

AN ICT STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM SECTOR IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: A CASE STUDY OF ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT:

This research has sought to propose a strategy for the sustainable use of ICT in the tourism sector in Zimbabwe. In order to achieve the above-mentioned objective, this research, which is a comprehensive case study into the tourism sector of Zimbabwe, has deployed semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observations and netnography to collect the data. The case study was carried out, in accordance with the case study guidelines, as outlined by Yin, and guided by the interpretive paradigm. After a further analysis of the results, the results that pointed to the same aspect were grouped together; and various deductions were made, as a diagnosis of the identified problem. The identified problems were synthesised into seven diagnostics. A guiding policy was then identified for each of the diagnostics, leading to a set of coherent actions, derived from each of the identified guiding policies. The research also showed the implementation of the coherent set of actions that consist of three layers. These are: government, regulator and service providers. This research contributes to ICT4D literature; and it has provided an ICT strategy for sustainable development in the tourism sector for appropriate interventions from government and other role-players in the tourism sector.

KEYWORDS: ICT strategy, Sustainable development, tourism sector, Zimbabwe

1. INTRODUCTION

ICT usage has become indispensable in developing, reaching, and managing, as well as distributing tourism products worldwide. It exists as a source of information and a confidence booster; since the ultimate choice of preferred tourist destinations depends on the available information, and not on the actual destination itself (Hsu & Li, 2015; Park & Jang, 2013). Prospective tourists nowadays have more information and a variety of destination choices (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). The rapid developments in ICT have revolutionised the operations, and the way companies and countries lure tourists, thereby resulting in stiff competition in the global tourism sector.

Tourism has the potential to be the major driver of economic wealth in the 21st century. The tourism sector has immense poverty-alleviation potential and a multiplier effect on the economy and the supply chain (Davidson & Sahli, 2015; Rogerson, 2013). It contributes significantly to the national economy through wealth-creation, employment-creation and foreign-currency generation. It also contributes to export earnings and the national Gross Domestic Product (Davidson & Sahli, 2015). The importance of tourism to the economy is testified by the fact that in some economies, such as Rwanda, it is now a major