

Women
entrepreneurs in the
tourism sector in
zimbabwe economics
essay



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This paper examines the challenges that women entrepreneurs face in the tourism sector in Zimbabwe. The research targeted female entrepreneurs selling curios in Masvingo and Victoria Falls which are the prime tourist destinations in Zimbabwe. Women entrepreneurship has been under spotlight in Zimbabwe because it is a source of economic growth. Despite the potential that lies in women entrepreneurs they face additional or at least different social, cultural, educational and technological challenges than men in establishing and developing their own enterprises, and accessing economic resources. From the interviews conducted women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector have difficulties in securing funding, inadequate business related education as well as social, cultural and religious impediments. This paper engenders to understand the gender biases embedded in society which constrain women's mobility, interactions, active economic participation and access to business development services. Lastly, appropriate interventions are recommended within the discourse of entrepreneurship.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, Tourism, Gender, Enterprise development, Women Entrepreneurship

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of capacity building and national development in any country. As such, this paper focuses on challenges faced by women in the tourism sector. On 21 May 2012 there was a forum on Women's Engagement in Africa's Tourism Industry in Victoria Falls held during the African Travel Association conference. The presenters included the former Deputy Secretary General of United Nations World Tourism

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Organization (UNWTO) who alluded to the fact that tourism constitutes 30% of the world's economy and offers 78% of workforce in the world. He further reiterated that research has explicitly shown the gender inequalities that exist in the tourism sector as mostly women and children as compared to the male counterparts are exploited. He further mentioned that in 2008, the UNWTO came up with a policy for gender equality which is envisaged under the United Nations Platform. In 2010, the Global report on Women in Tourism by World Tourism Organization and United Nations women encouraged women to participate in leadership roles in the tourism industry. The report held that although women constitute a high percentage of the workforce in the tourism industry, most of them occupy lower levels where they are subsequently lowly paid. Because of this report, UNWTO suggested that vocational training be offered to empower women in the industry. Tanzania and Gambia were the first two countries chosen to start the vocational training for women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry. Other countries to benefit from the training are from Latin America and Africa.

Another presenter a Managing Director of Affluent Hospitality Group in America said that women make up 80% of Travel Agency in America and 80% of travel decisions are made by women in North America. This justifies the fact that women have an active role to play in the tourism industry.

In addition the Marketing Director of Amalinda Collection in Zimbabwe gave a testimony of her experience in the Tourism industry. She admitted that as a mother she has a lot of family responsibilities that apart from being a working woman such that she faces the dilemma of choosing between family and business. At one time when her son fell sick at 4 months old she had to <https://assignbuster.com/women-entrepreneurs-in-the-tourism-sector-in-zimbabwe-economics-essay/>

quit the job in favour of the family. Family roles represent one of the challenges that women entrepreneurs face in comparison with their male counterparts.

The Governor and Resident Minister of Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe reported that, 60% of arts and crafts in Zimbabwe are produced by women from Binga who largely produce reed mats and baskets while the Gwaai women produce pottery artifacts. The interesting revelations made at the conference prompted the researchers to consider conducting a research on the challenges that women entrepreneurs face in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe.

In current years women-owned businesses have become increasingly popular but entrepreneurship remains a deeply gendered institution (Anderson, 2008). Bushell (2012) considered entrepreneurship as expedition out of paucity and gravitation towards equity but this has not been the case because women remain marginalized globally. Given the constraints facing African women entrepreneurs their full economic potential is not actualized and they do not feature on the mainstream of the economic agenda (Ozigbo and Ezeaku, 2009). There is therefore need for countries to address gender disparities between men and women to achieve significant milestones in economic growth. In addition to those problems faced by all small-scale entrepreneurs, women face additional or at least different social, cultural, educational and technological challenges than men in establishing and developing their own enterprises, and accessing economic resources (Mayoux, 2001). It is important that such challenges be addressed so as to enable women to prosper in their businesses. Chitsike (2000) and United <https://assignbuster.com/women-entrepreneurs-in-the-tourism-sector-in-zimbabwe-economics-essay/>

Nations Industrial Development Organization (2003) mentioned that women's businesses in Zimbabwe tend to be small and are discriminated by the legal system which backs male ideologies.

Literature Review

In many countries entrepreneurship has been considered a means of generating meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities, particularly for those at the margins of the economy - women, the poor and people with disabilities (ILO, 1998; Rajani and Sarada, 2008). However, very little literature exists on the role of women entrepreneurs in a global economy especially in Africa (Dudley, 2008) and this is one of the reasons why women continue to be marginalized in entrepreneurship development. In addition, in cases where the role of women entrepreneurship is articulated there still remains a gap in gender analysis (Dudley, 2008). Research factors affecting performance of women entrepreneurs' of their businesses are limited in scope, as any existing research most often focuses on individual characteristics and motives as performance predictors (Teoh and Chong, 2007) at the expense of gender disparities. Despite the economic importance of female entrepreneurs their numbers are lower than those for men (Verheul, Van Stel and Thurik, 2006; Carter, 2000; Minniti et al., 2005) and therefore it is of importance to address the barriers to female entrepreneurship. This paper deviates from the former approach by focusing on challenges that women face in entrepreneurial development. Furthermore, the research applies an entrepreneurial development model adapted from Richardson and Howarth (2002a) to analyse the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector in Zimbabwe as shown

in figure 1 below. The model is based on the cross sectional biological structure of a peach fruit. At centre of the model is the seed which represents the entrepreneurial opportunity identified. The inner part adjacent to the seed represents the mesopreneurial (fruit mesocarp) factors based on the MAIR model by (Gibb and Ritchie, 1982) which include motivation or commitment, skills, abilities and experiences, idea in relation to the market as well as the resources. Williams (1997) commented that commitment and dedication of the entrepreneur is critical if they are to prosper whilst Zimmer and Scarborough (1996) attribute failure of small businesses to managerial incompetence and lack of experience among other factors and therefore women entrepreneurs need relevant skills and experience to fully exploit entrepreneurial opportunities. The mesopreneurial factors represent the basic ingredients of business success. The final structural component is the exopreneurial (fruit exocarp) factors which represent the macro environment in which the enterprises operate and it entails the following aspects:

The enabling environment which focuses on policy issues, institutions and initiatives which impact on enterprise development in particular the tourism industry in Zimbabwe

The socio-cultural and economic context which the social, cultural and religious factors that affect enterprise development.

Enterprise Support Sector made up of initiatives and organizations developed to propel enterprise development and how these impact on enterprise development.

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The Economic/Market Environment which deals with opportunities and threats in the environment.

Women entrepreneurs hardly have specialized support institutions to cater for their specific needs (United Nations International Development Organization, 2003). In most cases entrepreneurial and technical training, advisory and information programmes often have to be carried out within a non-conventional set-up (United Nations International Development Organization, 2003). Women entrepreneurs need to have a more supportive environment that is more favourable (Stevenson and St-Onge, 2005) if they are to gain similar recognition that of men. Training programmes developed must take into account their society, culture, community and empowerment (Agbényiga and Ahmedani, 2008). If significant milestones are to be achieved in female entrepreneurship support systems need to take into account the needs, challenges and unique situation of women to promote women entrepreneurship and avoid failure and lower levels of female entrepreneurship (Drine and Grach, 2010). It is vital to note that countries that have developed policies and legislation tailored for women entrepreneurship have witnessed tremendous growth and increase in the numbers of women in business.

Enterprise support sector: Government, NGOs, Private Sector, Membership Organizations, donors

Endopreneurial factor

Seed

Entrepreneurial Opportunity

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The Economic/Market Environment: Opportunities and Threats

Enabling Environment for Enterprise: regulations, policies, institutions, institutions and processes

Figure 1 Peach Fruit Concept of entrepreneurship: Adapted from Richardson and Howarth (2002a)

Mesopreneurial Factors

Exopreneurial factors

Resources

Socio/cultural context: Attitudes, aspirations, confidence and permission

idea with market

Skills, abilities and experience

Motivation and determination

Female Entrepreneurship

Women Entrepreneurs refer to women or a group of women who initiate organize and operate a business enterprise (Jahanshahi, Pitamber and Nawaser, 2010). McClelland et al. (2005) define a woman-owned business as one which is at least 51% owned by one or more women or in the case of any publicly-owned business, at least 51% of the stock of which is owned by one or more women. In 2010 187 million women were involved in entrepreneurship ranging from 1. 5-45. 4% of the adult female population in 59 economies (GEM, 2010). It should also be noted that Ghana has 55% of

women being involved in entrepreneurship and it is the only economy where there are more women than men entrepreneurs (GEM, 2010). One of the United Nations Millennium Development goals is to promote gender equity and empower women as agents of poverty eradication, hunger, disease and to stimulate sustainable development (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2004). Therefore promotion of women entrepreneurship is vital for the achievement of broader objectives including poverty reduction and economic development. A positive indicator to women entrepreneurship is that African leaders have pledged to take joint responsibility for promoting the role of women in social and economic development by reinforcing their capacity in education and training, facilitating access to credit and assuring their participation in the political and economic life (NEPAD, 2001). The increased role of women in economic development has forced many governments to take an active role in developing policies on women development and gender related issues.

Mueller and Dato-on (2010) stipulated that women play a significant role in entrepreneurship but their role remains suppressed in comparison to that of their male counterparts across the globe because of family roles, traditions , cultural and structural constraints which diminish their abilities to lead business (Bushell, 2012). Women bear the responsibility for childcare and homecare and as a result this leads to work-family conflicts (Des, 2001 and Jahanshashi, Pitamber and Nawaser, 2010; Winn, 2005). Chitsike (2000) also stated that men view women's role as that of being at home and not engaging in any business activities that are reserved for men.

One of the challenges that women face is unequal access to productive resources and services, including finance and skill upgrading opportunities (United Nations International Development Organization [UNIDO], 2003; Tumbunan, 2009; Sorokhaibam and Laishram, 2003). In many African countries, women inequality lies in economic rights and access to resources as men persist thus preventing women from taking full advantage of the economic opportunities (Ozigbo and Ezeaku, 2009). Degroot (2001) mentions that women's participation as owners of small medium sized business has been constrained due to poor access to market information, technology and finance, poor linkages with support service and unfavourable policy and support mechanisms (De Groot, 2001). In Zimbabwe domestic chores and agricultural activities do not allow women time to travel to support institutions such as finance houses for advice and information on credit (De Groot, 2001). In many African countries, women spend most of their income on the household and fear investing their funds in business ventures for fear of business failure (Ozigbo and Ezeaku, 2009), particularly on food and education for their children. Many of them are afraid to invest their limited funds into a business for fear of failure.

Many women entrepreneurs are seldom taken seriously in spheres of credibility and capability, competing and succeeding in a male dominated environment (Ozigbo and Ezeaku, 2009) and this is one of the factors that explain their relatively obscure role in economic development. Despite the fact that many women entrepreneurship is a source of job creation, economic growth and social development many women owned businesses remain stunted by lack of appropriate managerial skills, access to business

resources, networking opportunities and access to new markets (Ozigbo and Ezeaku, 2009). The current institutional environment purposes to achieve gender equity but the traditional powers are tilted towards the patriarchal system and therefore maintains the status quo of gender inequity (Goheer, 2003).

In Zimbabwe women have largely been marginalized from mainstream economic activities because of the predominant patriarchal system which confines women to domestic roles. 53% of all economic activities in Zimbabwe are performed by women but, this figure remains invisible because it is not accounted for in national statistics and most of the activities are characterized by poor working conditions. It is also worth mentioning at this stage that religion, culture and the socialization process are some of the major factors perpetuating gender inequity in Zimbabwe. This is evidenced by the fact that under the current customary law, women cannot own/inherit land (Chitsike, 2009) and land is one of the resources that are important for entrepreneurial development.

Research Methodology

Baines and Wheelock (2000) mention that many women have ventured into entrepreneurship but little research has been done on gender and female entrepreneurship. The reasons behind increase of entrepreneurial variances arising out of gender remains unresolved is because women feel that by exposing these issues they deepen their entrepreneurial differences (Calas et. al. 2007 as cited in Peris-Ortiz, Rueda-Armengot and Benito Osorio, 2011). Studying women entrepreneurship is critical because it is an

important source of economic prosperity and presently research efforts, <https://assignbuster.com/women-entrepreneurs-in-the-tourism-sector-in-zimbabwe-economics-essay/>

policies and programs tend to be skewed towards men and neglect the needs of women entrepreneurs and potential women entrepreneurs (OECD, 2004). In the African context there are very few studies that have focused on female entrepreneurship particularly in the tourism sector and therefore this research seeks to close this gap. In addition, Gelb (2001) states that this is due to lack of indigenous research, inadequate information and methodological constraints (Ozigbo and Ezeaku, 2009). Despite the increasing role, women entrepreneurship theory development and empirical evidence only offer a very blurry picture of women entrepreneurs (Tann, 2008). Subsequently, improved understanding of women entrepreneurs' challenges is essential in order to assess their needs, and provide solutions to teething problems they encounter. Although there have been some studies of small businesses in Zimbabwe, none has provided rich qualitative data of female entrepreneurs (Mboko and Smith-Hunter, 2008) and this study endeavors to contribute towards addressing this deficiency.

This study is based on the small and medium business entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe's Arts and Crafts industry in Masvingo and Victoria Falls. 10 women in Masvingo from Dzimbahwe Crafts and Art Center and 15 from various Crafts Centers in Victoria Falls who were trading at Elephant Hills Hotel during the 37th ATA Conference between from 18-22 May 2012 were interviewed for this research. These towns are top tourism destinations in Zimbabwe and are home to reputable attractions which are The Great Zimbabwe and the Victoria Falls respectively.

Interviews were conducted at Dzimbahwe Craft Center situated along the highway to Masvingo Town. For the effectiveness of the conversations, we <https://assignbuster.com/women-entrepreneurs-in-the-tourism-sector-in-zimbabwe-economics-essay/>

had to talk to the women while viewing the different artefacts they make. The conversations included negotiations over the products prices that made the interviewers buy some of the items to encourage the women to talk freely. The interview started with more general introductions, some business questions that included who makes the products, how (i. e. whether there is use of machines or just ordinary hands), where, when and why the people do this business. The interviews also covered issues to do with any support the women received in terms of finance, human and material resources, marketing and other business operational areas. In the process, we had to go to the extent of observing the women doing the work like crocheting and weaving the mats, bed and table covers, polishing and decorating the wooden plates, basins and bowls while some were even carving the different items according to their area of specialization. This one day session took us about one and a half hours and we spent \$30 to buy some items from the different women who added up to a total of 10 entrepreneurs.

In Victoria Falls, we took the advantage of the 37th African Travel Association conference (ATA) that we attended from the 18th to the 22nd of May 2012 at Elephant Hills Hotel. Some selected male and female arts and crafts entrepreneurs from various selling centres of Victoria Falls were given the opportunity by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) to come and sell their wares free of charge at the venue during the conference days. To promote the entrepreneurs, the ZTA had in their conference program a session for “ Meeting the African Culture” when both mid-morning and afternoon teas were being served at the grounds where the entrepreneurs were selling their products. This was a good opportunity for the conference

delegates to meet and discuss with the sellers while at the same time viewing and buying the handicrafts. As researchers, we took advantage of this to carry out our study for 3 consecutive days.

On the first day we toured the various stands just to view the items on display and we asked some few general questions like what we did in Masvingo. Some of the questions were about how they come to be part of the ATA conference and the benefits they were expecting from the conference. On the second day we got into in-depth interviews to get details of their operations, marketing, any support and assistance from any institutions towards the success of their businesses. To probe for more information we were appreciating their achievements and sympathizing with their challenges as we were discussing with them during the tea breaks. For the other two days we had to share a table with some women during lunch time so that we could talk more. At times we had to sit together in the conference venue, commenting on what the presenters were saying about tourism entrepreneurship. One good example was a debate on the presentation done by a representative from the Zimbabwe Ministry of Youth, Development, Indigenization and Empowerment.

On the final and third day, we selected some of the artefacts to buy that included the bowls, the "big five", basins, Zimbabwe bird (Shiri Hungwe) for Blessing, one of the researchers' totem and other items. We spent \$50 for the items and we left the women in a very happy mood. As a way of appreciating our concern for them some women gave us some of the items at very low prices and in return we influenced some of our colleagues to buy from them. The total of the interviewees was 25 women.

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Analysis and Discussion

The demographic Profile of Interviewed Women Entrepreneurs

Table 4. 1 Geographical Location of the Women Entrepreneurs

RESEARCH AREA

LOCATION

Urban

LOCATION

Rural

Masvingo

3

7

Victoria Falls

9

6

Out of the 10 women who were interviewed in Masvingo, 7 were residing in the rural areas and only 3 were from the urban area. From the 15 interviewees in Victoria Falls, 9 were urban residents and only 6 were from the rural area. This data reflects that the handicraft business is done in both rural and urban settings provided there is favourable environment. In Masvingo the majority of entrepreneurs come from their rural homes that

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surround Nemanwa Arts and Craft center because operating from home reduces any rental costs that can be incurred. The few who stay in the urban area have their husbands working in the town and this business supplements their spouses' income.

In Victoria Falls the majority of women who are urban dwellers reported that they own houses in the town from the cooperative that was formulated by the Arts and Crafts business operators sometime in 1990. The remaining percentage constitutes those women who own homes in the peri-urban area of the town and are permanent residents of the area.

Table 4. 2 Age of Women Entrepreneurs

AGE GROUP

NUMBER

Below 25 years

2

26-30 years

4

30-45 years

15

46-50

4

The survey results suggest the relationship between a woman's age and entrepreneurs. The likelihood of a woman venturing into business positively increases with the 30 to 45 years age range have the greatest number of women entrepreneurs. Very few women below the age of 25 years want to get into this business probably because they are unable to do the job or have better things to do.

Motivations

Women who are in art and craft business in Victoria Falls and Masvingo said that they are into this business because they grew up doing the weaving, knitting and pottery activities and to them they see it as a way of their living. In the yester years when tourism was still vibrant in Zimbabwe they could earn more than other people in some professions but as from 2004 to date the business has slowed down due to the economic crisis. These women admitted that they cannot go out of this business because they have no alternative means of survival since their environments are basically in the dry regions of the country. Therefore what is evident in what the women are saying is the fact that tourism fits very well in their livelihood strategies as a source of income. From the findings it emerged that the women are motivated into employment by push factors such as unemployment, inadequate family income and the need to accommodate work and home roles as in the Zimbabwean scenario the woman's place is the home. The same sentiments were echoed by Vijaya and Kamalanabhan (2009) and Drine and Grach (2010) who reiterated that women are motivated by the desire to provide security for the family and flexibility that entrepreneurship offer between home and family roles.

Access to Financial Resources

The women entrepreneurs in the arts and crafts industry revealed that their major challenge is their inaccessibility to both investment and operational capital since they have no personal assets to use as collateral which is a prerequisite at the financial institutions. If they happen to get the starting capital they may even face more challenges of getting adequate operational capital to meet their daily supplies of raw materials such as reeds, steel wires, finishing oils, threads, wood, polishes and others to use for their business. At times they may need transport to take their products to and from their homes for security reasons. If these people are operating from the designated sites the local councils would need the rentals every month for the upkeep of the places. The problem of lack of capital usually arises from the fact that the enterprises are the major contributors to the survival of the family, and this puts a brake on efforts for improvement of women's enterprises in Zimbabwe (Degroot, 2001).

On the accessibility to capital, one woman at the ATA conference for Young Professionals in Victoria Falls narrated her ordeal of trying to get financial assistance from the Ministry of Indigenization and Youth Development that promotes indigenous entrepreneurs in the country. Grace said, ' When I went to the offices I was told to bring a project proposal. I prepared that at my own expense. After that they gave me a pile of forms to fill in whose other requirements i could not understand. As if that was not enough, I was told to wait for a response that never came to my attention and these people lie that they are supporting us financially.' Another woman, Nyaradzo narrated that, The Ministry of Indigenization and Youth Development, asked for a list

of all entrepreneurs who needed financial assistance and the specific amounts requested and were handed to the ministry but nothing materialized. The ministry later on asked the women entrepreneurs to pay \$20 per person for a week's training in financial management. After paying the money nothing has been done since November 2011. She said ' Vanhu ava matsotsi anodakubira varombo, havana basa nesu,' (These people are conmen, who steal from the poor and they do not care about us). This is a major challenge for the women who are vulnerable to all sorts of financial risks in business. Most women also revealed that most financial institutions were not keen to finance their business initiatives. This negative attitude towards financing of women entrepreneurs is explained by the traditional patriarchal system division which spells out the differences of male-female roles in society as supported by Ozigbo and Ezeaku (2009).

Protection of intellectual property rights

A number of women entrepreneurs fall prey to political promises and business intermediaries. One woman who failed to get funding from the Ministry of Indigenization and Youth Development later discovered that her project was being implemented by one of the government officials in Victoria Falls. She had no voice over it. Because of this, many women in the sector feel betrayed and humiliated because of such practices. This rhymes the Shona proverbs that " murombo haarovi chine nguwo" (This literally means the poor will never challenge the rich). It is important for women entrepreneurs to be well versed with their intellectual property rights so that they can challenge those who prey on their ideas in judiciary.

Production and space-related challenges

The study has revealed that a number of Zimbabwean women who are arts and crafts entrepreneurs have no fixed place for their business operations as they are dotted from their homes, forest and some few designated arts and craft centres. The designated centres have no permanent structures put in place but there are some temporary shades which are brought by the individuals from their homes. These offer no security at all as they are just open spaces for business and in addition one is exposed to the harsh forces of the natural environment.

Those who operate from the forests (source of raw materials) cite transportation problems as one of the challenges. For example, if a wood carver finds a good tree in the forest which is too big to carry home or at the designated area she has to work on it from there and then carry the finished products. These pose a lot of risks to the females since there are a lot of dangers associated with forestry environments.

Storage space for the finished products is another problem for most women entrepreneurs. Most leave the products covered by some cloths or tents during the night in the presence of either a guard or unattended at owner's risk. Lack of storage space puts the products at risk of theft. The most special wares are taken back home daily which is a tiresome task for the females since most of them walk a distance of about 5 kilometres every day from their homes to the designated centres.

Family roles

At home there is usually a challenge of divided concentration between home chores and work and at home the working space is limited and not conducive for business operations. One woman (Maria) even expressed that, “handingazosiyi mumba mune tsvina nekuda kwebasa” (I cannot leave my house dirty because of work). Already this indicates how busy women entrepreneurs are with household and business responsibilities at any given time of their lives and this is a hindrance to effective business operations. In support, De Groot (2001) posits that household roles deprive women of time to travel to enterprise support institutions or to attend training sessions to acquire skills in various fields. As long as women’s responsibilities remain divided between work and domestic roles their contributions to economic development will remain obscure.

Marketing operations

There is a general belief that Zimbabwe arts and crafts are unique worldwide and they are found in many countries these days in China besides the Americas which used to be the country’s chief tourism source market. These products have made Zimbabwe boast of its rich and unique culture

The majority of women sell their products to the foreign tourists. Financial constraints make it difficult for the women to access regional and international markets despite the high demand for the Zimbabwe art and craft in these markets. It was reported that in the past years when tourism was at peak (i. e. between 1990 and 1999) business was lucrative and there was no worry of exporting the products as buyers could come to the country and buy the products. During the period business was very lucrative.

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Masundire (2011) identified the need to assist arts and crafts producers to access foreign markets as 90% of their wares are in demand in Europe, America, Australia and South Africa.

As a result of inaccessibility to foreign markets, there is now the emergence of market intermediaries popularly known as the “ cross boarder traders” who buy and sell the products from arts and crafts producers in foreign markets. The major problem these intermediaries pose is that they bid to buy the wares at a very low price at the expense of the producers because of the low local demand. In fact, the women entrepreneurs end up with no fix