DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN AND AROUND MASVINGO, ZIMBABWE

Phanos Matura[1],
Jemitias Mapira[2][i]
[1]Lecturer, Tourism and Hospitality,
Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe,
Tourism Consultant,
Masvingo City, Zimbabwe
[2]Professor, Geography and
Environmental Science,
Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

Abstract:

Tourism is viewed as one of the largest and fastest growing industries at the global level. Developing countries often see it as a low-hanging fruit in terms of stimulating economic development. A variety of perspectives has been explored in the study of tourism. However, one of the least researched issues is that of the demographic characteristics of the sector. Hence, there is a need to explore it. This study focusing on Masvingo Urban (Zimbabwe) examines several demographic features of the tourism industry. They include: age, gender, education as well as designation, nature and type of organization and experience. The data collection exercise was conducted in May, 2018. It is recommended that more such studies should be conducted so as to achieve more holistic views on the subject. Since women in the industry are outnumbered by men, there is a need to employ more of them in order to balance up the numbers. Although this study only focuses on Masvingo, there is a need to explore the issues at both national and regional levels so that policies can be drawn with a view to improve the situation.

Keywords: age, gender, education, participation, Masvingo

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is the largest and fastest growing industry at the global level. It has positively impacted villages, provinces, countries, regions, continents and the globe as a whole. The impact has been cross cutting, positively transforming societies in terms of their economics, politics, socially and environmentally. Mathieson and Wall (1982)

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[i] Correspondence: email jmapira2000@gmail.com

defined tourism as "*the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs*." The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2016) defined tourism as "*the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited*'. This is a universally accepted definition of tourism. Tourists by purpose of visit are those who undertake a trip for; holidays, business, health, study, meetings, incentive travel, conventions, exhibitions, congresses, family, visiting friends and relatives, religion, sports, and others (UNWTO, 2016). Border workers, transit passengers, nomads, refugees, members of armed forces, representation of consulates, diplomats, temporary immigrants, permanent immigrants (UNWTO, 2016) are not regarded as tourists.

Tourism creates employment, and wealth, drives economic growth and change, provides the rationale for environmental conservation, culture and heritage preservation, alleviates poverty and uplifts communities as well as playing a key role in the redistribution of income. Tourism accounts for 30% of the world's total service exports and 7% of the world's exports and generates US$1.4 trillion. In terms of global gross domestic product (GDP) contributions, tourism accounts for 10%, it provides one in ten jobs employing 200 million plus people worldwide. In terms of global tourist arrivals, there was a 7% increase in 2017 from 1.2 billion in 2016 to 1.3 billion in 2017. In Africa, tourist arrivals grew by 7% in 2017 from 57.8 million in 2016 to 62.1 million in 2017. In Zimbabwe, tourist arrivals grew by 12% from 2.17 million in 2016 to 2.42 million in 2017 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, ZTA, 2017). Arrivals into Southern Africa account for 2% of global arrivals. These arrival figures show the importance of the tourism industry globally, continentally and nationally. Tourism is often advocated as a means to diversify economic conditions in rural and regional areas by providing alternative sources of employment and income generation (Cox and Wray, 2011).

The tourism industry is dominated by small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) worldwide and very few large operators (Holloway and Humphreys, 2012). These SMTEs play a significantly dominant role as product and service providers in the tourism industry worldwide including in Zimbabwe and Masvingo urban. And the demographic profile of SMTEs managers and owners (management) in and around Masvingo urban deserves a closer look and analysis given the fact that everything rises and falls on management and leadership in organizations. The aim of this study is to identify and examine the demographic profile of the management of SMTEs in and around Masvingo Urban with a focus on tourism.

2. Significance of the Study

The study is very important as it provides the demographic profile of SMTEs in Masvingo City. This demographic profile assists the government and other policy making agencies in making calculated and informed decisions regarding the

enhancement of SMTEs performance in line with the '*Zimbabwe is open for business*' motto. The study helps in main streaming affirmative action with the view to promoting sustainable tourism development in Masvingo and Zimbabwe. More so, there is limited literature particularly on the demographic characteristics of small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) management in and around Masvingo urban and this paper seeks to address that gap.

2.1 Demography

Hauser and Duncan (1959; 2) defined demography as "*the study of the size, territorial distribution, and composition of population, changes therein, and the components of such changes.*" Demographics help to show an array of information, including the population characteristics such as gender, age, income, internet access, poverty levels, experience, and years in business, level of employment, ethnicity, home ownership, education and etcetera (French, 2014). Demographics capture a snapshot in time. Demographic data or profile offers reliable data about a community's resource needs, aids planning, aids resource allocation, aids development of training and capacity building for the development of vibrant tourism communities (French 2014, Hauser and Duncan, 1959). Demographic data are needed to obtain basic information about the respondents and their organisations. It provides identification material about the respondents such as age and gender.

Demographic data, in addition, helps through the analysis of subgroups to provide a method for identifying differences in key results in responses by subgroups such as on age and gender (Proctor, 2000). In a nutshell demographic data impacts everything about an organisation including its performance, thus it is important to have a deeper understanding of the demographic profile of SMTEs in and around Masvingo urban. The demographic factors to focus on in this study include gender, age, education, designation, type of organization, and experience in tourism industry. These factors were investigated among SMTEs management in and around Masvingo urban to get an understanding of the demographic profile of SMTEs management in and around Masvingo Urban.

2.1 Small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs)

The small and medium tourism enterprises play a significantly dominant role in the tourism industry in both developed and developing countries (Barjaktarovic and Barjaktarovic, 2010; Jaafar, Ing, and Sukarno, 2011). The size of tourism enterprises is defined and determined in terms of several criteria which include; number of rooms, number of employees, and value of assets, sum of money invested, revenue and income generated (Jaafar *et al.*, 2011, Barjaktarovic and Barjaktarovic, 2010). SMEs in the tourism industry play a significant role in employment creation, wealth creation, economic growth and make a huge contribution in improving the living standards of the local community and visitors or tourists alike (Grundey, 2011). Despite their immense role in the tourism economy or sector, small and medium scale lodges and hotels receive little attention in terms of support and research. According to Morrison and Thomas (1999),

researchers engaged in hospitality management have ignored small enterprises or arguably misunderstood their dynamics by treating them as scaled down versions of larger firms. More rigorous empirical research into the behaviour, profile and practises of SMTEs is required especially in the 21st century with a view to enhancing performance given their dominance in the tourism industry.

2.2 Research Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative cross sectional survey design with self-administered questionnaires as the data collection instrument to enhance accuracy of research findings. The study participants were managers and owners of all the twenty five registered lodges and hotels in and around Masvingo urban, Zimbabwe. The participants were selected based on their positions and knowledge of their organizations, that is, lodges and hotels. Data analysis was done through descriptive and inferential statistical procedures and the findings were presented in the form of graphs and tables accompanied by discussions thereof. The study was conducted in May 2018 based on information that was collected through the instruments which were used.

3. Findings

3.1 Gender of respondents

Figure 1 below, shows that the gender of respondents of the study population was almost equal. Male respondents constituted 52.9% whereas female respondents constituted 47.1%. In terms of descriptive statistics, the mean is 1.47 and the standard deviation is 0.514 indicating that the gender of respondents is almost half females and half males in support of the frequencies. This indicates the increasing role of women participation at managerial level in the country's economic activity and in the tourism sector in particular.
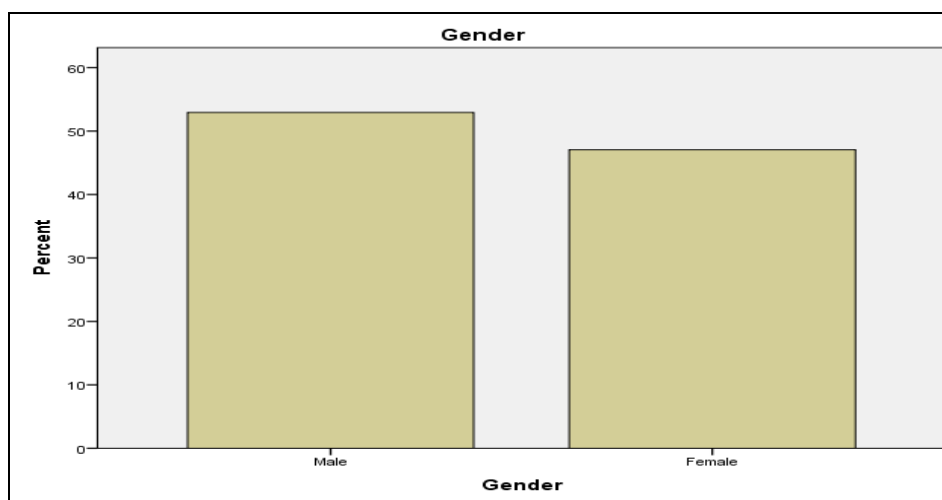

Figure 1: Gender characteristics of the tourism industry in Masvingo

3.2 Age of respondents

Figure 2 below shows the age of respondents of the study population. 35.3% of the respondents are 30 years and below, 29.4% are aged 31-39, 11.8% are 40 – 49 years in terms of age and lastly 23.5% of the respondents are above 50 years of age. Notably 64.7% of the respondents are below 40 years of age and 35.3% of the respondents are above 40 years of age. The mean for age of respondents is 2.24 and the standard deviation is 1.2 indicating that more than half of the respondents are below the age of forty with only 35.3% being over forty years of age. This result indicates the increasing participation of the young and active generation in the tourism industry in Masvingo, which is a positive development. On the other side, this may reflect lack of the much valuable practical experience in management of lodges and hotels, a possible source of challenges and problems for the study organisations.
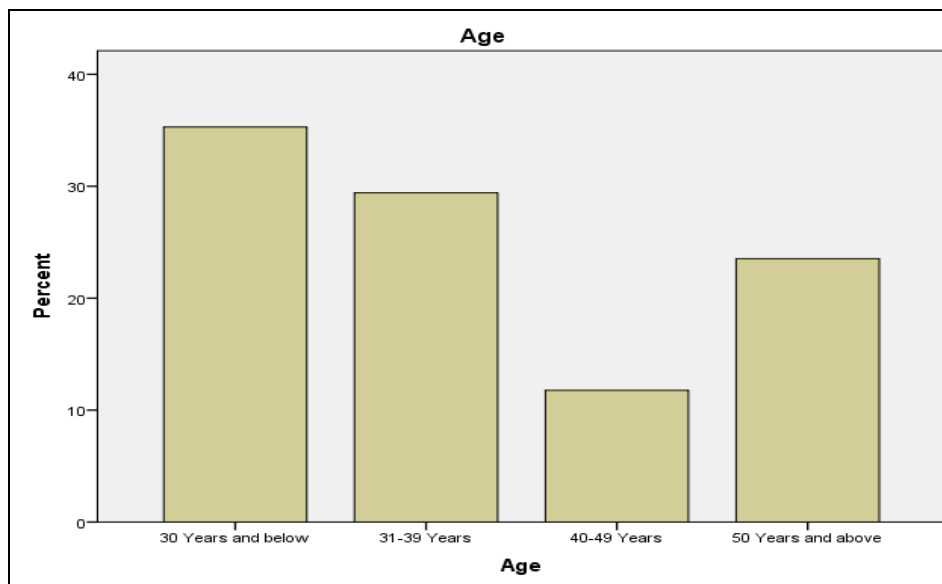

Figure 2: Age characteristics of the Participants

3.3 Level of education of respondents

Figure 3 below indicates that all respondents have basic education and minimum qualifications to do their work. 56.3% have a first degree, 25% have a diploma, 12.5% have a certificate and only 5.9% have a doctorate. Evidently, more than 80% have at least a diploma. This is supported by the mean and standard deviation that are 3.38 and 0.957 respectively showing that most respondents have either a first degree or a diploma. This confirms the widely held view that Zimbabwean companies are run by reasonably educated people and a reflection of the Zimbabwean society which has high literacy levels. This result is consistent with an earlier finding by Glancey and Pettigrew (1997) in the United Kingdom, who found out that small and medium scale hotels were run by people, who were in the middle stages of the life cycle (30-49 years old) at the commencement of the venture, who were characterized by the following attributes: high levels of educational attainment; previous managerial experience and pursuing business objectives. This is further supported by Barjaktarovic and Barjaktarovic

(2010)'s findings in Serbia that the owner – managers of small and medium lodge or hotel had a basic business management qualification and in most cases he or she is an expert for marketing, human resources, sales, supply and coordinator of all hotel's activities .
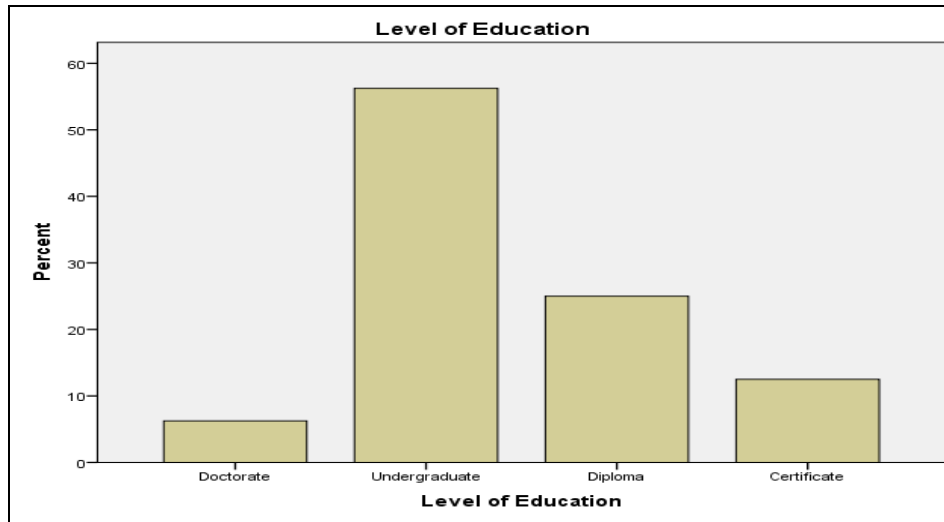
Figure 3: Level of Education

3.4 Designation of respondents

Table 1: Designation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Owner	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
Managing Director	2	11.8	11.8	17.6
Manager	14	82.4	82.4	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

Out of the population, 82.4% of the registered small and medium scale lodges and hotels in and around Masvingo urban are run by appointed managers, 11.8% are run by managing directors and only 5.9% of the targeted study enterprises are run by their owners. Notably, these results show that more than 90% of the businesses in the study are run by appointees that are managers and managing directors. This is illustrated in table 1.1 above. The mean is 3.59 and standard deviation is within acceptable range at 0.938 to further confirm that most of the respondents are managers of the study organisations. This result is in sharp contrast with Barjaktarovic and Barjaktarovic (2010)'s findings in Serbia that in small tourism companies comparing to large companies, the function of the owner and manager is combined in one person. This can be an indicator that the level of corporate governance and professionalism is increasing in Zimbabwe's Masvingo tourism accommodation sector.
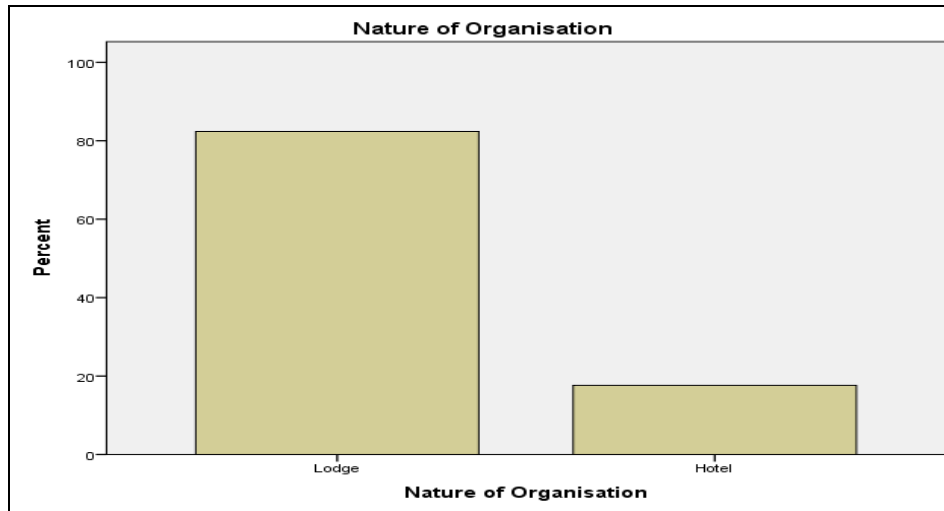
3.5 Nature/Type of organization

Figure 4: Nature of Organization

The results of the population show that 82.4% of the respondent organizations were lodges whilst 17.6% were hotels. Notably this is characteristic of the obtaining situation where lodges outnumber hotels by a huge margin as shown on figure 1.4 above. The mean is 1.18 and the standard deviation is 0.393 showing that most study organisations were registered small and medium scale lodges. This is a reflection of the profile of the tourist accommodation sector in that most facilities are lodges (Jaafar *et al.*, 2011). Barjaktarovic and Barjaktarovic (2010) asserted that small and medium scale lodges and hotels are dominant in large towns, tourist and other regional and local centres, in which there is no need for large hotels. They increase accommodation offer of large towns, make it different and contribute to the competitive advantage of the town in which they are located.

3.5 Experience in tourism

Figure 5: Experience in Tourism

Experience in tourism is sought to understand the number of years the concerned businesses' management have been in the tourism industry. A greater percentage indicated that they have been in the tourism industry for 3-5 years (35.3%) and 11 years and above (35.3%). There are relatively few businesses in the study that have been in tourism for 6-10 years (17.6%) and for a maximum of 2 years (11.8%). Evidently a greater number (88.2%) of registered small and medium scale lodges and hotels in and around Masvingo town have been in tourism for a minimum of 3 years, meaning they have quite reasonable experience in the tourism industry. These results are clearly presented in figure 1.6 above. The mean and standard deviation are 2.76 and 1.091 respectively.

4. Conclusions

The study showed the demographic profile and characteristics of small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) management particularly in the lodges and hotels in and around Masvingo urban. The results are useful as they provide a cross sectional demographic picture and landscape of those in leadership and management of lodges and hotels in and around Masvingo urban. The study recommends that there is a need to use demographic data in making informed decisions regarding the enhancement of performance of small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs). The performance of SMTEs analysis needs to take cognizance of the demographic profile to make it comprehensive and sufficiently complete at both national and regional levels. There is also a need to explore the influence of these demographic factors on the performance of small and medium tourism enterprises in terms of financial and non-financial indicators at both national and regional levels so as to achieve a holistic perspective on the subject matter.

About the Authors

Phanos Matura is a lecturer in Tourism and Hospitality at Great Zimbabwe University as well as a Tourism Consultant in the city of Masvingo (Zimbabwe). Jemitias Mapira is a professor in Geography and Environmental Science at Great Zimbabwe University where he has been employed since 2003. He holds a Masters degree (MSc) in Environmental Science from the University of Botswana as well as a PhD in Environmental Education from Stellenbosch University in South Africa.

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