score of 0.752 which is consistent. T-tests were run to determine statistical differences on the issues concerning brand coverage. Most (73%) of the respondents were in agreement with the fact that the new brand covered aspects on economic issues, natural attractions, heritage and accessibility and activities. All of the components were significant ( $p < .001$ ) after one sample t-tests were run. Repeated tests with one way ANOVA proved the same results which demonstrated that the tests within-subjects effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Of the variables, the most important aspects were economic factors, heritage and accessibility and activities respectively. 85% of the respondents were of the view that “Zimbabwe: A World of Wonders” brand covered economic aspects. This was attributed to the fact that Zimbabwe was coming from a decade of economic crisis hence the brand had to cover economic aspects in order to attract investor confidence. This is supported by [8] who states that due to the economic situation that prevailed in Zimbabwe in 2001, the tourism sector produced its worst performance in tourism and hence the need to rebrand. The country suffered a major decrease in its tourism receipts [3] and [1], transport expenses escalated disproportionately as a result of fuel surcharges; hence coming from such a background respondents noted that it was ideal for the brand to cover economic aspects. This would redress issues on the quality of Zimbabwe’s tourism product.

Tourism contributes to the economy of a country in several ways. Tourists contribute by paying for their accommodation in hotels, going on safaris, eating in restaurants, buying curios, paying for their travelling, visiting attractions and even participating in recreational and adventure activities, [10]. Basically, all activities have an impact on the economy directly or indirectly through the multiplier effect. [10] conclude that, the growth in tourism does not only have a positive impact on the tourism industry, but also influences many other sectors of the economy such as, the agricultural, manufacturing and retail sectors.

On the aspect of Heritage coverage, 70% of the respondents were of the view that the brand covers the issue of heritage extensively. The government may gain from tourism in terms of the taxes that are levied on the tourists who visit attractions and world heritage sites. Heritage tourism encompasses elements of living culture, history, natural history of a place and the natural environment that communities value and steward for the future, [44].

Accessibility and activities is another aspect that was investigated. A fairly high number of the respondents (67%) indicated that the brand covered accessibility and activity issues. There has been a growth in the number of activities in Victoria Falls which is the country’s main attraction. [21] defines the tourism product as an amalgam of many components, including the attractions, facilities, image, price and **accessibility** of a destination. Activities are the main drivers of the tourism industry. Furthermore, since one of destination branding’s main purpose is to attract visitors, the input of past and potential visitors may also provide valuable design insights.

### 5.2 Brand consultation

After factor analysis was done on 8 variables representing consultation in the rebranding process, 2 components were derived as shown below, Cronbach alpha 0.928. ( $p < .05$ ). 62% of the respondents agreed to have been consulted in the rebranding process in terms of policy and partnerships and tourism promotion.

**Table 5: Brand Consultation**

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	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Policy and Partnership	12.956	37	.000	2.516
Tourism promotion	13.807	37	.000	2.776

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A fair number of respondents (71%) indicated that they were consulted in rebranding clearly noting the importance of policy and partnership. These respondents highlighted that they were consulted in terms of the policy though to a lesser extent. [10] is in support of the involvement of stakeholders in brand implementation since most tourism policies are developed by the central government. However when it comes to implementation, there are a lot of stakeholders involved. In a qualitative study by [35] on tourism policy and

destination marketing in South Africa, they concluded that a positive chain of influence in which a destination is portrayed in synergy with the tourism policy and objectives leads to sustainable tourism development. Although the study looked at stakeholders and policy developers other key issues on religion and culture are not tackled yet they determine the willingness of stakeholders to participate in tourism. According to [30], a corporate brand needs to deal with the requirements of multiple stakeholders especially in developing a successful brand. These views highlight the significant part played by stakeholders in developing a destination

First and foremost a brand has to be created for instance a qualitative study was conducted in Turkey on marketing of Turkey as a Tourism destination. [31] argued that centralisation of destination marketing inhibits destination growth as it favors developed destinations at the expense of developing destinations. This problem they suggested could be resolved by embracing local authorities and other stakeholders in developing destinations. These views highlight the significant part played by stakeholders in developing a destination. Using qualitative methodology in Finland on Brand recovery: a quick fix model for brand structure collapse, [10] argues that without proper stakeholder participation destination branding can create a brand that generates too high tourists expectations from a destination compared to what the destination can offer on the ground. This results in unsatisfied customers.

Unsatisfied customers are not good for both destination marketing organisation and destination stakeholders as it limits repeat business and ability to convince future clients of your products and services. These results are in line with results from [34] who conducted a quantitative study on effects of communication on tourists’ hotels reservation process and concluded that there is strong relationship between marketing and hotel reservations.

Zimbabwe experienced crises and there was need to excessively market the country as a tourist destination in order to attract new and repeat tourists. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) responsible for promotion had to excessively market the destination. The key to luring visitors is to differentiate the destination and to market it to potential visitors [9]. In a study by [45] it was concluded that there is need to concentrate on promoting unpopular and/or unknown tourist areas to put the country in a class of its own through sourcing of foreign currency for the promotion of these tourist resources in line with the demands of the new international tourist. There was a need to brand Zimbabwe’s undiscovered tourist gems in line with stakeholder preferences.

### 5.3 Value for money

Eight items were used to determine value for money. 2 components were derived after factor analysis and a reliability test had a Cronbach alpha score of 0.859. These factors are socio-economic factors and intrinsic factors which proved to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) after one sample t-tests were run.

**Table 6: Value for money**

	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Intrinsic factors	25.859	37	.000	2.724
Socio-economic factors	21.452	37	.000	2.296

66% of the respondents were of the notion that the rebranding exercise has somewhat contributed towards value for money in terms of tourist’s attitudes and patterns. A satisfied tourist will consider revisiting a destination therefore tourists should get value for money. From this viewpoint, the tourist is an active participant in the production of tourism spaces and actively acts on them and interact with them with the consequence that tourists practice contribute to the ways in which places are constituted [46]. [6] suggest that, it is far better for countries to identify where their real genius lays, their unique abilities or potential that really does put them in a class of their own.

Respondents proved that in order for tourists to get value for money, there is need for proper visitors’ management so as to reach satisfaction. In a qualitative study by [19] on nation branding carried out in India, it was concluded that it was difficult to represent vast and diverse populations. This study informs the value of diversity in coming up with a brand. Thus earlier work by [12] placed emphasis on identification of the brand’s values and their translation into suitably emotionally appealing personalities and the target and efficient delivery of that message.

In a quantitative study carried out in Hawaii on role of residents in branding tourism destinations by [36], it was concluded that destination marketing organizations and tourism service providers should understand the importance of the internal branding processes among residents, and should incorporate them into their destination branding strategy. Involving local people facilitates a smooth relationship between tourists and the community hence influencing both social and intrinsic factors. These results emphasize the importance of

community ownership of the branding process and the brand. However in Zimbabwe no study has been done to look at the extent of involvement of stakeholders (whether players or community members) in the branding process. Important to note is that many countries are still grappling with after effects of the global financial crises experienced from around 2008. Zimbabwe is one of them as indicated by the respondent’s views. As such time and money for tourism purposes are becoming scarce. Thus most people want to spend their hard earned income, little leisure time on destinations with emotional appeal, high conversational capital and celebrity value, [12].

## VI. Conclusion

Zimbabwe has unique opportunities for tourism development. Findings from the study indicate that it is ideal for the country to be seen as “A World of Wonders”. The country has a rich biodiversity concentrated in its national parks, heritage sites and prime tourist destinations. Despite this potential, Zimbabwe is somewhat not yet a tourism hotspot. Product development remains unevenly drawn across rural and urban lines. Ambiguous perceptions from visitors as reported by tour operators need to be redressed to promote Zimbabwe’s tourism brand. Because of immense economic changes, value for money of Zimbabwe’s tourism, and profound policy reforms Zimbabwe cannot be spared for the emerging discipline of destination branding and marketing. Despite economic recession in the past decade, the country has potential for achieving the appropriate balance of marketing and management, balancing the expectations and interests of visitors and residents. This study contributes to the field of destination (re)branding. By focusing on tour operators’ perceptions, the study provides a new perspective on destination brand development. The study also seeks to alter the role attributed to tour operators in the overall destination brand development process so that they can be seen as important stakeholders. Though not definitive, the findings of the study suggest that long-term success and strength of a destination brand is contingent on whether the brand’s promise (coverage) and value is effectively and consistently confirmed between visitors and tour operating organisations. Somewhat overlooked in terms of the brand building process, tour operators have to be regarded highly in brand development efforts championed by the DMO. Finally, this study points to the need for a large scale study encompassing tourism stakeholders perceptions on Zimbabwe’s tourism brand for a coordinated brand building process.

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