

Theorising the anchors of green tourism practice for the hotel sector in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the pillars upon which the green tourism strategy in Zimbabwe can be anchored on. Hotels in Zimbabwe are implementing various green tourism strategies. This is a mitigatory measure for the negative impacts brought by the tourism industry. However, the exact green tourism practices hotels in Zimbabwe should concentrate their resources on when implementing green tourism have not been fully theorised. Empirical studies on the anchors of green tourism are widely missing in literature. Devoid of such knowledge, hospitality and tourism operators in the country concentrate on implementing green tourism initiatives which they do not have the capacity or technical knowhow in implementing such practices. To minimise wastage of resources in the implementation of green tourism, it is important to determine the anchors upon which hospitality and tourism in Zimbabwe should concentrate on. This study adopted a qualitative research methodology, through the use of structured interviews and non-participatory observations. Purposive sampling and a descriptive research design were employed for this study. Data was presented in pie charts, tables and diagrams. Pictures taken during observations were also used for data presentation. A thematic approach was used to analyse the data. Findings of this study indicate that some green tourism practices being implemented by hotels in Zimbabwe do not give them maximum benefits. Such practices include the use of liquid petroleum gas in kitchens to save energy, use of energy saving appliances, utilisation of low flow shower heads and low flush toilets to save water. For waste management resort hotels rot their biodegradable waste by composting whilst city centre hotels throw away their refuse due to limited space. The findings revealed that hotels in Zimbabwe should anchor their green tourism strategy on: solar energy, biogas production, rain-water harvesting, re-using re-usable materials and composting of biodegradable waste. The study recommended the following strategies in order to enhance the implementation of green tourism practices in the hotel sector: green awareness campaigns, green certification, research, innovation and development, making use of green tourism rewards, introducing a sustainable policy framework, and requesting patrons to participate in green tourism training programs. The study concludes that hospitality and tourism operators have the potential to practice green tourism at a low cost if they concentrate on practices that are easy to implement and the resources are readily available in the country.

Key Words: Green tourism, green tourism initiative, anchors of green tourism

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I. Introduction

The tourism industry is famous for its luxury and has been blamed for wasteful use of resources, making them one of the leading influencers of environmental damage. The various negative impacts of tourism trigger the government to put forward sustainable tourism practices to mitigate such negative impacts of tourism. The hotel sector has not remained indifferent to the challenge of sustainability of current times. However, in Zimbabwe, lack of systematic experiential research on anchors to base the green tourism strategy irrefutably produces scant strategic and policy leadership. This lends hoteliers to massive unnecessary experimental costs on adopting green tourism practices that do not suit the economic, social, political and technological environment in Zimbabwe. This paves way for the current research aimed at determining the green tourism pillars, on which the green tourism strategy in Zimbabwe can be anchored.

II. Background To The Problem

The concept of green tourism emerged at the end of the twentieth century in the wake of increasing concern on the sustainability of economic development (Fahad, 2015). Green business was incited by the growing awareness of environmental issues particularly the accelerating depletion of natural resources and the deterioration of environmental quality. That is the reason why the Brundtland Commission, which is also known as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was established (Page, 2017; Wearing & Neil, 2019; Ibnou-laaroussi, Samah, Wing-keung&Husam, 2020). One of the commission's primary goals was to: "help define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, a long-term agenda for action during the coming decades, and aspirational goals of the world community (Muzapu&Sibanda, 2016). In the same vein, Agenda 21 was adopted at the first International Earth Summit held from 3 to 14 June in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro Brazil (Ward, 2015; Warf, 2014; Kiper, 2013; Parson, Haas & Levy & Marc, 1992), and the two principles were to combat environmental damage, poverty and disease through global cooperation on common interests, mutual needs and shared responsibilities.

While tourism is a major force for development, it has a number of negative aspects. Thus tourism is a significant and growing contributor to climate change, currently accounting for around five percent of global carbon dioxide emissions, mainly generated from all modes of transport and the operation of tourism facilities like accommodation (Wearing & Neil, 2019; Bramwell, 2012). Local pollution of land and water from poor treatment of solid and liquid waste by tourism businesses and from the activities of tourists can be a challenge in some places frequented by tourists (Honeck, 2020; Mitchell & Ashley, 2020; Iwanowski& Rushmore, 2014). That is also the main reason why the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has initiated a strategic plan that aims at integrating environmental sustainability into decision making in the tourism industry and into consumers' purchasing choices, by disseminating technical know-how and building business networks to catalyse the issue of sustainability in the sector of tourism (Filimonau&Naumova, 2020; Udegbe, 2017).

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through its strategic plan has implemented many initiatives meant to improve sustainability in the tourism industry (Cruz &Manata, 2020). However, since 2009 when the initiative was first launched, sanity has not been realised in the tourism sector, particularly the hotel industry (Taufique, Siwar, Talib&Chamhuri, 2014). The aim of most UN agencies such as UNEP, UNWTO and UNESCO is to integrate environmental sustainability into decision making in the tourism industry as a driver to sustained economies both in developing and developed countries. Despite efforts to harness Sustainable Development Goals in hotel operations; there still exist a discord on how it has to be done, with most hotel operations especially in the developing countries still to implement any meaningful green tourism practices (Shukla, 2019).

Of particular concern now in the development of green tourism in developing countries is the demand and supply nexus. The main market for tourism products in developing countries comes from the developed world where a sound green tourism strategy is being implemented in hotels and tourist sites (Cheng, Chiang, Yuan & Huang, 2018; Thøgersen, 2016). Consumer purchasing choices are now driven by green issues when it comes to the purchase of tourism products (Manson, 2019; Stone, 2011). Failure by hotels to adhere to green issues has a detrimental impact on the destination as a whole as it will be shunned by most green-conscious clients. Following prescriptions on Dwyer (2003)'s Integrated Destination Competitiveness Model, Kim, Palakurthi and Hancer (2021) argued that hotels' ability to implement green tourism policies in a more meaningful manner contributes to credible management of situational and demand conditions as destination competitiveness indicators.

In the face of climate change, recurring economic cycles of boom and bust; and a lot more challenges such as pandemics and epidemics which all have detrimental impacts on the profitability and sustainability of hotel business in general, green tourism is regarded as the option to minimise costs (Rahman, Reynolds &Svaren, 2021; Baicu, 2016; McNamara & Gibson, 2013). Although substantial debates exist both in developed and emerging economies (Jones, Hillier & Comfort, 2016), international pressures and country-based campaigns encouraging hotels to address sustainable issues (Makonese, 2018; Swilling, 2016) it is vital to analyse the aspects which form the backbone of the green tourism strategy. Hotels in some destinations have so far gained momentum through implementation of green tourism initiatives (Peattie & Charter, 2020). For instance, Sweden gained popularity worldwide for recycling of its waste. Recycling in Sweden is viewed as an environmental action by all parties within society including producers, consumers and municipalities and the country is proud of its identity as a world-leader on environmental issues. To that effect, sorting of waste has taken centre-stage in Swedish hotels and is bearing the economy some benefits. Contrary, Czechoslovakia tried setting up recycling plants for household waste yet the benefits in the first five years from 2016 were still to be realized (Baicu, 2016). The question on the transferability of these green tourism anchors can only be resolved through research (Shen, Qian, & Chen, 2020).

This paper therefore contributes to the long standing debate on which green tourism anchors yield greater benefits for the hotel sector. Weaver (2018) stipulated that in order to ascertain a sustainable future of the hotel business and the world in general, it is becoming more crucial to develop a strategic governance mechanism aimed at addressing these green issues so as to increase the life span of the available limited resources. The unresolved puzzle still lies on which anchors to invest more in. Basing on the resource based view, different countries, or hotels in the same country are endowed with varying capabilities, in relation to the gifts of nature to their disposal (Porter, 1990). Such a debate therefore provokes researchers to perceive on what then could lead to a greener economy hence the need for this research, though with greater focus on the hotel sector where much of negative impacts of tourism are propagated.

According to Mbasera, Saaymanand Kruger (2017), Zimbabwe as a nation was facing an array of challenges, which made the green tourism strategy a necessity. Green tourism has so far gained popularity in solving national problems and advancing towards zero poverty in developing countries as a result of its ability to encourage firms to save water, conserve energy and reduce solid waste (Makonese, 2018). All these have an aggregate impact of reducing operational costs and protecting the earth. In Zimbabwe, lack of systematic experiential research on anchors to base the green tourism strategy irrefutably produces scant strategic and policy leadership. This lends hoteliers to massive unnecessary experimental costs on adopting green tourism practices that do not suit the economic, social, political and technological factors in Zimbabwe. This paves way for the current research aimed at determining the green tourism anchors on which the green tourism strategy in Zimbabwe can be moored.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The anchors of the green tourism strategy in Zimbabwe have not yet been fully determined. Several studies on green tourism have focused on hotel characteristics and the adoption of demand oriented hotel green practices in Zimbabwe (Njerekai, 2019), environmentally friendly practices in hotels (Mbasera, Saayman & Kruger, 2017), a green management framework for hotels (Mbasera, 2015); and hoteliers' perceptions on the impacts of green tourism on hotel operating costs (Zengeni, Zengeni & Muzambi, 2013). A scan of these studies reveals that, little has been done to interrogate the anchors of green tourism strategy within the Zimbabwean context. Devoid of such knowledge, the country concentrates on implementing green tourism initiatives which may not have the capacity to support green tourism development. Of concern is that this may lead to unnecessary resource wastage as the country concentrates on implementing green tourism initiatives which she is not good at, and does not have the capacity to execute. For successful implementation of green tourism, it is proper that Zimbabwe should focus on its competitive and comparative advantages as informed by the theory of competitive advantages of nations (Porter, 1990). Using a qualitative research methodology, this study sought to determine the anchors upon which green tourism practices in Zimbabwe can be based on. Findings of the study provide insights on the ideal approaches that the tourism and hospitality sector in Zimbabwe may adopt in the implementation of green tourism.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study sought to determine the anchors on which the green tourism strategy in Zimbabwe can be centred on.

III. Literature Review

Green tourism

A product or service is labelled "green" when it is beneficial to the producer and consumer without harming the environment (Furqan, Matsom & Hussin, 2010). Although different definitions of "going green" exist, "going green" generally refers to the actions of individuals, businesses and governments to protect the quality and continuity of life through the conservation of natural resources and the prevention of pollution (Kiper, 2013). The term "green" is also known as eco-friendly, sustainable, environmentally friendly or pro-environmental (Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2009). According to De Freitas (2018), a "green" business is one that deliberately chooses to incorporate environmental and sustainable development considerations into its business plan and operations.

Rahman, Reynolds and Svaren (2021) coined green tourism to mean tourism which involves visiting natural areas while minimising environmental impacts. This definition portrays a myopic view of green tourism. Green tourism has of late grown into a subject that is widely expanding from the archaic view of visiting natural environments to be applicable in all facets of tourism even with respect to build environments and service delivery within the tourism industry. Dodds and Holmes (2019) however, noticed that the term green tourism has often been used by businesses that do not put that much effort into making their activity more sustainable and the term became more known for greenwashing. Greenwashing refers to companies that are more interested in becoming known for its green tourism and less for its contribution to the environment and local communities (Öz, 2019).

The concept of green tourism has evolved over time and is presently used with different meanings. The original one, spread during the 1980s, stands for small-scale tourism which involves visiting natural areas while minimizing environmental impacts. In this line, green tourism has been used interchangeably with such concepts as ecotourism, nature tourism, and rural tourism (Peattie & Charter, 2020). Businesses have generally adopted a broader meaning for green tourism: any tourism activity operating in an environmentally friendly manner. Recently, international organizations have defined the notion in line with the concept of sustainable tourism, which also considers other dimensions than environmental protection. In fact, for the World Tourism Organization, green tourism consists of “tourism activities that can be maintained, or sustained, indefinitely in their social, economic, cultural and environmental contexts” (UNWTO 2017: 1).

A more comprehensive definition for green tourism was given by Yu, Chancellor and Cole (2021) who explicitly define the term as any form of tourism that relates to natural environment and cultural heritage of an area that undertakes good environmental management practice. It therefore entails that green tourism should take into account the needs of the environment, local residents, business and visitors now and in the unforeseen future. A scan through existing literature prescribes the following as criteria for rating green tourism initiatives in organisations:

- Compulsory compliance with environmental legislation and an unquestioned commitment to improving environmental performance (Dube&Nhamo, 2021; Chen, Bernard & Rahman, 2019).
 - Management and marketing - demonstrating good environmental management including employee awareness, specialist training, monitoring and record keeping of green feedback from guests (Peattie & Charter, 2020; Uddin & Khan, 2018).
 - Social involvement and communication of environmental actions to clients through a variety of channels and a range of actions, for instance Green policies, promotion of environmental efforts through websites, education and community and social projects (Njerekai, 2019; Lowe, Lynch & Lowe, 2015).
 - Energy-efficiency of lighting, heating and appliance, insulation, hot water systems and renewable energy usage (Raharjo, 2019; Makonese, 2018).
 - Water efficiency, for example good maintenance, low consumption appliances, flush offset, rainwater harvesting and usage of Eco-cleaners (Shen, Qian & Chen, 2020; Stone, 2011).
 - Purchasing environmentally friendly goods and services such as products made from recycled material, use and promotion of local and organic food and drink and vegetarian food (Mitchell & Ashley, 2020; Davies & Konisky, 2015).
 - Elimination of waste by encouraging the reuse, recycle, reduce and eliminate principles. Glass, card, paper, metal and plastic can be recycled, supplier take back agreements and composting can as well be used (Maramura, Maziriri, Chuchu&Mago, 2020).
 - Natural and cultural heritage awareness where there can be onsite measures to increase biodiversity, for example, wildlife gardening, growing native species, nesting boxes and providing information for visitors on the wildlife on and around a site (Kim, Palakurthi&Hancer, 2021; McNamara & Gibson, 2013).
- Nevertheless, these criteria have not escaped criticism from governments, agencies and academics (Dodds, & Holmes, 2019; Shukla, 2019). Much of the appraisal criteria for green tourism implementation has been developed with destination certification in mind, yet a destination green tourism policy or strategy is an aggregate of small initiatives at organisational level. Research should therefore seek to provide answers to questions by hotels as to what green tourism initiatives for hotels should specifically entail.

Anchors of Green Tourism in the Hotel Sector

Few writers have been able to draw on any systematic research into the anchors of green tourism that yield greater benefits for developing landlocked countries, like Zimbabwe. Research findings came up with the following anchors of green tourism.

Solar Energy

Njerekai (2019) and Marunda, Sai and Muchenje (2013) advised that since most of the countries in Africa have an annual average of 8.3 sun hours per day it is best for them to harness solar energy as an alternative form of energy. For countries in southern Africa, solar energy has become a necessity than any other option as they have for more than a decade so far been mainly facing challenges of exacerbated power cuts (Makonese, 2018; Mhizha, Mandebvu, Nyaruwata&Zengeni, 2012). In most African countries inclusive of Zimbabwe, there is abundant sunlight which can be tapped by hotels to attain greater benefits. The solar energy can be stored in batteries for future use. It will then be used to power solar geysers, light television sets and for lighting the hotels. If the hotel produces excess solar energy, it can sell the extra energy to gain funds for use in important areas.

Biogas

Thøgersen (2016) noted that gas generated through bio digestion is non-polluting; it actually reduces greenhouse emissions, thus reducing the greenhouse effect. More so, the raw materials used in the production of biogas are renewable, as trees and crops, will continue to grow (Ward 2015). Manure, food scraps, and crop residue are always available as raw materials, which makes it a highly sustainable option to mitigate environmental problems that they cause. Overflowing landfills don't only spread foul smells, they also allow toxic liquids to drain into underground water sources (De Freitas, 2018; Iwanowski & Rushmore, 2014).

Harvesting abundant rainwater from roof tops

According to Cruz and Manata (2020) the rainwater harvesting industry can become a leading employer in the green infrastructure movement. Rain water in an opaque container can last for a very long time because it does not allow any sunlight which causes algae as that in transparent container. Therefore, it is imperative for hotels to purchase as large and many containers as they possibly could. Dodds and Holmes (2019) concur that rainwater harvesting is an untapped resource that could be developed quickly within organisations.

Strategies for inculcating the practice of green tourism in the hotel sector

It would be not enough to mention green tourism anchors without highlighting the strategies that should be implemented to inculcate the practice of green tourism in the hotel sector.

Education

Filimonau and Naumova (2020) concluded that a sound green tourism strategy starts with an internal marketing initiative to harness the employee buy-in so as to foster a green tourism culture from within. Honeck (2020) added that community development with the participation of surrounding communities, suppliers and service providers, promoting the economic, social and cultural growth; greening the supply chain, through either purchasing from firms that are equally environment responsive or setting clauses that result in efficient practices especially in the use of renewable energies among others is also part of the current practices in hotels. Maramura *et al.* (2020) highlighted that education of both hotel employees and guests on how and why the best way to achieve green tourism should be practised by hotels. The benefits of green tourism to the hotel and the whole community at large should be explained to various stakeholders so that informed decisions should be made.

Green Tourism Certification

Certification as highlighted by Shukla, (2019) enables to foster responsible environmental and social behaviour thereby delivering a green product to tourists. This means green certification provides a mechanism through which enterprises can achieve voluntary standards of performance that meet or exceeds baseline standards or legislation (Kim, Palakurthi & Hancer, 2021). In the same manner, Ward (2015) stipulated that green certification also assists consumers and trade buyers who are looking for sustainable products and provides a basis for sustainable businesses to promote and network with each other with mutual confidence. Njerekai (2019) commended that the process of becoming certified can help hotels understand what they need to do to be considered green and improve their performance, for example, it can help them identify weaknesses and gaps in their performance and seek to fill them within a programme of continuous improvement. The hotels can identify sound ways to improve their internal management processes and independently assess their environmental, social and economic impact; demonstrate compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements on environmental issues as well as drive up sales by appealing to environmentally conscious guests. Deraman (2017) concurs with this when he forwarded that the process of certification induces businesses to become more efficient and offer higher quality services.

Requesting Patrons to Participate in Green Tourism Training Programs

Swilling (2016) opined that it is the responsibility of the government to train all employees in tourism organisations and hotels. Training for sustainable behaviour should also capture stakeholders at all levels of the value chain while stimulating opportunities for innovation, nurturing of talent and professionalism in green tourism implementation (Raharjo, 2019). The same sentiments are shared by Wearing and Neil (2019) who prescribed that for green tourism initiatives to be successful, there is need to empower all stakeholders with the requisite knowledge so that responsibility taken should be taken towards a total green tourism destination. This shows the need for the government to provide and promote quality and professional education and training for employees in hotels and tourism organisations. Above all this ensures that information has reached to all using different strategies. Failure to do so would lead to excuses by various stakeholders that they are not aware of the green tourism standards and practices expected.

Research, Innovation and Development

Young *et al.* (2009) isolated research and development as another strategy and mechanism that can assist in developing a framework for effective ways to contribute to green tourism development. Such

sentiments concur with Mouton (2021) who stipulated that research should lead to generation of new knowledge. Hotels produce a lot of waste especially from food products that are handled daily and such waste can earn hotels some value through innovation and creativity. Some consumers are looking for extremely healthy food therefore they can love to experiment with traditional dishes where the chefs in hotels exercise creativity, showcasing their various skills (Honeck 2020; Naumova 2020). Thøgersen (2016) and Ward (2015) added that innovation should be done to address problems specifically in the hotel sector. In the same line Shen, Qian & Chen (2020) postulated that the policy mix necessary to support and encourage green innovation should have a more strategic approach to foster innovation would help to achieve the core objectives of green tourism. Such efforts would lead to development of novel ways to manage and conserve water and energy and to manage waste sustainably in hotels.

IV. Materials And Methods

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology approach. The study's population was derived from employees in four and five star hotels in Harare and Victoria Falls. Data was interpreted and construed from people's perspectives and experiences which were basically qualitative. Although Manson (2019) forwarded that there is no universally prescribed sample size for qualitative research, Cruz and Manata (2020) believe that a larger sample size is ideal in order to provide greater reliability of study findings. Therefore, the researcher considered a sample size of thirty which is closer to the upper boundary to ensure reliable qualitative data. An eighty-three percent response rate was realized which is in line with Creswell (2014) who ascertained that with interviews, a higher response rate is yielded. Fahad (2015) and Farrimond (2016) both agreed that a rate of seventy-five percent and above is sufficient for a researcher to proceed with presentation, analysis and discussion of research findings. Data was collected from Harare and Victoria Falls hotel employees of four and five star hotels using interviews and non-participatory observations. For data analysis, the researcher sternly followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of data analysis which include distinct processes such as transcription, organisation, coding, analysis and interpretation. Explorative data analysis was done using thematic approach which is a method of analysing, identifying, organising and reporting themes within data (Zammit, 2020).

V. Findings And Discussion

The following sections present and discuss the results/findings of the study.

Green Tourism Initiatives Currently Being Implemented by Hotels in Zimbabwe

In a bid to cut down costs or completely eliminate them, hotels have tried to improve their operational efficiency. The practices also reduce the negative impact on the environment through key strategies being employed by most hotels to save energy, reduce water consumption and manage waste.

Green Tourism Initiatives to Save Energy

Energy efficient appliances have been installed in rooms as energy saving initiative. A voice below outlined the objective of energy savers in the lodging industry:

Electricity is one of the major bill experienced by the hotel. We are trying to cut on unnecessary expenses. The use of energy saving bulbs has managed to cut on electricity expenses by almost 20%. Energy saving bulbs consume less energy than traditional bulbs. This has allowed the hotel to increase its mark up.

Energy saving bulbs use less electricity to emit the same amount of light as traditional bulbs and they last twelve times longer. Eighty percent of the respondents highlighted that they control guestroom energy consumption by using digital thermostats. Gadgets mentioned are irons, refrigerators, self-catering cookers, air conditioners among others. When electric appliances are not in use they are switched off. The appliances stated are the geysers during the day, lights of unoccupied rooms at night, fridges, air conditioners and television sets. They do this to avoid extra charges of lighting rooms with no guests. The voices below were quoted saying:

We switch off the geyser around ten in the morning when all the guests have bathed. It is then switched on at three on the morning of the next day unless a guest makes a special request for us to switch on the geyser at any other time of the day (Respondent 4).

All the fridges, air conditioners, television sets and lights of unoccupied rooms remain off until a guest checks in. Oftentimes even if the room is occupied, these will be off when the guest is not in the room especially during the day unless for the refrigerators (Respondent 11).

Generally, in hotels, these appliances also consume considerable amount of energy. Switching them off for a certain part of the day cut a considerable part of the electricity bill.

Besides the mentioned green tourism practices, sixty percent of the respondents indicated that the building envelop is now designed in a way that during the day it allows enough sunlight to penetrate in to the room so as there is no need to switch on lights. Liquid petroleum gas is another green tourism measure being employed by most hotels which is being used in the kitchens so as to cut high electricity bills at the hotel. They also highlighted that gas is a cleaner source of energy which causes minimal pollution to the environment.

Green Tourism Initiatives to Save Water

The responses from this research indicate that water is a finite resource which have to be used in a sustainable manner to avoid wastage. Low flow shower heads and low flush toilets are now frequenting most hotels to cut the water bill. Respondents indicated that these appliances require less water and more pressure hence cutting the water bill. This supports Weaver (2018)'s view that low flow shower heads can decrease water consumption by 40% or more. Another way to reduce water consumption mentioned by sixteen percent of the respondents is the harvest of rain from roof tops. Such water is later used to flush toilets, for cleaning rooms and for bathing. This reduces tap water use thereby promoting water conservation as asserted by the voice below:

We harvest as much rain water as we can during the rainy season. It is collected through gutters and stored in jojo tanks. We use the water to flush toilets and we encourage guests to use such water for bathing since it is good quality water which quickly produces foam unlike tap water which takes some time to produce foam. Many guests enjoy bathing with rain water. The water can go for some days if all the three tanks are filled (Respondent 14).

Besides reducing the amount of detergent needed in laundry and dish washing appliances, the zero hardness of rainwater eliminates the scale build-up in house-hold appliances that could occur with the use of other sources of water. This will extend the life of the appliances. Research findings indicate that although a few hotels are employing this green tourism initiative, they have limited capacity to store water for future use. This means they use the harvested rain water only during and shortly after the storm. One third of the respondents interviewed indicated that for stay in guests, they re-use linen and towels as a way to save both water and energy, unless if a guest request the linen to be changed.

Green Tourism Initiatives to Manage Waste

The responses in this research revealed that hotels are implementing a variety of strategies to manage waste. Thirty-two percent of the respondents regarded composting as a key strategy to manage bio-degradable waste. Hotels have dug compost pits and they put their waste which can decompose. After decomposition, the waste is used as manure in gardens. Organic manure is more effective than compound fertilisers which cause eutrophication of rivers and dams. The findings support Raharjo(2019) who forwarded that one of the ten R's is rot, that is allowing organic waste (food scraps, grass clipping) to decompose in a process typically referred to as composting. However, hotels in Harare especially those located in the centre of the town complained that composting is not applicable to them due to their location and that they discharge their litter in the bins which is later collected by Harare Municipality. This shows that rotting is mainly applicable in resort hotels leading to underutilisation of the food left overs generated in city centre hotel kitchens. Besides rotting, the cost of purchasing new material in hotels is cut through recycling waste. This, at the same time deals with waste in an environmentally friendly manner. The responses given are clearly reveal that recycling is not done at hotels but is sent to recycling companies which have the resources and machinery to do the process.

Another strategy being implemented in Zimbabwean hotels to manage waste is re-using materials. This include materials like food left overs, plastic lotion containers as well as soaps. One respondent was quoted saying that:

The hotel produces a lot of waste from food left overs. The hotel re-use some of the waste as a green tourism initiative. For example, stale bread is dried, crushed and then the bread crumbs are used in the kitchen for coating food stuffs like chicken. The crumbs can also be collected daily from fresh bread and used for the same purposes (Respondents 2).

Besides reducing the amount of litter at the hotel, re-using materials is also a cost-cutting strategy. Respondents indicated that to eliminate the use of volumes of papers used for scheduling, inventory, sales, correspondence and many more, hotels have introduced paperless transactions. By doing most transactions electronically, hotels have saved hundreds of hectares of forests saved since paper comes from wood. Paperless transactions increases protection of digital files provided that the password is kept as a secret by the owner and it immediately saves space within the building because papers and books occupy space which would be used for other useful purposes when the hotel goes electronic.

ANCHORS OF GREEN TOURISM IN ZIMBABWEAN HOTELS

Although there are a variety of resources that can be utilised in the implementation of the green tourism strategy, only a few can be used as anchors of green tourism in Zimbabwean hotels due to the country's geographical location and its capabilities. The following sections present the results and discussion of findings of the study.

7.2.1 Solar Energy

Thirty-six percent of the respondents in both towns mentioned that there was abundant sunlight which is at the hotel's disposal. Such long hours of sunshine can be tapped by the hotel to attain greater benefits. The country experience thirteen hours of sunlight in summer and eleven hours in winter. Solar energy can be stored in batteries for future use. It will then be used to power solar geysers, light television sets and for lighting hotel rooms.

A respondent commended that:

Sunshine is in abundance in the country. The use of solar systems ensures the country an endless supply of energy even in an economic downturn, drought and all year round, since it is not only a renewable source of energy but also a clean energy source therefore going solar ensures the hotel a fistful of benefits (Respondent 19).

Another respondent commended that:

As a way to cut costs, hotels should install a solar system. This addresses the problem of massive power cuts that are experienced in the country due to load shedding. The solar system should be robust enough to power solar geysers and television sets in hotel rooms. The whole hotel needs a three hundred kilovolt solar system to provide power in all departments (Respondent 15).

An analysis of the voices above indicate that hotels should introduce the use of solar energy as a way to cut electricity costs. This could be used for lighting, powering television sets, charging laptops and phones and to power solar geysers. Instead of using generators to supplement electricity, hotels can make use of solar systems to ensure that there is enough provision of warm water for guests in all the hotel rooms all year round.

On the other hand, Mhizha, Mandebvu, Nyaruwata&Zengeni (2012) highlighted that the use of solar energy in Zimbabwean hotels was still in its infancy stage. The main reason given was that solar panels are expensive to purchase and to install. Hotels should be ready to engage into such huge capital outlay projects which have short pay back periods.

7.2.2 Biogas

Forty percent of the respondents nominated biogas as the most important resource at their hotel. This is because it can be made from abundant waste which is produced at the hotel be it human or plant waste.

The hotel is surrounded by many trees where leaves fall down and these are left to decompose therefore can be used for biogas production. The biogas can be used in kitchens in place of electricity and liquid petroleum gas. Unlike biogas, the two energy sources being used at the hotel have their limitations with electricity suffering load shedding and liquid petroleum gas being non-renewable (Respondent 12).

Another voice was quoted that:

At this hotel recycled glass and plastics are not of greater use because we give it to other organisations which does the recycling and sell the recycled material to its customers. This allows biogas to be the strongest of all the pillars since it is also a cheaper energy source. Biogas is a strong pillar of green tourism because it is cheaper to produce with locally available human and plant waste. Biogas can be obtained from both human and plant waste which is in abundant supply at the hotel (Respondent 22).

The voices above indicate that biogas is a cheaper, environmentally friend source of energy. Hotels can also partner with their suppliers of beef, pork, mutton, chickens and goat meat to get more waste so that they produce biogas in huge quantities. This supports Mouton (2021)'s view that biogas provides an efficient energy generation method and cannot be affected by cloudy weather. Some respondents mentioned that hotels produce a lot of human and plant waste material which are very useful if converted to biogas. Instead of flashing human waste, hotels should use it for biogas production and supplement electricity. This energy could be used to produce energy to power cookers in the kitchens and for lighting.

7.2.3 Composting

The findings from the study highlight that some respondents regard composting as a key strategy to manage biodegradable waste. Food left overs would be rot on eco-compost as evidenced by the voice below:

The hotel has a garden which needs to be fed with organic manure so that the vegetables and herbs grown in the garden gain enough nutrients so that they grow quickly. So the decomposable are an important resource at the hotel. Here in Victoria Falls vegetables are very expensive therefore by rotting waste we cut costs of buying vegetables and herbs. We cut costs of buying fertilisers to enrich the soil on the garden (Respondent 8).

Such responses indicate that plentiful food leftovers can be useful resources for anchorage of the green tourism strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. Hotels have dug compost pits and they put biodegradable waste which can decompose. After decomposition, the waste is used as manure in gardens. Organic manure is more effective than compound fertilisers which cause eutrophication of rivers and dams. The study findings highlight that composting is an important green tourism practice which yield a great deal of benefits for the hotel and food left overs and decomposable waste can be used as an anchor in green tourism. They are in abundance since the hotel produces lots of these.

7.2.4 Harvesting abundant rainwater from roof tops in the summer season

During the research, respondents indicated that purchasing more water tanks or constructing large reservoirs will enable hotels to harvest as much rainwater as they want. These tanks should be connected to the hotel's plumbing system so that when rainwater is collected into the tanks, the system automatically switches on to the harvested rainwater. All the departments will make use of this quality water which requires less detergent.

When the harvested water is finished, the system can automatically switch on to municipal treated water again. This allows the tanks to continuously collect more rainwater throughout the rainy season. Findings from this study indicates that although a few hotels are employing this green tourism initiative, they have limited capacity to store water for future use. This means they use the harvested rain water only during and shortly after the storm. Thus much of the water is lost as runoff or overland flow leading to massive land degradation in areas with no vegetation.

7.2.5 Restructuring the Building Envelop to Let in Natural Light (Green Buildings)

Re-designing the building envelop to let in sunlight is another anchorage for hotels. Sixty percent of the respondents interviewed indicated that the building envelop is now designed in a way that during the day it allows enough sunlight to penetrate in to the room so as there is no need to switch on lights. The colour of walls and ceilings should be bright so that the rooms get intense sunlight even in cloudy weather. Other respondents also highlighted that their hotels have big windows which are not just a good way of ventilation but they also allow guests to view the outside scenery, save energy by allowing guests and staff to switch off lights during the day since they give enough light to get into the room. Unlike small windows which require lights to be on even during the day especially on a cloudy day, big windows only need curtains to be raised so that natural light is used and energy costs are saved. Some responses revealed that glassy walls are also replacing the brick and mortar walls which are not only expensive to construct but causes a dark shadow to engulf the whole room even during daylight. These themes can be identified in the voices below:

The hotel is designed with very large windows which allow light to enter the rooms as early as around six in the morning. When cleaning the rooms on the eastern wing in the morning, we do not switch on the lights, we just raise the curtains and everything in the room becomes crystal clear. Contrary, on the western part the hotel would be still faint in the morning since less light would be trickling into the room. In the evening it's vice versa since the western sides receive sunlight as late as around six. Big windows delay the time it takes for the guests to switch on the lights in the evening (Respondent 2).

The hotel rooms and ceiling is painted with white so as the light cast into the room does not need to be supplemented with artificial lights. Light coloured walls and ceilings enhance the brightness of rooms so that even if there are energy savers light quality is not compromised. Dark walls make the use of energy saving bulbs so difficult since light quality would be poor so traditional bulbs would be used to illuminate enough light into the rooms, (Respondent 19).

Big windows and glassy walls as a green tourism anchorage replace the brick and mortar which is expensive and which eliminate natural light from entering into the room. A close analysis of the sentiments expressed above indicates that these are once off energy saving approaches that cost the hotel next to nothing as the materials used are even cheaper. More so, Chen, Bernard & Rahman (2019) supported the use of glassy walls and big windows when he forwarded that glassy walls especially if they face the beach or the forest offers an excellent experience to the guests. The use of light colours to paint hotel walls and the ceiling is also an economic measure to save on energy consumption in hotel rooms. These, as highlighted in the second voice allow the utilisation of energy saving bulbs.

VI. Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the hotel sector in Zimbabwe has made some strides in implementing green tourism initiatives. The green tourism practices focus on energy management, water conservation and waste management. Under energy management, hotels have adopted the use of solar energy, energy saving bulbs, switching off electrical gadgets not in use, use of liquid petroleum gas as well as restructuring the building envelop. Low flow shower heads, low flush toilets, rainwater harvesting and re-using linen are water saving strategies being employed by hotels. On waste management, hotels adopted the use of recycling and rotting (composting) of waste. Despite the various green tourism initiatives being implemented by hotels, only a few of these show significant results and these may be used as anchors on which green tourism implementers would centre on. Such green tourism practices include rainwater harvesting, re-structuring the building envelop, composting and re-using materials. It is therefore safe to conclude that hospitality and tourism operators in Zimbabwe should anchor their green tourism strategy on solar energy, rainwater harvesting, composting and biogas production. These anchors are cost-efficient, technically possible and environmentally friendly.

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