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Tourism suppliers' view of the role of government initiatives and tourism competitiveness in distressed contexts

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Abstract

This chapter analyses government initiatives' role in tourism competitiveness using data collected from suppliers operating in a distressed tourist destination. The government's involvement in the process of tourism development, especially in developing countries, is critical. The role and participation of governments in tourism development vary from minimal to a high level of involvement. Developing economies with ongoing political and economic challenges like Zimbabwe have not been comprehensively researched, especially on the nexus between competitiveness and government initiatives. Using qualitative data from a convenient sample of 15 hospitality and tourism managers in Zimbabwe, it was found that the role of government is important for enhancing tourism competitiveness. The study concludes that a higher level of government involvement is needed for Zimbabwe to enhance competitiveness. The government should play a greater role, especially in providing an enabling environment for improved competitiveness while reducing corruption.

Keywords: government initiatives; distressed destination; tourism competitiveness; Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Before the COVID-19, international tourism was projected to reach 1.8 billion arrivals, and emerging economies were expected to have 57% of the share (UNWTO, 2019). Though tourism growth has been revised downward due to the challenges emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism still plays a critical role in the economic development of emerging economies, especially job creation and revenue generation (Lee, 2015; Woyo and Slabbert, 2020). Several destinations globally are increasing government support to promote tourism development based on the sector's contribution to gross domestic product (GDP), especially among developing economies (Crouch, 2011; Woyo, 2018). Webster and Ivanov (2014) argue that the increased spending of public resources is justified based on the need to attract more tourist arrivals and enhance destination competitiveness.

Competitiveness is critical for a tourist destination to globally obtain a favourable market position (Leung and Baloglu, 2013; Woyo and Slabbert, 2021). Pike and Page (2014) argue that managing competitive tourist destinations is critical in studying the tourism industry. Though destination competitiveness has been an active area of research, there is a need for comprehensive research to generate insights that destinations can apply in developing strategic plans (Cronjé and du Plessis, 2020). Past studies show a shifting trend in terms of how research is investigating destination competitiveness from simply focusing on aspects of competitive advantage to emphasising the role of private and public actors in the development equation ([Armenski, Dwyer, and Pavlukovic, 2018](#); [Hall and Campos, 2014](#); [Mei, Arcodia and Ruhanen, 2015](#)). This implies that even destinations with ongoing crises like Zimbabwe (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020, Woyo, 2021) need to understand what competitiveness means, its models and factors (Cronjé and du Plessis, 2020) and the role the government plays in enhancing competitiveness.

Government initiatives are imperative for enhancing destination competitiveness (Croes, 2011; Croes and Kubickova, 2013). However, studies investigating the role of government in a tourism competitiveness context (see Table 1) are relatively fewer (Javed and Tučková, 2020), suggesting an area of research that is still in its infancy (Hall and Campos, 2014; Wan and Bramwell, 2015). This is regardless of three decades of tourism competitiveness research (Kubickova and Martin, 2020). Though the role of government in tourism development among developing countries is prominent (Yang *et al.*, 2008), the challenge is that research is yet to provide a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of government initiatives and policies in enhancing tourism competitiveness (Yang *et al.*, 2008; Kubickova, 2019), specifically from a destination with ongoing political and economic challenges, like Zimbabwe (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020). This demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between government role and tourism competitiveness.

A review of past studies shows that most studies on competitiveness focused more on definitional aspects, its measurements, and determinants (Abreu-Novais *et al.*, 2016; Cronjé and du Plessis, 2020). Furthermore, African destinations, particularly those with ongoing political and economic challenges, have not been investigated (see Table 1). The focus of existing studies has been more on developing countries located in the Central American region. Furthermore, a population gap is observed in the literature. Most of the studies were conducted using secondary data, drawn mainly

from the World Trade Organisation, World Bank, Central Banks, Tourism Boards and the World Travel and Tourism Council. Therefore, methodologically, this study contributes to insights drawn from the tourism suppliers' primary data. Table 1 also shows that the same research gap was presented. This chapter responds to the need to understand how government initiatives and competitiveness are linked (Kubickova and Martin, 2020). Acknowledging these research gaps, this chapter investigates tourism establishments managers' perceptions regarding the government's role in enhancing destination competitiveness in a distressed context. This general aim is divided into two specific objectives: (1) identifying the government initiatives, (2) and their perceived influence on destination competitiveness in a distressed destination.

This study contributes to the literature by discussing the role of government initiatives using a destination in distress. Thus, the study's findings provide an interesting perception of government initiatives' impact on destination competitiveness. Understanding government initiatives' influence in enhancing a destination's competitiveness with a fluid political environment could help the supply side plan and develop the industry better. Methodologically, this chapter provides findings based on primary data that has been qualitatively analysed in a field where most publications have been based on secondary data analysed quantitatively (see Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of research on government role and tourism competitiveness

Source	Study focus	Geographic focus	Methodology	Study population
Kubickova and Martin (2020)	Relationship between government and destination competitiveness	58 countries from developed and developing countries	Conceptual	Secondary data
Kubickova and Li (2017)	Tourism competitiveness, government, and tourism area life cycle	Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras	A case study using time series analysis	Secondary data
Javed and Tučková, 2020	Government role in tourism competitiveness and its relationship with Tourism Area Life Cycle	Asia Pacific countries: China, India, and Pakistan	An econometric methodology using annual time-series data	Secondary data was used
Croes and Kubickova, 2013	Performance-based tourism competitiveness index	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama		Secondary data
Kubickova (2016)	Role of government in tourism, linking competitiveness, freedom and developing economies	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama	An econometric methodology using panel data analysis	Secondary data
Kubickova (2019)	Impact of government policies on destination competitiveness	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama	A quantitative methodology using regression analyses	Panel data from the 7 Central American countries, ranging from 1995 to 2013, for a total of 1134 observations

2. Literature review

2.1 *Tourism competitiveness*

Competitiveness is complex and difficult to measure in a tourism context (Dodds and Holmes, 2020; Woyo and Slabbert, 2021). This complexity is also reflected in Table 1 where the research gap appears to be the same and not solved across a range of studies. There is no universally accepted definition of the term (Dodds and Holmes, 2020; Woyo, 2018) and measuring constructs due to differences in destinations and countries. However, most definitions focused more on the destination's ability to increase tourism spending, attract more visitors, providing memorable experiences, optimisation of destination attractiveness, delivering appealing tourism offerings, increasing market share, and enhancing the well-being of residents sustainably (Dodds and Holmes, 2020; Ritchie and Crouch, 1999). Thus, making the process of defining and measuring tourism competitiveness a tenuous activity (Kubickova and Martin, 2020).

The development of new tourism products, markets and customers requires destinations to think more like businesses (Kubickova and Martin, 2020). This is critical for creating and sustaining competitive advantage (Cronjé, and du Plessis, 2020; Kubickova and Martin, 2020; Woyo and Slabbert, 2021). It has been argued that countries and regions that rely on tourism income must create a competitive advantage to maintain their market position (Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005). However, creating destination competitive advantage is intricate due to the complexity of the field and the involvement of multiple private and public sector stakeholders (Javed and Tučková, 2020; Tučková and Jurigová, 2014).

2.2 *Government involvement and competitiveness*

Government involvement in tourism development is critical for economic performance and modern economic activities (Glaser and Shleifer, 2002). For tourism destinations to be successful, there is a need for a “whole-of-government approach to tourism development and management” (World Travel Council, 2015:30). Hall (2007:219) notes that this level of tourism performance is achieved when the government establishes market conditions that enable firms to leverage the economy's competitive advantage. This shows that the government is a critical role player in enhancing destination competitiveness (Hall, 2007; Kubickova and Martin, 2020; Kubickova, 2017). Consequently, destination competitiveness must be viewed just like other public goods (Kubickova and Martin, 2020). This is because the government plays a key role in assisting tourism growth to boost the economy and increase the quality of life of destination residents (Kubickova and Martin, 2020; Kubickova, 2017). Therefore, tourist destinations with governments that can provide quality public goods have always been the most chosen ones among tourists (Croes, 2011; Woyo, 2018).

The government's involvement in tourism development is frequently reflected in public policies, creation of government departments, ministries and institutions to manage the destination (Hall and Campos, 2014; Mei et al., 2015). However, poorly conceptualised policies introduced by governments in a destination have a negative effect on tourism competitiveness (Manuela and de Vera, 2015). This is one reason why the nexus between government initiatives and competitiveness attracts a lot of attention from academics (Kubickova, 2017) and practitioners.

To achieve the desired competitiveness in a destination, stakeholder cooperation is critical, and governments must play a much bigger role by creating an enabling environment (Dwyer *et al.*, 2016; Hall, 2007; Woyo, 2018; Woyo and Slabbert, 2021). Furthermore, creating a competitive destination requires a balanced approach to stakeholder cooperation (Devine and Devine, 2011) to avoid the illusion that normally happens when tourism development is left entirely to the private sector (Karnani, 2011). Leaving the management of a destination to "the private sector could result in the unbalanced development of infrastructure and market expansion, with the risk of growing congestion and increased pressure on environmental resources" (Devine and Devine, 2011, p.1253). Therefore, government involvement is crucial in helping prevent activities that affect the welfare of residents.

Government involvement in tourism is not without criticism. On the one hand, there is a school of thought that argues that government policies are vital to the industry's success (Glaser and Shleifer, 2002; Mei *et al.*, 2015; Yang, Wall, and Smith, 2006). On the other hand, some argue that public-sector involvement in tourism is excessive. Government involvement is bad for business because of its bureaucratic tendencies and blatant lack of transparency (Bull, 1995; Croes, 2011; Dolfma, 2013; Mei *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, it causes market distortion (Croes, 2011). However, the government remains a critical stakeholder in tourism development (Dwyer *et al.*, 2016; Javed and Tučková, 2020; Kubickova and Martin, 2020) mainly due to "its impact on any national economy and residents' quality of life" (Javed and Tučková, 2020:997). Consequently, measuring these aspects in a country with ongoing political and economic crises (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020) is required.

2.3 Role of government in tourism development and competitiveness

The role of government in the tourism industry has long been recognised in the literature (Dwyer *et al.*, 2016), as presented in Table 1. As stated earlier, its role is frequently reflected by developing national tourism policies, destination marketing campaigns, and special agencies for tourism (Kubickova and Martin, 2020). It is widely established that government plays an important role in tourism competitiveness (Devine and Devine, 2011; Lee, 2015). Based on this, developing a competitive tourist destination directly results from having a competent bureaucracy (Lee, 2015). However, it is important to note that the function is not universal and varies from country to country (Kubickova and Martin, 2020). Furthermore, tourism development is often in stages and thus requires different levels of government involvement. Destinations generally start with low government involvement and move towards higher participation to create an environment for tourism to compete globally. The level of involvement tends to decline once tourism has achieved a strong global industry presence. Consequently, it is imperative for this current study to establish the suppliers' perceptions and establish government involvement in Zimbabwe and how it influences competitiveness

3. Methods

Zimbabwe is a tourist destination operating under distress for more than two decades (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020, 2021). The destination developed national tourism strategies through the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, launched destination marketing campaigns and a tourism policy. These government interventions were motivated by the decline in tourist arrivals which emanated from the contested land reform programme and disputed elections (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020, 2021; Woyo, 2018). However, research understanding these government initiatives' role in enhancing a destination's competitiveness in distress is yet to emerge on a local level. On a global level, limited studies investigate the political environment and tourism competitiveness (Pike and Page, 2014), especially in countries with ongoing political and economic challenges like Zimbabwe.

There is a lack of research regarding government initiatives' role in tourist destinations' competitiveness (Kubickova, 2019), especially in Africa's distressed contexts. Exploratory research was deemed appropriate for the study and identifying variables that could be useful for quantitative research. A qualitative approach was selected because it helps investigate all aspects and how the supply side perceives the role that government initiatives have played on destination competitiveness in the last two decades. The government's role in destination competitiveness in a country with ongoing political and economic challenges presents new challenges that need to be identified to obtain critical insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1988).

An inductive qualitative approach was adopted using open-ended questions for in-depth online interviews (in English). The online interviews directly resulted from the need to follow existing health and safety regulations that were gazetted to contain the COVID-19 virus. The study employed non-probability sampling, and participants were invited to participate in the study via emails between October and November 2020. The final sample had a total of 15 participants that were drawn from tourism establishments operating in Zimbabwe (Table 1). Samples ranging between 14 and 30 are adequate for scientific analysis in tourism studies (Phelan, 2015; Yap and Ineson, 2009). Therefore, the sample of 15 was deemed consistent with previous influential qualitative research recommendations. It is advised that sampling should continue until the study reaches saturation, and saturation was reached after the 10th interview. Fifteen interviews ranging from 36 minutes to 40 minutes in length were conducted, which was deemed sufficient for this exploratory study.

The key criteria for inclusion in the study were for the participant to hold a formal management position in the tourism and hospitality industry and have worked in the sector for at least ten years. Data collected in this study include demographic aspects of the participants, their perceptions of government initiatives, and how they have influenced Zimbabwe's competitiveness as a destination post-2000. All participants were asked four main questions and additional probing questions to solicit more answers. Permission to record participants was sought before the interviews and was granted. All interviews were recorded on the Zoom cloud facility and were transcribed verbatim before being used for the study.

Content analysis was used to analyse the data, and this resulted in several sub-themes from the questions administered during the interviews. The interview responses were read and re-read several times to interpret variations and discern similarities and differences in the content. Similarities and variations observed resulted in numerous underlying sub-themes that helped reorganise data and identify reoccurring themes (Thyme *et al.*, 2013; Mazaheri *et al.*, 2013). Responses were coded to uncover similarities (Table 2). Careful observation of the sub-themes resulted in 5 dominant themes labelled funding, policy issues, tourism framework, enabling environment and budget incentives (Figure 1).

Table 2: Participants' profile

Participant	Position/Department	Type of organisation	Age	Experience (in total)	Location
S1	Operations Manager	5 Star Hotel	48	15	Harare
S2	Marketing Manager	Tour Operator	38	11	Victoria Falls
S3	Finance Officer	Car Rental	45	18	Kariba
S4	Finance and Administration	National Park	57	25	Hwange
S5	General Manager	National Tourism Organisation	49	12	Harare
S6	General Manager	4 Star Hotel	50	20	Victoria Falls
S7	Executive Housekeeper	3 Star Hotel	46	15	Harare
S8	Services Manager	Low-cost Airline	38	10	Harare
S9	Food and Beverage Manager	5 Star Hotel	40	16	Masvingo
S10	Sales Manager	Tour Operator	40	15	Harare
S11	General Manager	Tour Operator	39	10	Mutare
S12	Manager	Restaurant	35	10	Nyanga
S13	Manager	Tour Operator	37	15	Victoria Falls
S14	Food and Beverage	Guest lodge	43	20	Victoria Falls
S15	Finance and Administration	Arts organisation	48	24	Harare

4. Discussion

The responses provided a rich overview of the tourism suppliers' perceptions in a destination with ongoing political and economic challenges. This chapter identifies and analyses the five key themes that underpin government initiatives' role and their perceived influence on destination competitiveness in a distressed destination. Funding, policy issues, tourism framework, enabling environment, and budget incentives, each with several distinctive dimensions expressed as their sub-themes, are presented in the map of themes and sub-themes in Figure 1.

The most prominent theme that emerged was related to the government's incentives through the National Budgets since 2000. Though argued to be erratic, most of the participants recognised that government, since 2000, has played an important role in enhancing destination competitiveness in Zimbabwe. The incentives through rebates on importing capital goods for tourism projects, scrapping of duty on safari and car hire vehicles gave Zimbabwe a critical boost during a time of tourism decline, especially after the year 2008.

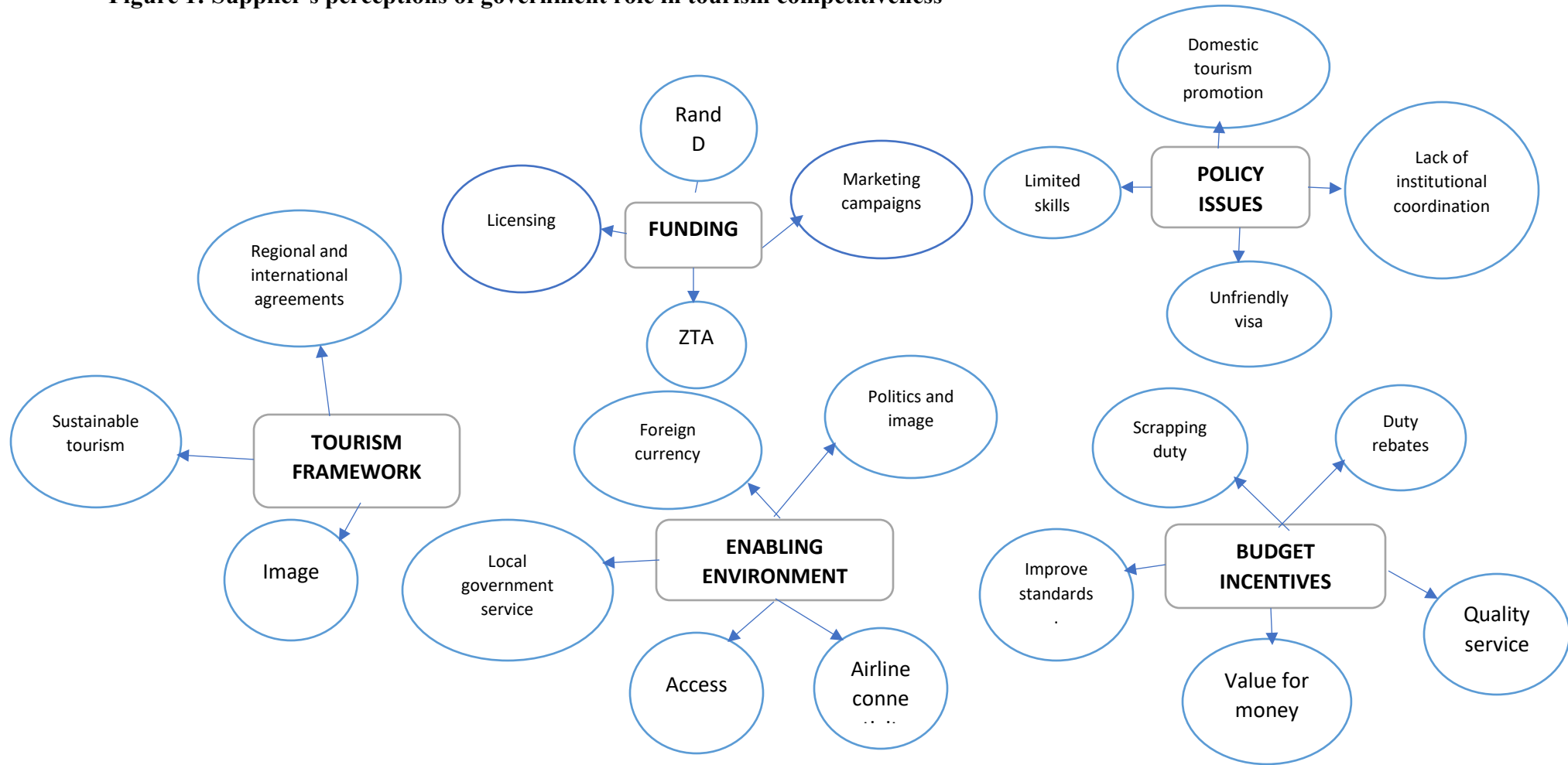
Some critical reflections from industry experts are worth noting. On the question of the importance of incentives that were announced through the national budgets in the last 20 years, participant S12 voiced out that:

"The extension of the tourism rebate regulation applies to the import of capital goods for tourism projects and is a significant incentive for those involved in tourism to take the opportunity to upgrade and refurbish their products, properties and associated projects".

"The scrapping of duty on importing safari and car hire vehicles will boost the industry's productivity. Quality of equipment will give the clients value for money, impeccable service and this, in turn, will improve industry standards."

Participants shared mixed opinions about the incentives by scrapping their duty and rebating on capital goods for tourism projects. Some lauded the Zimbabwean government's role in enhancing tourism competitiveness by enabling suppliers to acquire capital goods. However, others expected the government to provide a more enabling environment that makes it easy for the tourism industry to acquire foreign currency to buy capital goods. Though some participants indicated that rebates and scrapping of duty are significant on their profits and the determination of a fair price to the customer, recent studies continue to reflect that Zimbabwe is an expensive tourist destination (Woyo, 2018; Woyo and Woyo, 2019; Woyo and Slabbert, 2019, 2020; Woyo, 2021). Zimbabwe's pricing regime is too serious to be overlooked. It affects the price competitiveness and tourism recovery for both the domestic market (Woyo, 2021) and the international market (Woyo, 2018; Woyo and Slabbert, 2020). Therefore, while the government has helped provide incentives, more is required to influence the destination's price competitiveness.

Figure 1: Supplier's perceptions of government role in tourism competitiveness



Though conclusions regarding the impact of government spending have been mixed in past studies, most of the studies argue that government expenditure or spending impacts economic development (Berggren, 2003) and destination competitiveness (Kubickova, 2019). Funding by the central government remained a recurring response under various categories of inquiries. While many of the participants agreed that Zimbabwe has world-class attractions, the industry's contribution to GDP remains relatively small because the country is still struggling with basic issues such as infrastructure, especially transport. This is generally exacerbated by the fact that Zimbabwe is still perceived as politically unstable (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020, 2021). Due to this, Zimbabwe is not able to secure funding from international markets for infrastructural development. Due to the country's political climate, international sourcing partners for hospitality and tourism investment remains difficult to find due to the economic environment prevailing in Zimbabwe at the moment.

Investment in tourism infrastructure is important for enhancing destination competitiveness (Woyo, 2018; Woyo and Slabbert, 2021; Xie and Tveterås 2020). Based on the analysis of the results, it was noted that the government in distressed contexts must continuously provide more funding for investing in tourism infrastructure (Xie and Tveterås 2020) to enhance tourists' competitiveness. However, this is not currently happening in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, other issues raised in the study include increased funding for the national tourism organisation to conduct its duties, such as licensing and marketing campaigns. Due to economic challenges, it appears these aspects are not perhaps the priority of government at the moment.

The third theme focused on enabling the environment for enhancing competitiveness in distressed contexts. Key issues raised included the lack of local government services, foreign currency, politics and image, price competitiveness and limited airline connectivity. Many participants argued that the government's role in creating an enabling business environment where tourism could thrive was limited. Past studies (Woyo, 2018; Woyo and Slabbert, 2020, 2021) note that Zimbabwe's competitiveness is affected by the general lack of direct flights from source markets. Poor air transport and road infrastructure is affecting Zimbabwe's competitiveness, and there is a need for government to invest in air and road transport. Investment in infrastructure is critical for attracting a larger growth of international travellers to the destination. Furthermore, an improved infrastructure network is imperative for the destination in that it creates an enabling business environment for tourism establishments. According to WEF, such an environment is critical for improving Zimbabwe's competitiveness rankings that are currently low. Furthermore, most of the participants agreed that the government must also improve laws to attract foreign investment and avoid policy inconsistency, especially with its empowerment laws. Improving the laws could help attract investors in tourism infrastructure through public-private partnerships in the tourism industry.

Safety and security are classified in the literature as deterrents for travel (Farmaki *et al.*, 2019). While Zimbabwe continues to receive arrivals, the government's role in ensuring safety and security has been questionable, especially after firing live ammunition to protesting citizens (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020). Managers in the sector are strongly advised to develop strategies that help ensure travellers' security and safety in countries with political instability. This is critical in improving the destination's brand image, which has been negative for a long time. Furthermore,

aspects listed under policy issues such as visas, lack of coordination, and domestic tourism promotion require concerted stakeholder participation to enhance a destination's competitiveness.

Regarding the unfriendly visa regime, Zimbabwe is generally ranked 27th in the Africa Visa Openness report, and this could be affecting its overall tourism competitiveness ahead of competitors. Supplier participants argued that governments need governments in distressed contexts to facilitate tourists' free movement, which will become more critical post-COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the ease of doing business has been noted with great concern, and it does not come cheap in Zimbabwe, for example, due to rampant corruption. Once tourists arrive in Zimbabwe, they may face other hurdles, including several policy roadblocks on the highways, which often discourages tourists from staying longer, affecting overall competitiveness.

Another theme identified was the tourism framework, and most of the participants highlighted that tourism is an important sector that cannot be operated without a guiding policy framework. The development of the tourism industry in Zimbabwe has been for a long time premised on the concept of low volume high spending tourism has been a narrative that had no policy guidelines, and the presence of policies is generally deemed crucial for competitiveness. However, the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry has completed the National Tourism Policy drafting to guide the country's tourism sector's operations. Though the National Tourism Policy is now in place, most respondents argued it could have driven tourism development for improved competitiveness. The vacuum created due to the absence of a policy affected creating an enabling tourism environment that is important for tourism competitiveness, especially in distressed contexts. Though the National Tourism Policy was designed to create an enabling environment for sustainable tourism development and community participation, this objective's realisation is difficult considering the many challenges that Zimbabwe is facing (Woyo, 2021).

4.1 New challenges and applications

The study shows that while Zimbabwean tourism suppliers generally agree that government plays a key role in enhancing competitiveness, several challenges emerge. Firstly, government involvement appears to be fuelling more corruption, especially with initiatives such as scrapping the duty to import tourism equipment. This, therefore, tends to affect the influence that government should have on destination competitiveness, especially when it comes to creating an enabling environment. Secondly, aspects such as heavy police roadblocks that characterise Zimbabwean highways (Woyo and Woyo, 2019) creates negative destination images that tend to reduce the competitiveness of the destination and discourage long durations of stay. These roadblocks will also pose a challenge for restarting tourism following the global COVID-19, where people are more comfortable travelling using private road transport. Thirdly, there is a general lack of realisation from the government concerning what a competitive tourist destination will do for Zimbabwe. This is reflected in the gestation period of national tourism policies and guidelines.

To summarise, policymakers must be mindful of the policies and initiatives that they implement. Furthermore, they must also be conscious of the effect these policies have on destination competitiveness. Too little and too much involvement can either amplify or dampen destination

growth, thus, lowering destination competitiveness. Individual policies must be fully understood, monitored, and revisited for deregulation to be effective.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is critical for governments, especially in countries with distress, to be aware of the policies and initiatives they put in place and their impact on the tourist destination's competitiveness. Contrary to Javed and Tučková (2020) findings, this study concludes that a higher level of government involvement is required to enhance tourism competitiveness in distressed contexts. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding, monitoring, and evaluation of government initiatives using a stakeholder approach is imperative to ensure a destination's successful tourism competitiveness. Furthermore, this study shows that some initiatives like incentives through the scrapping of duty and duty rebates help sustain the tourism industry's competitive advantage when the economy is weak. Consequently, governments of destinations with ongoing crises like Zimbabwe must evaluate and decide which policies directly affect tourism and the economy.

The reader should use caution when interpreting the results of this chapter. The findings are specific to Zimbabwe as a country in distress and can only be generalised to another country with similar ongoing political and economic challenges as the one investigated. Furthermore, other research limitations could be noted. Firstly, the sample was qualitative and did not cover the whole spectrum of the establishments making Zimbabwe's tourism sector. The study did not consider other tourism stakeholders' viewpoints, and this leaves a significant population gap for future researchers to consider other players in the tourism industry. Future studies should look at other sectors that were not represented in this study. Secondly, this study is based on qualitative analysis of data collected from managers of establishments, which may also not justify the generalisation of the findings. This chapter makes a studier point in giving an exploratory stance to trigger further empirical investigations of the government's role in enhancing tourism competitiveness of destinations in distress. Future researchers can take various variables exhibited as sub-themes in Figure 1 and operationalise them in future investigations of the nexus between government initiatives and tourism competitiveness. Thirdly, quantitative studies using primary data can also bring much richer and newer insights into government initiatives' impact on tourism competitiveness in distressed contexts.

Lastly, future studies should include different regions and countries in Africa and other continents, leading to different results. Addressing these limitations of the study could improve our understanding of the nexus between government initiatives and tourism competitiveness and help practitioners develop effective strategies to sustain competitiveness in a tourist destination.

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7. Chapter Highlights

- The study measured the perceptions of suppliers operating in a distressed destination regarding the nexus between government initiatives and tourism competitiveness.
- This chapter analyses government initiatives' role in tourism competitiveness using data collected from suppliers operating in a distressed tourist destination.
- The government's involvement in the process of tourism development, especially in developing countries, is critical.
- Developing economies with ongoing political and economic challenges like Zimbabwe have not been comprehensively researched, especially on competitiveness and government roles.
- The role of the government is important for enhancing tourism competitiveness. The study concludes that a higher level of government involvement is needed for Zimbabwe to enhance competitiveness.

8. Questions for reflection

1. What is the nexus between the role of government and tourism competitiveness? How are government initiatives and competitiveness linked together?
2. What is the appropriate level of government involvement that can provide distressed destinations with high destination competitiveness levels?
3. Should the government intervene in tourism development? Which public services should the government provide for the tourism industry?