

Studies in Promoting the Tourism Sector in Zambia: The Response of Public Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Economic diversification remains a priority for African countries seeking to grow their economies. The tourism sector offers numerous economic opportunities that can be harnessed to reflect the Structural Transformation agenda set by the members of the African Union. The rich natural and cultural heritage spread across the continent demands an effective response from Higher Education Institutions in calibrating their training content to reflect the evolving needs of the industry.

This paper undertakes a case study of Zambia. It studies the evolution of the tourism policy and Institutional frameworks from its independence era to 2020, in order to note important themes that have been emphasized over time. The paper then outlines findings from a survey amongst public higher education institutions offering programs targeted for the tourism sector. The paper evaluates the manner in which these Institutions reflect Zambia's aspirations for the tourism sector.

The paper proposes that the multifaceted nature of the tourism sector provides Higher Education Institutions with an opportunity to be creative in the training of professionals for the industry. It further advocates for indigenous solutions to the challenges and opportunities of the tourism sector in each African country.

Key words- Tourism policy, Zambia, Curriculum

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an economic activity mainly built on leisure and recreation sites facilities and services. In its glossary of 'Key Terms' The UNWTO [1] defines tourism as "...a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure". This definition highlights the various aspects of the activity which

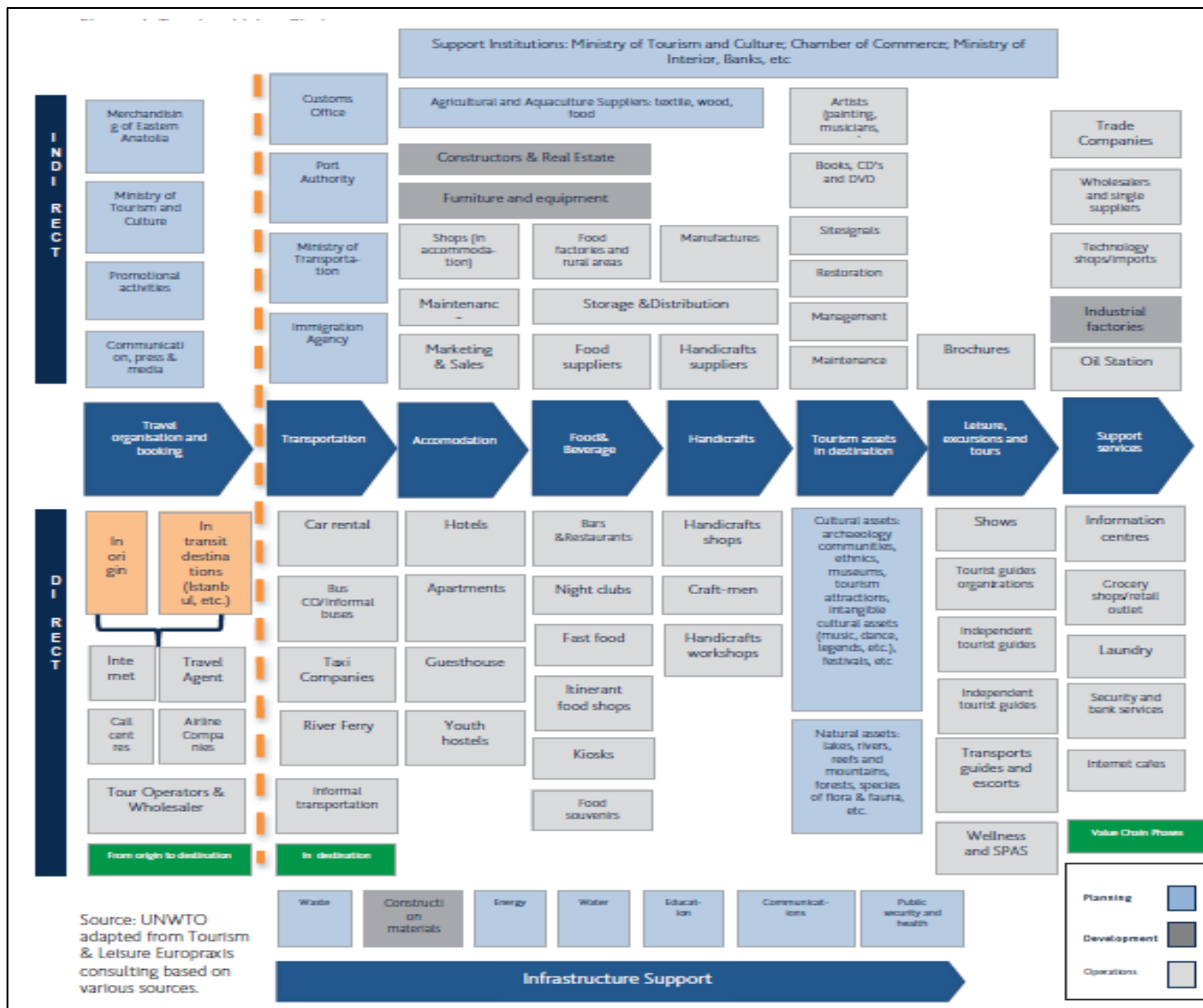
make it operate as an industry or an economic sector. Foundational conceptions to tourism have attempted to highlight important characteristics of tourism by viewing it as a system [2] the interaction among its elements of demand and supply [3], or as a Framework [4] [5]. Other conceptual applications have been created to describe how the sector operates in different niches.

The tourism sector provides different opportunities for different disciplines to apply their specializations. The UNWTO [6] provides an extensive illustration of the Value Chain of tourism reflected in Figure 1 below. It can be noted that both the indirect and direct players in the sector provide employment opportunities for different skilled professional to work together to realise the development and growth of the sector.

The frequently accounted for and identifiable aspects related to 'Travel Organisation and Booking' are in the centre of the value chain model, linking both the direct and indirect aspects of the chain. The components of transportation, accommodations, food and beverages, handicrafts, tourism assets in destinations, leisure and excursion and tourism, and support services are easily associated with the tourism sector. However, this value chain reveals the significance of the supporting structures that drive the viability of the industry.

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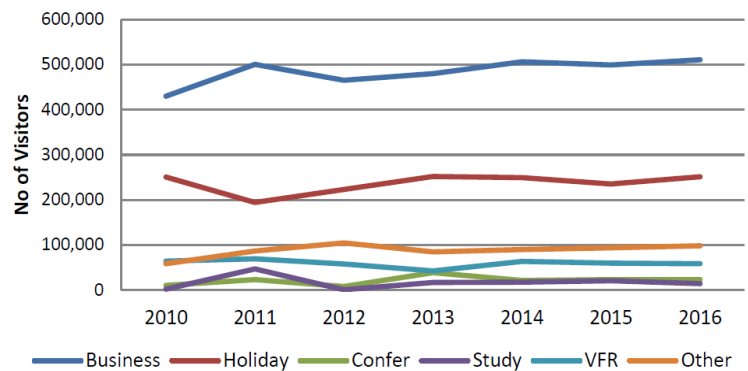
FIGURE 1 TOURISM VALUE CHAIN



II. TOURISM IN ZAMBIA

Tourism in Zambia has evolved from a strong reliance on nature and wildlife based attraction to one driven by the Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism product. The Tourism Master Plan [7] outlines the growing dominance of MICE Product and the potential of other nature and cultural destinations in the rural areas of Zambia (see Figure 2 below)

FIGURE 2 TOURIST ARRIVALS IN ZAMBIA, AND MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT BETWEEN 2010 AND 2016



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The tourism sector only contributes to 1% of Zambia’s GDP yet has been continually cited for its potential to drive Zambia’s economic diversification agenda [8] [9] [10] [11] [12].

Higher education institutions have an important role to play a think other tanks and producers of human capital to support the growth of tourism. The curricula taught at higher learning institutions has to be responsive to the needs of the industry [13] [14] [15] [16].

Public Universities have an important role to play in promoting national policy agendas due to strong links they are expected to have with national government and other public institutions. In Zambia, the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013 defines Public Universities as those owned by the Government or a local authority and are financed out of public funds [17]. The Higher Education authority lists seven (9) Public Universities namely The University of Zambia, The Copperbelt University, Mulungushi University, Kwame Nkrumah University, Mukuba University, Chalimbana University, Kapasa Makasa Univeristy, Levy Mwanawasa University and Palabana University. These were founded in 1965, 1987,2008,2008, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2019 respectively. Of the nine (9) Public Universities only three (3) offer undergraduate degree programs explicitly related to the tourism sector. These degree programs were very recently introduced to in their respective Universities and are yet to graduate their first degree holders.

This paper seeks to evaluates the manner in which these Institutions reflect Zambia’s aspirations for the tourism sector by analyzing the curriculum of the tourism degrees through the lens of Zambia’s tourism policy aspirations. The content of a curriculum can provide insight into the focal area(s) related to the tourism sector value chain. Various authors have analyzed information from the curriculum to study responsiveness of curriculum to the needs in industry [18] [19] [20] [21]. Although none of these studies outline the curriculums referred to, they all highlight how content reflects the direction of tourism in their respective context. Wattanacharoensil [22] provides a good summary of the evolution of tourism curriculum in the context of the US, UK and European region from the 1960s to 2014. The countries have played a leading role in tourism education development compared to other regions of the world (ibid).

III. METHOD

The study reviewed tourism curriculum of the three Public Universities. Two (2) of them offered the same curriculum. For the purposes on anonymity, this paper denotes the two as Curriculum A. The other university offers a different curriculum, and is accordingly named Curriculum B. For the purposes of

anonymity, the study tabulates the analyses the courses offered within the two curriculums according to the UNWTO [23] value chain aspects highlighted in Figure 1. Therefore, tourism courses with a word ‘Food’ will be linked to the ‘Food and Beverage’ Value chain aspect, or those named ‘Tour Operating’ will fall in the Travel organisation and booking aspect’. Those named after individual aspects of the chain will be associated accordingly. For instance, a course on ‘Culture’ will be associated with the value chain aspect on ‘Cultural Assets’ linked to the Tourism Assets in a Destination Category’. The analysis is also influenced by the authors 8 years academic and research experience in tourism studies.

Table 2 outlines an overview of the two curriculums analyzed.

TABLE 2 STUDY REVIEW OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES OFFERING TOURISM DEGREE PROGRAMS

	Curriculum A	Curriculum B
Duration	4 years	4 years
Key words in Degree title	Hospitality management	Tourism management
Number of courses	31	40
Practical skills	3 rd year: Practical in Hospitality	1 st and 2 nd year: Practical in Hospitality 3 rd year- Practical in Destination Management
Orientation based on UNWTO Value Chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Beverage • Accommodation Direct Side Aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel Operation and Booking • Cultural Assets • Tour guiding Infrastructure Support Public Security and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Beverage • Accommodation • Tourism Assets in Destination • Support Services • Tourism Assets at Destination Direct Side Aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel Operation and Booking • Cultural Assets • Natural assets • Education • Communication • Internet • Travel agent • Tour guiding • Tour guide organisations Indirect Side Aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Sales • Food suppliers • Agricultural Tourism Assets at Destination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management • Restoration • Strategists

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Curriculum A is more oriented towards the aspects of Food and Beverage, Tour operations and Booking, and Accommodation. These aspects are all Direct aspects of UNWTO’s [24] Value Chain illustration and are thus easily

identified and associated with the visibility strength and operation of the tourism sector. The curriculums strong bias towards hospitality is in line with the dominance of the MICE product among Zambia's tourism products. Training students at advanced level in this aspect can lead to job creation opportunities focused on hospitality – particularly when the aspect of Entrepreneurship is included in the curriculum [25]

Curriculum B covers a wider scope of issues both directly and indirectly influencing the tourism industry. The presence of Destination Asset Management reflects newer opportunities for graduates to create and find employment associated with the industry. This curriculum provides an opportunity for students to gain practical experience in hospitality and the management of tourism destinations. This latter aspect is futuristic in its outlook responding to the need for destination level planning to promote sustainable tourism. Other indirect aspects of the value chain are linked to the inclusion of applied economics courses in the curriculum which covers a wide range of topics.

The Zambia Tourism Master Plan contains proposals directed at opening up new regions for tourism development. Although the Plan acknowledges the strength of the MICE product, it emphasises the need for product diversification built on the rich potentials Zambia has to offer- particularly in the rural regions. This calls for the strong presence and involvement of destination managers, planners, and other creative disciplines to create and establish products that will grow the sector. The Public Universities under study have responded to the expressed need of lack of skilled labour in the hospitality industry highlighted in both the 1997 and 2015 tourism policies. However, there is need to move beyond the focus on hospitality to promote aspects that will promote the growth of the tourism industry. The Curriculum B in this study has made some attempt to provide students with a wholistic experience of the sector. However, there is a likelihood of lack of depth in the study of important aspects linked to the sector on account of the workload of the curriculum.

V. CONCLUSION

The promotion of locally led initiatives in the tourism sector is strengthened in a curriculum that covers a wider range of issues. However, the need for focused and context based solutions can also come from a curriculum that is created to address an expressed need. Therefore, there is an opportunity for Public Universities to create tailored programs such as Sustainable Tourism, Destination Planning and Development or even Events Management. However, these programs need the input of the private sector and government during the development of their curriculum to ensure that graduates are integrated with ease into society.

Although Public Universities have only recently introduced degrees related to tourism, academic staff have been trained in various aspects of tourism, have conducted research on tourism development in Zambia, and teach courses on tourism which are part of other degrees affiliated with the sector. Therefore, in order to provide a conclusive view on the extent of responsiveness of Universities to the tourism sector, it will be fundamental to study the writings of these scholars and enquire on their impact to tourism practice.

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