



COLLABORATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract: *The paper conceptualizes a stakeholder model that reflects their involvement for tourism development. The model integrates key sequential concepts such as stakeholder research, stakeholder strategy formulation and stakeholder implementation. Stakeholder research will be inevitable so as to unearth the true state of affairs as well as unravelling the existing challenges within the tourism industry. Strategy formulation of stakeholders will involve collaboration and consultations among the various key stakeholders to craft measures on how best tourism development can be achieved; measures may include capacity building or establishing a communication platform. Implementation involves putting all the strategies into action and involving all stakeholders. The conceptual model results from the syntheses of literature for successful stakeholder processes and developing collective commitment and capacity to turn ideas and plans into action. Both theoretical and empirical works were consulted in structuring the model and specification of its various concepts.*

Key words: *Stakeholder, Stakeholder involvement. Collaboration, Tourism, Tourism development*

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INTRODUCTION

Issues of coordination, collaboration and partnership are now at the forefront of much tourism research on finding new solutions to resource management and destination development problems (Madeline, 2010). Stakeholders within the tourism industry undertake various important roles in promoting tourism development for the country. Several stumbling blocks have impeded facilitating stakeholder involvement for tourism development in Zimbabwe. Shantha (2003) notes that, negative growth rates, devaluation of currency, low productive capacity, low savings and absence of direct foreign investments are the key challenges that have hindered stakeholder involvement in tourism development. Eccles *et al* (1996) argue that, the goal of tourism development is not readily achievable partly because the concept of development means different things to different stakeholders. A precise appreciation of the challenges of stakeholder involvement in promoting tourism development will enhance the government's ability to improve on tourism policy making and also enhance the conceptual understanding of the political dimensions of tourism including tourism politics and the tourism policy making process.

Gets *et al* (1994) note that, issues of stakeholder involvement have become key areas of research in the tourism literature in the past two decades. The recognition of numerous problems arising in tourism development due to the lack of involvement and cohesion among the vast number of players in the tourism industry has brought with it the need for formulating courses of action that can be utilized to enhance Public and Private Partnerships (PPP). The tourism industry is characterised by a plethora of actors, with different interests and values (Shantha, 2003). Developing systems that allow effective tourism planning require processes that ensure adequate consideration for all networks or stakeholder interests (Pforr, 2002).

This paper focuses on the efforts of stakeholder's involvement for tourism development. These efforts among others which the study seeks to unearth have stagnated tourism development for the country (Pforr, 2002). Tourism development is vital for the country as its advancement is usually attached with positive socio-economic, technological and also cultural benefits. However, pinpointing the critical stakeholder groups with major responsibility for the tourism development is highly contested (Songorwa, 1999). Many groups may claim this role as their responsibility. For this reason it is important to identify



the stakeholder consideration and to define a consensus amongst the relevant groups (Gray, 1989).

LITERATURE

The provision of direction for tourism is implicit in formulating the development through a publicly-driven process based on stakeholder values and consensus, rather than through a more private expert-driven process based solely on market forces (Ritchie & Crouch 2000). Stakeholders must agree that the final vision statement provides both a meaningful and an operational 'dream' for the future of their destination (Ritchie & Crouch 2000 Page numbers). Collaboration and stakeholder involvement is based on the belief that expertise does not lie solely with programme professionals. Thus stakeholder support has grown to be a recognised field as considerations and perspective of multiple stakeholders are worth in making major decisions (Getz, 1996). A firm must first identify its stakeholders, their interests and stakes and it is necessary to manage them and understand the process (Freeman, 2010). A broad range of stakeholders have knowledge, daily life experiences and expertise that can contribute to organisational success. Keeping lines of communication open with stakeholders is crucial towards tourism development. Banach & Gregory (2001) note that collaboration and stakeholder support is also vital at all levels as they have the potential to illuminate issues and needs during the course of the program implementation. Gray (1989) postulates that certain specific measures need to be undertaken if successful collaboration is to be achieved. These include organising a set of stakeholders to address common problems, accommodating differing organisational interests, enabling participating organisations to collectively negotiate agreements and acting as a vehicle of action learning that helps to tackle changes in environments (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Timur & Getz, 2008 and World Travel & Tourism Council, 2004).

The study approaches the subject of tourism development by focussing on stakeholder involvement and examining three concepts; stakeholder research, stakeholder strategy formulation and stakeholder implementation and the linkages between them, as illustrated in Figure 1.

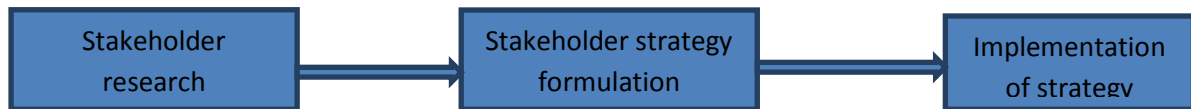


Figure 1 Stakeholder Analysis in Tourism Development

STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH

Research is essential in unravelling the gaps that exist in the industry that would be impeding tourism development. Tourism development is reflected by stakeholders' ability to identify the need for the development. Gets *et al* (1996) states that, the recognition of numerous problems arising in tourism development is due to the lack of involvement and cohesion among the vast number of players in the tourism industry has brought with it the need for finding ways of bringing the interested parties together. The tourism industry is characterised by a plethora of actors, with different interest and values. Research is the systematic study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions (Hunt, 1975). Now this may sound straight forward (and is often presented that way), but in tourism industry, research is often an open ended process that is likely to generate as many questions as it does answers.

The method of research particularly in tourism development and applied to stakeholder involvement has evolved to become highly complex and diverse, and having some basic knowledge is certainly a necessity (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). This knowledge however is not in itself sufficient to begin designing and carrying out a study. It is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, re-assessing and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information carrying out appropriate analysis and drawing credible conclusions (Hunt, 1975). Tourism research plays two key roles for tourism development, first it is part of the tourism intelligence feedback process and it provides decision makers with data on the effectiveness of the current tourism and provides insight for necessary changes. Stakeholder involvement is also the primary tool for exploring new opportunities in the tourism industry.

STRATEGY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Strategy formulation and implementation is whereby alternative courses of action are crafted so that they can counter the gaps identified in the research by the implementation (Tkaczynski *et al*, 2009). This paper aims to suggest goals, components and methodologies



for capacity building programmes that aim to enable stakeholders, governments and agencies to successfully engage in partnerships for tourism development. Capacity building for sustainable development partnerships aims to contribute to the achievement of goals such as, all stakeholders to successfully initiate, design and implement partnerships for tourism development (Hemmati & Whitfield, 2003).

Strategy Formulation and Implementation for stakeholder involvement can be regarded as those methods or laid down principles that are derived from a process of developing and following a standard way of doing things that multiple organisations can use (Hunt, 1975). Strategy, are set of guidelines, ethics or ideas that represent the most efficient or prudent course of action. Parker (2012) posits that, best practices are instituted to maintain quality as an alternative to mandatory legislated standards and can be based on self-assessment or benchmarking. Best practices for stakeholder involvement are important as they help maintain realistic expectations on the standard levels of service delivery within the industry. Below are best practices that can be implemented to come up with a sound tourism development (Parker, 2012).

- Treating stakeholders as partners;
- Requirement for stakeholder responsibility;
- On-going dialog between users and developers;
- Stakeholder involvement in entire projects;
- Ensuring all stakeholders are identified;
- Transparency of project information;
- Using collaborative technology;
- Monitoring stakeholder engagements.

The relationship between research, strategy formulation and implementation with tourism development is that if there is no research of the type of stakeholders and their role in tourism is not known, there is bound to be no strategy formulated thus there will be nothing to implement therefore there may be no tourism development. For sound tourism development, there is need for all these three variables (research, strategy formulation and implementation) to link together so as to come up with one thing (Parker, 2012).



THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The conceptual model of stakeholder involvement in tourism development as illustrated in Figure 2 (below) is expanded from Figure 1 (above). Research, strategic formulation and implementation, follow a sequence in which they give a result of tourism development.

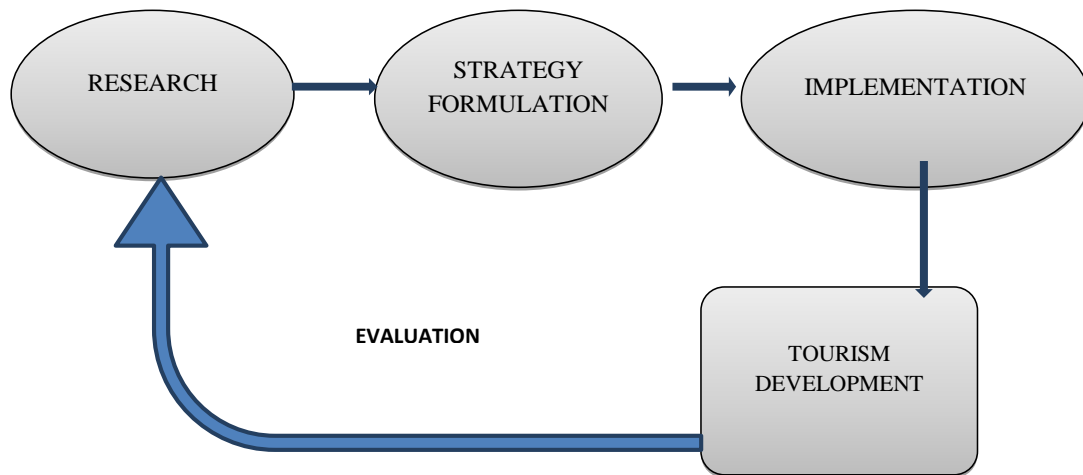


Figure 2: A Conceptual Model of Stakeholder Involvement in Tourism Development

The conceptual model resulted from the syntheses of literature in which there is need to research on the different types of stakeholders and their role in tourism development, after that there is also need for strategy formulation which is generating alternative courses of action that can be implemented so as to strengthen stakeholder involvement to enhance tourism development (Keller, 2008; Kim *et al*, 2008; Hankinson, 2005). Strategy formulation includes capacity building and formulating communication platforms for all stakeholders to channel their inputs towards tourism development. As a conceptual model, empirical applications are warranted to test its viability. While there are existing measurements for the individual concepts included in the model, pilot and experimental studies are useful to generate or refine measurements holistically for the model and its constructs for tourism development in Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that, there are great possibilities of implementing stakeholder approach, but, unfortunately, the approach has not been applied with objectivity in the Zimbabwean tourism context. Adequate application of collaboration and stakeholder involvement may result in quantitative and qualitative improvement in tourism. This paper seeks to inordinately unearth the contemporary challenges and add value to previous



researches on tourism development strategy in Zimbabwe. There is need to recognise that the travel and tourism industry is global, highly competitive and unstable. An empirical study is vital as it will outline the importance of stakeholder involvement in tourism development. This may help in reviewing stakeholder interests and reduce or eliminate conflicts thus cultivating an ethos of shared vision vital for promoting tourism development in Zimbabwe.

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