



WEALTH CREATION THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED CULTURAL TOURISM VENTURES: UNEXPLORED OPPORTUNITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: *Wealth creation in rural areas is strategic to Zimbabwe. About 80% of the Zimbabwean population dwells in the rural areas. Tourism in Zimbabwe has in the past relied heavily on wildlife. Although most tourism in Zimbabwe has taken place near rural areas, most rural areas are still lagging behind in development and tourism has not created wealth for the inhabitants of rural areas. Cultural tourism is a branch of eco-tourism which is being used in other countries to create wealth for the rural population. Cultural tourism's success as a tool for wealth creation is associated with the fact that rural people have access and ownership to their culture and cultural resources. This paper suggests models which can be utilised by Zimbabwean rural people to create wealth from their culture and cultural resources.*

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INTRODUCTION

Wealth is an important measure of economic well-being whose effect is not necessarily covered in social studies (Gibson, Le and Stillman (2007). It is defined as the abundance of valuable possessions or the state of being rich (Oxford Dictionary (2011). It is important to note that the concept of wealth varies from community to community (Gibson et al , 2007). Notwithstanding the varying ways in which wealth is defined, the relationship between being wealthy and general well- being has been described as positive in many cases. Sabel, Dorling and Hiscock (2007) found a positive relationship between wealth and reduced risk of mortality and increased equality. Mitchel and Show (2002) found out that a quarter of all premature deaths in America was associated with poor socio-economic circumstances. Gibson et al (2007) argue that differences in wealth are key determinants of educational investments. Therefore children from wealthy families are likely to be better off in future compared to those from poorer families. Against that background, the need to create wealth in communities can never be over-emphasised. The 2013 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) report indicates that about 80% of the Zimbabwean population dwell in rural areas. The Zimbabwean rural areas are characterised by an agrarian economy (ZIMSTAT, 2013). Austin (2003) notes that economic activity in most rural African communities is largely subsistence and rural people have no capacity to raise long term-finance. In some areas, rural areas are also prone to poverty (Manjengwa, Kasirye and Matema (2012). Rural areas are also prone to shocks like drought, pests and other unforeseeable events which usually affect their harvest. The utilisation of cultural tourism for wealth creation is one avenue which can be used to create wealth for the rural people. Austin (2003) notes that African rural communities need to utilise local resources including their culture and heritage to go beyond poverty alleviation to creation of wealth. The creation of cultural tourism ventures in Zimbabwean rural communities is an avenue which can create wealth for the rural population. Kline and Milburn (2010), concurs and indicate that tourism entrepreneurship is attractive to rural areas because it can generate economic solutions from within the community, mobilise local talent and build community identity. In Zimbabwean rural areas, economic solutions are needed to address challenges related to access to basic necessities like food, access to education, access to clean water, communication, participation in decision making for as well as access to health facilities.



This paper supports the thesis that Zimbabwean rural communities can utilise their culture to create wealth in all its facets for a better and sustainable livelihood both for families and the communities in general.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Zimbabwean rural economies are in most cases agrarian in nature. This has given rural inhabitants limited options for creation of wealth. Agricultural production is at times affected by shocks like droughts , for example the 1992 and 1995 droughts, cyclones, pests (for example army-worm) which affect their harvest. Some rural communities fall in regions where soils are poor and rainfall patterns are erratic, rendering them non-productive in terms of agriculture. Examples are the Zambezi Valley rural communities in Matebeleland North province of Zimbabwe. In such communities, rural population has been described as poor. The creation of cultural tourism ventures is an avenue used in other countries for Example India, not only to fight rural poverty, but to create wealth for rural populations. The Zimbabwean rural communities are rich in culture and heritage. The nature of ownership of these resources is such that local populations and community leaders are often the custodians of culture and cultural resources. Although the creation of community-based cultural ventures have not yet been explored and tried in Zimbabwean rural communities, it is an available avenue which can be adopted to create wealth for the rural communities of Zimbabwe.

WHAT AND WHY WEALTH CREATION

The concept of wealth is significant in economics, yet the meaning of wealth is context dependent (Gibson et al (2007). Wealth of simply defined as an abundance of valuable possessions or money or the state of being rich (Oxford dictionary, 2011). Economists define wealth as anything of value. In that sense, wealth is a subjective idea. It is not static or fixed. In economics, wealth can be divided into monetary and non-monetary wealth. Monetary wealth is anything that can be bought and sold for which there is a market and hence a price. Non-monetary wealth includes those things which depend on scarce resources and for which there is demand but are not bought and sold in a market and hence has no price. Deducing from that description, one can say, monetary wealth often translates into non-monetary wealth or social wealth, which is described in terms of indicators of wealth.



Wealth creation is the act of ensuring that a family, community or country is better off economically (Sabel et al (2007). Gibson et al (2007) note that wealth is an important measure of economic well-being for families and communities. Gittleman and Wilff (2004) note that it is vital for families and communities to create wealth since differences in wealth contribute to intergenerational transmission of advantage or disadvantage. In that sense, children of wealthier families will likely find it easier to create their own wealth in future, which they can pass on to future generations.

Zimbabwean rural communities rely on agriculture for their well-being. Austin (2003) notes that most rural African communities including in Zimbabwe, have a subsistence economy which is prone to shocks like droughts, cyclones and pests. Saxena (2007) emphasises that rural spaces should no longer be associated with agricultural commodity production only, but should be seen as localities for the stimulation of new socio-economic activities often incorporating tourism and leisure. Austin (2003), concurs and encourages rural African communities to garner an appreciation of the importance of cultural and heritage tourism entrepreneurship beyond poverty alleviation to creation of wealth. Zimbabwean rural communities should aim to create monetary wealth by packaging and pricing cultural assets in their communities and then translate the accumulated monetary wealth into social wealth. Social wealth can be defined contextually as those aspects which indicate that a community is wealthy. In this case these include access to clean drinking water, health facilities, education, and abundance of nutritious foods, easy of communication as well as ability to participate in decision making. When one looks at these indicators of wealth in the context of the Millennium Development Goal number 1, one can safely say, wealthy communities are those who have overcome poverty.

RURAL-BASED CULTURAL TOURISM

Rural areas are defined as less densely populated places, whose location is far from large population centers and which traditionally rely on primary industries (agriculture, fisheries, forestry) for existence (Wilkinson,1991). Pigram and Jenkins (2000), define them as environments with a characteristic agrarian landscape or natural values. Due to their distance from urban centers, rural areas are perceived either as places to which to escape from the pressures of modern intensive society or as untamed wilderness which can rekindle the human spirit, or just as large reserves of open areas suitable for space-intensive



pursuits (Shaw and Williams, 1998). One can therefore say that the true notions of 'urbanity' and 'rurality' are to a large extent, cultural definitions.

While rural areas in developed economies suffer from a decrease in populations (Hyttinen, 2000), in Zimbabwe, the majority of the population (80%) reside in rural areas. The rural economies in Zimbabwe are agrarian in nature (Mutana et al, 2013). Manyena (2003) mentions that in specific rural communities, the lack of essential drought power has often seen communities leading a poor life. Manjengwa, Kasirye and Matema (2011) found out during their survey that 81.6% of the population in 16 surveyed districts were poor with the majority of the poor residing in rural areas. Zimbabwe Statistical Office (ZIMSTAT), (2011) reported that 81.6% of Zimbabweans were poor with 95% of that fraction dwelling in rural areas. Kinsey (2010) also discovered similar results and concluded that poverty in Zimbabwe is overwhelmingly rural. Mutana, Chipfuva and Muchenje (2013) emphasise the need to tap into opportunities availed by tourism in creating socio-economic solutions needed in Zimbabwean rural communities. Rural areas play a major role in tourism and leisure in Zimbabwe since most tourism activity takes place in National Parks which are located adjacent to rural communities (Mutana et al ,2013).

Cultural tourism is defined it as visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or partly by their interest in the historical, artistic, and scientific or lifestyle or heritage offering of the community or region or institution (Silberg, 1995) . It also entails the visiting historic or archaeological sites, being involved in community festivals, watching traditional dances or ceremonies, or merely shopping for handcrafted art. Cultural tourism can be regarded as a subset of eco-tourism in that Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) defined it as concerning small groups of tourists seeking to know about and sustain natural environments, and also wishing to learn about the cultures associated with such places and the need to sustain local communities. Given the relationship between land and indigenous peoples, the two components of environmental conservation and cultural development are closely entwined. Cultural tourism has been perceived as both a growth market and an alternative form. Ruiz-Baudrihaye argued that it could be considered as "an intellectual, quality form of activity which inspires respect for local cultures and regions" (1997:43). Hummon (1988) and Craik (1997) observed that cultural tourism is a consequence of a convergence of commercialization, a restructuring of cultural production into industries,



government investment in culture, more training in this production and an increased consumption by people. Deducing from the aforementioned descriptions, most cultural tourism activity takes place in rural communities where the environment is serene, the cultures and authentic and the lifestyles still depict the original ways of life.

The increase in increased consumption of cultural tourism products worldwide has resulted in many rural communities learning to create wealth through community-based cultural tourism ventures (Austin, 2003). Kline and Milburn (2010) noted that cultural tourism has the potential to create wealth for rural entrepreneurs.

In South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania, culture and heritage were promoted for the development of rural communities with positive results in poverty reduction. Austin (2003) however emphasises that rural communities in Africa need to be encouraged to increase their appreciation of entrepreneurship which utilises culture and heritage, beyond poverty reduction towards wealth creation. Rural -based cultural tourism is defined in this paper to refer to any visit related to leisure, experienced in rural areas which utilises the culture and heritage endowments found in the rural areas. Kline and Milburn (2010) note that rural tourism entrepreneurship is crucial in the long-term success of rural communities since it is one of the few opportunities to economic development which creates and sustains local rural economies and return the benefits directly to that local community. As a result, rural cultural entrepreneurial ventures can support social and cultural sustainability of the local community if appropriately developed.

CULTURAL TOURISM FOR CREATING WEALTH IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL AREAS

Cultural tourism is tourism that focuses upon the rich past of people or areas as preserved and portrayed in monuments, historic sites and culture (Cabrini, 2005). Kaillor (1995) notes that people do not visit a country for its airports, hotels and the recreational facilities but for culture. The author goes on to mention that a growing number of visitors are becoming special interest travelers who rank the arts, heritage and or cultural activities as one of the top five reasons for travelling.

Certain characteristics of tourism makes it a development tool of choice in the rural areas; it is labour intensive, inclusive of women and informal sector based on natural and cultural assets of the poor and suitable for poor rural areas with few other growth options (Ashley and Roe, 2002, Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005). Tourism offers an opportunity to revitalise



rural areas through the diversification of economic activities (Bennet, 2000) and provides a useful way of restoring regional balance in a country (Schaller, 2001). Mutana (2013) notes that the cultural wealth, the lifestyle and the heritage available in rural Zimbabwean rural communities for example Binga district in Matebeleland North along Lake Kariba, leaves one wondering why people in these communities are still poor. She further argues that there is need for rurally -based tourism in Zimbabwean communities to help remove poverty by bringing the net benefits to the poor.

The use of rural based cultural tourism ventures for wealth creation as great potential. Authors have supported the use of rural based entrepreneurial ventures which utilise culture and heritage (Kline and Milburn, (2010), Austin, (2003), McGehee and Kline (2008). Kline and Milburn (2010) note that in the United States of America, rural based cultural tourism ventures have resulted in higher employment, higher income levels, increased educational attainment and lower mortality rates for rural populations.

McGehee and Kline (2008) explain that rural based tourism entrepreneurial ventures are attractive because they generate economic solutions from within the community, mobilise local talent, build local identity and encourage development.

Horob and Long (1996) link the concept of cultural tourism with sustainable development. The need for a destination to come up with products which are kinder to the environment can never be over-emphasised. A number of authors on ecology and tourism have extensively researched on the impact of nature-based tourism on the environment and concluded that the traditional nature based tourism packages were detrimental to the environment (Muchapondwa, 2006). The concept of sustainability and the greening of the tourism industry have changed the tourists' attitude towards those destinations whose product is nature-based while those destinations promoting culture and the interaction of tourists with the people are being favored more and more. Cultural tourism is more sustainable than the conventional tourism package (Manwa, 2007, Zeppel and Hall, 1992).The writers have established that cultural tourists are higher spenders than other types and can be instrumental in the development of local communities. Beyond developing local communities, cultural tourism can be instrumental in fostering national identify and nostalgia (Palmer, 1999). Mutana and Zinyemba (2013) suggest that cultural tourism is one aspect of non-substitutable product which Zimbabwe can promote in a bid for sustainability.



This implies that rural based cultural tourism ventures have a large pool of enthusiastic cultural tourists to tap from , hence have potential to create wealth for the rural populations.

Mkono (2010) notes that culture is the only product which cannot be substituted and which can be successfully differentiated for competitive advantage. The author goes on to note that Western tourists expect authentic experiences which are personalised and offer a high quality service delivery.

Customer tastes and preferences in tourism packages have changed. Gray, (1990) notes that cultural tourism signifies a shift in the evolution of tourist behavior from mass tourism. Butler, (1990) concurs and adds that tourist tastes have changed. Destinations offering eco-friendly products like cultural tourism are likely to be patronized more by tourists than destinations offering conventional/traditional nature-based tourism packages. Cultural tourism offers local communities an opportunity to show case their culture (Mkono, 2010). The inhabitants of rural areas possess culture and are the custodians of the cultural norms (which can be promoted for tourism. This implies the limited capital investment needed before culture can be utilised for wealth creation. Culture entails lifestyle. The performance of 'culture' depicted in dances, lifestyle and other rituals are part of everyday life in rural areas. It is not skill that the rural people need to be trained on. Therefore, it is easier for the rural people to create wealth using culture.

Cultural tourism brings the market to the product. Due to the nature of cultural tourism, the tourists looking for authenticity actively look for places where culture can be learnt and take active action to visit the places. Therefore, it is easier for the rural people to create wealth through cultural tourism.

MODELS FOR CREATING WEALTH THROUGH CULTURAL TOURISM

A variety of models are suggested on how rural people in Zimbabwe can create wealth through cultural tourism. It should be noted that communities have the opportunity to utilise any of the models or a combination of models in approaching the wealth creation activity in their community. Also, in some cases, locals may not be in a position to carry out the actual business of utilising cultural tourism but they should in all cases have the design and should by all means benefit from the tourism activities taking place in their community. Austin (2003) notes the importance of local decision making and control in ensuring the



success of community based entrepreneurial ventures in African communities. Kline and Milburn (2010) emphasise the fact that local based entrepreneurs have a connection with the community and will reinvest financially and emotionally in the local area.

MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL AND HERITAGE RESOURCES BY RURAL COMMUNITIES

This basic model is based on the need for rural communities to take over the management of cultural and heritage resources found in their communities. The Traditional Leaders Act Chapter 29.17 of 2001 indicates that the rural communities are the custodians and owners of their culture and heritage. The current management model in Zimbabwe is that some cultural and heritage resources are controlled by state departments whose administrators are based in the urban areas. This results in a missing link between the rural communities where those resources are and the people who promote and broker such cultural products. Rural communities in Zimbabwe have structures which can be utilised to ensure the management of cultural and heritage resources for example the Chiefs, who are the traditional leaders of communities, have the duty to promote and uphold cultural values and traditional family life (Traditional Leaders Act (2001) Section 5). The chiefs in any given province form a Provincial Assembly from which representatives are selected to in the National Chiefs' council. This shows that if the control of heritage sites and cultural tourism products are controlled by communities, a uniform structure of how to manage the resources can easily be established.

Under this model, the communities through the structures of Village Development Committees (VDCO and Ward development Committees (WADCO) can specify all aspects of culture that can be promoted for tourism, determine a price and engage necessary tourism offices (for example Zimbabwe Tourism Authority or Registered travel Agents and Tour Operators) for the promotion of such products. The consumption of any of these products will only follow a booking system and payment of the requisite fees to the community. Any proceeds from visitors coming into the community for cultural tourism resources will go into the community bank account and be used for development of the community and creation of wealth.



ESTABLISHMENT OF CULTURAL VILLAGES

Cultural villages are institutions designed to showcase the local culture and lifestyle in a staged mode. Mutana and Zinyemba (2013) describe a variation of cultural villages called 'live-in cultural villages' where tourists get to stay in a hut similar to what is used by locals, consume local traditional food and participate in a local life style. Under this model the custodians of a specific culture, for example the chiefs in a specific locality of rural district come together in form of a chief's council, and agree on the cultural aspects which they would like to be show-cased at a cultural village constructed in their area. The Chiefs' council can utilize knowledge available in the community to come up with a variety of products which can be showcased at the cultural village. Once the products have been agreed, private enterprises owned by people from within the community or from other places can be invited to come and establish cultural villages. Chiefs can appoint a single custodian or the contact person who will be responsible for negotiating with outside investors. The over-arching feature of this arrangement is that the locals should gain wealth from the established cultural village. One way to ensure this is to design a Community Share Ownership (CSO) scheme with any investor who establishes a cultural village in the community. A CSO is a business ownership structure where the community and the private investor share the ownership of a facility for example the community can own 70% while the private investor owns 30% or 51% and 49% respectively. The terms of the share ownership structure form part of the agreement entered between the community and the private investor who comes to establish a cultural village in a community. Proceeds from the community share ownership will go into the community account and will be used to develop infrastructure within the community, for example, roads, schools, health facilities and taking care of the elderly and the disabled.

Under this model, the community has the power to determine the behavior of tourists while consuming the cultural tourism products. The cultural village model also has the advantage of making use of staged authenticity thereby taking care of the possible negative impacts of tourism activities to the community (Mutana and Zinyemba (2013). To ensure sustainability, it is best if communities allow people with expertise and capacity to run cultural villages as successful businesses to operate cultural villages. Dixey (2005) observed that in Zambia, the



over-reliance on community ownership of cultural tourism ventures led to the demise of most cultural tourism ventures which were initially established in rural areas.

TOUR OPERATING VENTURES AROUND HERITAGE SITES

Zimbabwean rural areas boast of several heritage sites, some of which are well known for example the Great Zimbabwe Monuments near Masvingo town, the Matobo Hills near Bulawayo, Chinhoyi Caves in Mashonaland West and Khami Ruins in Matebeleland South. There are possibilities of many other places of heritage whose cultural significance is key in the history of communities although they are not well known. A good example is the Chibwatata hot springs in Kaani Ward, Binga district along Lake Kariba which is important in the BaTonga culture. In the history of the BaTonga people who are the inhabitants of Binga District in Matebeleland North Province along Lake Kariba, the Chibwatata Hot springs were key in the rain-making ceremonies. To date, traditional Chiefs in Binga district still value the hot springs as a key feature of their heritage.

Under this model, traditional Chiefs in a specific community form a chief's council. The Chiefs identify their heritage sites which can be used as cultural tourism products. Chiefs, with the help of other important community members, come up with a price for each product. A custodian or contact person is then appointed by the chiefs. It may be important that a custodian be a member of the community who has skills to communicate with outsiders and visitors and to receipt cash proceeds coming from the visits. Once prices have been determined, the community will invite tour operators, travel agents and other players in the tourism sector and make them aware of the availability of such a product.

This model is contrary to the current situation where heritage sites found in specific rural communities are owned by tourism bodies and other organisations. This situation boils down to what Handley (1996) describes as passive participation by rural communities which results in them feeling disenfranchised. This situation eventually leads to communities losing pride in their culture and spells death to cultures. Debes (2011) notes that cultures which are not promoted and utilized will eventually die.

HOSTING OF CULTURAL EVENTS IN RURAL AREAS BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Cultural events are ventures that have been used in other countries as viable business which have created wealth for their owners. For Example the Reed Dance in Swaziland, is well known cultural event where the King's birthday is celebrated. Cultural events are a good



way of creating wealth for rural people. Zimbabwean rural communities engage in various events known as *bira* (celebration) in Chishona, which if promoted for tourism can bring wealth to the rural people. Examples of such events include the inauguration of Chiefs, memorial events for leaders for example the Mzee Bira, which takes place every year to remember and celebrate the life of Vice President Muzenda who was a key leader and role model in his community and the country as a whole. In order for such cultural events to create wealth, they need to be planned on time or even up to five years in advance, opened up to non-community members and be associated with value. Another factor is that events should be associated with specific communities. For example, Mzee Bira for the Gutu rural community in Masvingo, the birth place of the Late Vice President, while other memorial events can be developed in other places. Either a blanket fee can be used as entry fees for non-community members or the event can have sub-products associated with it for example traditional food shows, traditional arts, song and dance and other products. Once a community plans an event, the event needs to be promoted through travel agents and tour operators' directly through local newspapers and the internet and allow visitors to book for the event. The event will then be carried out according to the authentic culture of the community concerned. Apart from creating wealth for the community collectively, events also avail an opportunity for members of the community to sell wares and other cultural products and get value out of their culture.

VENTURES AROUND SONGS AND DANCE OR ETHNO-MUSIC CONCERTS IN RURAL AREAS

Promotion of musicians and dancers is another way to create wealth in rural communities. Individual promoters or appointed community custodians can promote traditional songs and traditional musicians available in communities. In the Zimbabwean communities, a number of musicians are available who perform and compose traditional and unique music although they have not been promoted before. In Binga rural district, along Lake Kariba, Edward of Siachilaba community performs a type of music called *Kangobela*. *Kangobela* is a unique type of music played with an instrument more alike to the Shona *mbira* but with lesser keys different in its notes. The result is a unique and authentic sound, which is original to the BaTonga Culture. Another example is the Ngoma Buntibe cultural group of Siachilaba Community Binga District. This group performs as team of 35 to 60 players using a



combination of drums (Ngoma), nyele and dance. The resultant sound is a unique fusion of sound. In Chipinge District of Manicaland Province near the Zimbabwean Border with Mozambique, the Manzvire Muchongoyo group combines traditional Ndaу songs and dance in a unique and original way. These are only a few examples to show the potential of this kind of cultural venture. Under this model, a musical gala can be organised where traditional music from a specific community will be played by different traditional musicians from the community. The musicians are paid from the proceeds of the gala, for their performance. Musical products can also be sold nationally and internationally. Under this model, the traditional musicians can create wealth through performing traditional music and dance. As a result, younger generations are motivated to learn and perform their traditional music and dance. Other related products can be sold during these galas for example traditional food, art products, traditional beer among others. The community can also gain through offering tented accommodation for visitors and providing other meals and refreshments.

CONCLUSION

The promotion of community-based cultural tourism ventures if well planned can result in rural communities creating wealth. Cultural tourism is more sustainable in the sense that it utilises culture, a commodity owned by rural inhabitants, and one that is non-consumptive. Absence of benefits from tourism has led to rural communities in Zimbabwe viewing themselves as passive participants in tourism and as objects for tourists to view (Handley, 1996, Mutana, 2013). This history of community resistance has colored perceptions of both tourism and conservation in a negative frame, with rural people rightly feeling disenfranchised from tourism activities (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005). Rural-based cultural tourism can be a means of rectifying the past imbalances. Although good planning and community-leader commitment is needed, community-based cultural ventures can open up avenues for wealth creation and compliment agriculture in ensuring future wealthy rural communities in Zimbabwe.

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