

Assessing the Role of Local Authorities in Promoting Tourism in Zimbabwe. A Case of Victoria Falls City Council

Julianos Masimba

Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The paper sought to assess the role of urban local authorities in promoting tourism development within their areas' jurisdiction. Zimbabwe is a country that has tourist destinations that attract tourists from all over the world, including Victoria Falls, Chinhoyi caves, and Great Zimbabwe ruins. There is a literature gap on the role of local authorities as much of the research has assessed the central government's contribution, leaving a literature gap on the role of sub-national governments, given that these sub-national governments operate under delegated power from the center. The research adopted the qualitative approach, with the case study being the Victoria Falls City Council. Data was collected using interviews and observations. The researcher complemented primary data with secondary data to achieve reliability and validity. Data was presented using thematic and content analyses. The research established that local authorities play a critical role in tourism development through place marketing, efficient and effective service delivery, infrastructure development, and maintenance, to name a few. The research recommends that more should be done amongst them, including the full implementation of the devolution policy, improvement in service delivery, and the formulation of investment-friendly policies at the sub-national government level.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourists, Local Government, Tourist Destinations, Investment

Introduction

Local authorities have traditionally contributed significantly to the growth and development of the tourism sector through the provision of infrastructure, support of festivals and events, development of tourist attractions and experiences, and implementation of tourism promotion plans. Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2020) cited that the tourism sector is Zimbabwe's third largest sector after mining and agriculture. Gohori, & van der Merwe, (2024) noted that in 2019, the sector contributed an estimated 6.5% to the Zimbabwean GDP. However, there was a decrease in 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic to 4.2 % due to restricted travelling across the globe. Gohori, & van der Merwe, (2024) further noted a 5.2% contribution of the sector to the GDP in 2021, all this pointing to the sector's importance towards the nation's development. The growth of the sector to contribute meaningfully to Zimbabwe's economy depends on the need for consented efforts from all stakeholders including local authorities, which this study sought to establish. According to Tapfuma, Musavengane, and Magwaza, (2024) the Zimbabwean government has supported capital investment in the tourism sector by providing tax incentives and duty-free status on imports for specific categories of capital goods for hotels and safari operators. Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (2020) noted that through the Ministry responsible for tourism, the government has gone on a massive marketing drive, marketing the country as one of the finest tourism destinations, which has also contributed to the sector's growth. To complement the government effort, the tourism sector players have come up with different packages, amongst them the drive to promote domestic tourism by offering affordable packages for the locals to develop the sector. Having observed all these efforts, this research sought to examine the contribution of sub-national governments to promote the tourism sector, for these tourist attractions are within different local authorities' jurisdictions.

Background and the Significance of the Study

Tourism has become one of the significant contributors to global economic development. Globally, there are consented efforts with the United Nations member countries forming the UNWTO. (UNWTO, 2022) noted that the organisation was established to promote tourism as a driver for economic growth, inclusive development, and environmental sustainability, as well as to offer leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. However, the sector was negatively affected by the Covid 19 pandemic, which saw a significant decrease in global travel, thereby reducing tourist arrivals to tourist destinations. With the relaxation of travel restrictions at the beginning of 2022, the sector shows signs of a strong and steady recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic despite the mounting economic and geopolitical challenges (Shava & Shava, 2023). UNWTO (2022) noted that 2022 the sector saw a strong recovery, with an estimated 250 million international arrivals recorded compared to the 77 million arrivals in the same period of the previous year. The tourism sector's rebound has gathered pace in many parts of the world, weathering the challenges standing in its way. The role of the public bodies, including the state, in the strategic orientation of tourism is still valid today. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation among countries in tourism likewise remains important and this has seen much success in the industry.

Tourism has contributed significantly to the economic transformation of most African countries. However, the continent experienced stagnant growth in the tourism sector, recording a growth rate of 54% in 2002 (UNWTO, 2022). According to ZTA (2019), Africa has been receiving more tourists, with over 3 million

arrivals recorded in 2018 and 2019 and overseas, including America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, received over nine hundred thousand tourist arrivals, and this makes Africa a leading tourist destination. Franklin et al. (2012) state that tourism is one of the key industries driving the current change, and tourism could be a transformative tool for African countries. As a result, local authorities have been given more credit as the most influential authority in developing a practical framework for tourism with particular reference to the African region. UNWTO (2019) noted that Zimbabwe is one of the top 5 tourist destinations, with South Africa being the first, followed by Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Uganda. South Africa is a leading tourist destination in Africa, and the southern region and Durban are the leading cities in South Africa. The city has enjoyed a competitive advantage over other tourist destinations. According to (Ilo, Das, and Bello, 2023), the eThekweni Municipality has developed strategies for marketing Durban to domestic and international markets by digitalising their products and creating synergies between the tourism industry and the municipality. South Africa is an example of a destination that, through consistent investment in infrastructure, can now attract many self-drive tourists. The South African Department of Tourism has recognised local authorities as key players towards the sector's growth by giving them the mandate to foster the development and promotion of the tourism sector.

Local authorities provide services to their communities as mandated by the Urban Councils Act 29:15, Section 198 and the Second Schedule. Local authorities have the potential to create an enabling environment for tourism development through the provision of services and infrastructural development that will give the destination a competitive advantage over other regional and international tourism destinations. Tapfuma, Musavengane, and Magwaza, (2024) argues that local authorities create and provide political stability, security, and legal frameworks that the tourism sector needs to flourish. The local authorities are recognised as pivotal and influential stakeholders in a destination as they promote tourism with local knowledge and efficient and effective service provision. However, (Moyo, 2018) noted that multiple factors, amongst them the closure of industries coupled with poor governance, dwindling central government support, and lack of innovation to have other revenue streams and better service provision, have hurt the ability of the local authority to deliver services as mandated by the Urban Councils Act 29:15. This is in contrast with first world countries that have better-performing economies and better governance systems. The ripple positive effects have been better, more efficient and effective service provision by sub-national governments contributing significantly to the sector development (Ilo, Das & Bello, 2023).

Victoria Falls is one of the tourist epicentre destinations in the National Park on the Southern bank of the Zambezi River, close to Mosi-Oa-Tunya, one of the Seven Wonders of the World (ZTA, 2020). The town is surrounded by national parks such as the Zambezi National Park and Chamabondo National Park, as well as wildlife areas where all groups of flora and fauna are found. Victoria Falls City Council is an urban setup council responsible for providing services to both residents and tourists. The sector forms the town's foundation and contributes to council revenue and the provision of employment either informally or formally to the locals. With Victoria Falls being one of the world's wonders and attracting tourists from all over the world, this research sought to examine the role of local authorities that have tourist destinations within their areas in promoting the growth of the tourism sector and the challenges encountered. There has been an increase in competition regionally, putting Victoria Falls behind other destinations, such as Durban in South Africa. Therefore, this research sought to establish strategies local authorities such as Victoria

Falls City Council that thrive on tourism can adopt to promote the sector's development. The main research question is, "What is the role of local authorities in tourism in Zimbabwe?"

Theoretical Framework

The stakeholders' theory, a fundamental concept in strategic management, has gained significant traction in tourism development. The complex interplay of various stakeholders significantly shapes the trajectory and outcomes of tourism initiatives (Roxas et al., 2020). Stakeholders in the tourism industry comprise a diverse range of entities, including organisations and individuals, who are positively or negatively impacted by tourism development. Effective stakeholder involvement is crucial in reducing potential conflicts between tourists and host communities by empowering the latter to shape the tourism experience. For instance, the primary stakeholders in ecotourism include local communities, tourists, tourism operators, ecotourism site managers, and public and private sectors (Gumede & Nzama, 2022). Secondary stakeholders, such as the media and interest groups, sub-national governments can also influence the industry's performance. The local governments plays a pivotal role in encouraging sustainable tourism through marketing, information services, education, and public-private collaborations, although their values and motives must be carefully considered, (Zeng et al., 2022). Addressing concerns about sustainability, environmental conservation, and local community involvement has become increasingly challenging in tourism development (Roxas et al., 2020). Success in developing sustainable destinations is often attributed to effective governance, which requires a nuanced understanding of how tourism stakeholders interact and how this interaction can be harnessed to achieve sustainability (Zeng et al., 2022) (Gumede & Nzama, 2022).

Literature Review

There are variances in the literature on what tourism is. According to (Candela & Finigi, 2012), one must adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the complexity of defining tourism. According to Tapfuma, Musavengane, & Magwaza (2024), tourism is an institutional and social force that impacts people's lives and that is associated with it directly or indirectly. Guerra et al. (2015) note that it is a temporary and short-term movement of people or groups away from where they usually work and live. It includes the different activities they can do at these destinations. According to (Stangl & Schegg, 2017), it is a sum of relationships and phenomena from the interaction between tourists, governments, communities and business operators in attracting tourists through marketing and their hosting, striving to give them memorable experiences. Ghanem (2017) defines tourism from a psychological point of view as a subjective perception of an individual escaping from principal commitments and their daily routines for a relatively long period through a specific geographical and psychological movement, seeking unique experiences while seeking satisfaction and leisure. According to Ghanem (2017), tourism is the movement of people away from their place of origin for experience, satisfaction and leisure, as they travel to new areas to experience what they do not have in their places. As a result of the variances in defining tourism, the research settled for the UNWATO definition. UNWTO (1991) as cited by Chiwaridzo & Chiwaridzo (2024) defined tourism as activities comprising persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.

Henceforth, one can argue that tourism is a collection of activities and services that give the traveller a unique experience, such as transportation, accommodation, food, and beverages, as well as activities that give a unique travel experience for people travelling away from home. It is prudent to highlight that for all these activities to be provided, there is supposed to be a local authority mandated by the statutes to provide services. The Constitution of Zimbabwe mandates local authorities Amendment 20 Act of 2013 to provide essential services and manage affairs within their areas of jurisdiction. Efficient service delivery is critical in aiding the tourism sector's growth.

Chakunda (2018) defines service delivery as a phenomenon concerned with providing services and products by a government body to the operating constituency. Motsi et al. (2024) define service delivery as the actual delivery of products to clients. According to (UNDP, 2009), service delivery is a set of organised provisions adopted by a government institution to provide and deliver services to the communities they govern. The above definition has been constructed from the traditional services provided by local authorities; however, it sets out the tone as an umbrella term as the local authorities have moved from not only providing traditional services but to a much broader role that promotes the development of their communities. These traditional services provided by local authorities per the Urban Councils Act 29:15 include solid waste management, water provision, street lighting, health services, education and housing and broader roles that promote tourism, such as place marketing and public relations. Therefore, for tourism to be promoted and have a competitive advantage, the local authority should provide effective and efficient services to these tourist destination centres.

Chakunda (2018) defines local government as the democratically elected bodies of the local communities that identify the needs of the people in their communities and translate them into service provision. Elected officials run local governments from different wards in the community. Godfrey and Clarke (2005) describe the local government as a geographical and multifunctional organisation pursuing political, social and economic objectives through funds generated from the revenue collected and the national government and monitoring all public areas within their communities. The above definitions of local government as a lower tier of the government providing various services to its communities. The local authorities are constituencies that are guided by borders that do not allow another local authority to encroach on the borders of other local authorities (Di Viseer et al., 2010).

Chakaipa (2010) notes that local authorities are legally responsible bodies for planning and managing the operations of residents and organisations in their jurisdictions. It comprises elected and appointed officials, having its complimentary staff. According to the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment 20 Act of 2013, Sections 274 to 277 highlight that local authorities constitute elected officials, therefore encouraging public participation as the people as responsible citizens will run their affairs. The local authorities' mandate is to provide services to various stakeholders. The tourism industry is supposed to be promoted as it is in its jurisdiction and, therefore, mandated to provide services to the tourism industry.

The Relationship Between Local Authorities and the Tourism Sector

Local authorities perform several functions that directly impact the tourism sector. The following discussion is on the identified key functions that have the potential to assist in the development of tourism within these local authorities' areas of jurisdiction.

Place Marketing – local authorities must participate in exhibitions and trade fairs to market their areas. This has a ripple effect on local destinations. Thomas et al. (2011) defined a trade fair as an event where goods and services offered by an organisation are exhibited and demonstrated to other organisations and potential customers or clients. Platforms such as trade fairs and exhibitions present excellent opportunities for marketing tourist destinations within local authorities' jurisdiction. Visser (2005) noted that trade fairs promote tourism as local authorities and tourism players in the targeted markets provide effective and efficient information about tourist services.

Partnerships – public-private partnerships are key in promoting the growth of the tourism sector. Murphy (2012) alludes that partnerships build on the experience of each partner to meet clearly defined needs and contribute to the benefit of the public through the appropriate allocation and use of resources, risk and profits. Local authorities should provide a platform that enables the local community, private players, tourists and other stakeholders to work towards the sector's growth. Local authorities are responsible for developing applications for tourism-related land uses, planning land-use, and providing local infrastructure and public amenities (Nurmukhammad Oppokkhonov et al. 2024). Such can be greatly achieved through partnering with the private sector in mostly developmental financing. The provision and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities by local authorities can significantly influence the image and attractiveness of a destination, the depth and diversity of the available product, and, ultimately, how tourists experience a destination (Gascoin, 2013).

Provision of Basic Services – The local authorities, through the Urban Councils Act, are given the mandate to provide basic services such as water, refuse collection and sanitation. Service provision forms the backbone of the council's responsibilities in their areas of jurisdiction as outlined by the Urban Councils Act 29.15. Tourism facilities depend on the water and waste management provided by the local authorities. Providing efficient and effective service delivery portrays a positive image and increases the destination's reputation, which can also attract more tourists. According to Moyo (2016), the result of several factors, amongst them incompetence, revenue decline coupled with the economy's poor performance, have resulted in local authorities failing to provide efficient and effective service delivery to their communities.

Land Use Planning – according to the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act, local authorities are responsible for land use planning. Botti, Monda, and Vesci (2018) note that local governments responsible for land use planning should integrate the sector into their infrastructure and land use developmental plan. Such includes setting aside land for hostels, lodges, and other amenities development to facilitate the sector's growth. Wekwete (1996) defined planning as a physical component that refers to geographically providing structures of activities formulated by the local authority. Chatiza et al. (2024) highlighted that it is impossible to imagine implementing any formulated projects without a robust local authority planning and development regulator. The local authorities plan to develop physical infrastructure, and the stands they allocate to tourism players suit the requirements for establishing a hotel or a lodge. The planning of tourism by local authorities should integrate all stakeholders, such as the community and the tourism industry, in developing developmental plans that promote tourism development.

Promotions of Tourism Events – local authorities need to organise promotional events such as carnivals in partnership with the players in the tourism sector. Such events can contribute significantly to tourism development as they market the area and the investment opportunities within their jurisdictions. Exhibitors

showcase their services at such events, providing a marketing platform to attract more investment into the sector. Local authorities, being the custodians of their areas of jurisdiction, organise promotional events that allow the marketing of their areas through platforms such as billboards along the streets, exhibitions, and roadshows. According to Queensland (2020), festivals and events are public celebrations based on a theme. These events have cultural, physical, and social meanings for the community and are celebrated through public participation and involvement. Local tourism players market their products and services to stakeholders attending the festivals and events, and the local authorities have to support and promote them in various ways, such as using local authority facilities and resources.

Community Training and Capacity Building – communities close to or within tourism resort towns must be capable of deriving maximum benefit from the tourism sector. As local authorities are responsible for developing their local communities, training should be offered on tourism management to support the sector adequately (McKay, 2013). According to Musavengane et al. (2024), training should be offered in communication, learning different languages, nature and environmental conservation and tourism business management. Community training and capacity building create indigenous capabilities for the local people, aiding the sector's growth. According to Trauer (2006), tourism has various connections with other economic industry sectors; hence, training people on tourism is a strategic part of promoting its development.

Public Infrastructure Development and Maintenance – according to Nyathi (2020), public infrastructure is widely believed to be an essential stimulus to economic development, at least in places with potential. Urban Council Act, Second Schedule, and other acts, local authorities are responsible for the infrastructure development of the areas they govern through the provision and maintenance of public infrastructure. The responsibilities include maintaining public infrastructure, roads, street lighting, drainage systems, signage, parking and walkways. However, local authorities fail to maintain public infrastructure because of resource constraints. Nyathi (2020) therefore notes that the result has been the decline and deterioration of these structures and facilities, which have also affected the tourism sector. Infrastructure such as road signage enables the tourist to reach their destinations and locate hotels and lodges, which is the local authorities' responsibility to maintain. The street lighting system should be well maintained to assist the tourists in navigating their way around the town and increase their safety.

Local Tourism Development Plan—Local authorities are encouraged to consult with relevant stakeholders and use their powers under the local government statutes to ensure the preparation and implementation of a local tourism development plan (Tapfuma et al., 2024). The plan should integrate zoning, land use, infrastructure development, the national system of standards for tourism enterprises, and heritage and environmental protection imperatives to encourage sustainable tourism development.

Research Methodology

Data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. The purpose of combining both data collection methods in researching the role of local authorities in promoting the tourism sector was to have credibility and validity of the findings. The researcher reviewed secondary data sources to validate and supplement the primary data from in-depth interviews. These data sources were the Victoria Falls City website, journal publications, newspapers, government data, and previous research. Using both primary and secondary

sources of information was key in outdoing the weakness of the other source. The target population for the study was drawn from the purposively selected players in the tourism sector and the directors for Housing, Public Relations and Treasury departments in Victoria Falls City Council. The selected tourism sector players included safari operators, district development coordinators and selected hotel and hospitality operators. All these made up a sample size of 10. In-depth interviews were conducted, with the researcher recording and later transcribing the responses. Thematic analysis was an analytical-qualitative method to identify themes for reporting the collected data. Thematic analysis assisted the researcher in capturing the meaning of the collected data sets.

Findings

Land Use Planning and Development

The researcher established land use planning as one of the local authorities' roles in promoting tourism. The local authority developed the land to develop and promote tourism in Victoria Falls and attract investors who want to come and invest in Victoria Falls. In an interview, the Housing Director noted that;

“The local authority has developed commercial and residential areas near the Zambezi River. The land is fully serviced with water, sewer, road and electricity, with the land having options to change from residential to lodge site, with the plan being for the construction of hotels and lodges and other facilities meant to be utilised by the tourist.”

Therefore, according to Chatiza et al, (2024) local governments are responsible for land use planning leading to the development of tourism-related infrastructure and the local authorities play a significant role in the facilitation of the processes. This is in line with the stakeholders' theory that recognises the existence of the role of sub-nationals in the development of the sustainable tourism sector development. Nurmukhammad et al. (2024) concludes that the local authorities as a government at a local level should prepare the relevant tourism physical plans and take part in the plans brought forward that are tourism-related, as they are the responsible authority of their areas.

City Branding and Place Marketing

Another role of the local authority in promoting tourism is city branding and place marketing. The Victoria Falls City Council have branded the city with the name of one of the world's seven natural wonders, Victoria Falls. From the interviews conducted, the Public Relations Officer noted that.

“The branding and marketing have presented the city as Zimbabwe's tourism hub and epicentre. The city is identified by the falls, which have been used for marketing the city using this unique landmark, the waterfall.”

The research established that the city has a well-known identity and a theme, enabling the city to compete on a global stage. The city's branding has reignited the tourism industry as the city brand represents a variety of tourist activities offered in the city (Nyathi, 2017). City branding helps to promote tourism as it reminds the tourists about what is happening in Victoria Falls. This concurs with Mikic (2017), who noted that city branding means coming up with a name, sign, symbol, and a combination of all these elements, which assist

the product in designating and differentiating it from its competition. Therefore, the local authority has enabled the tourist attraction to represent them and be the name of the resort town.

Basics Services Provision and Infrastructure Maintenance

The Victoria Falls City Council indicated that they are trying to maintain the infrastructure, such as roads and streetlights, to facilitate the smooth movement of tourists in the resort town. The council is mandated by the Urban Councils Act 29:15 and the Regional Town and Country Planning Act 29:12. The Engineering Department Director, in an interview, noted that.

“The local authority is prioritising efficient and effective service delivery to the city though they face challenges. We have even channelled devolution funds toward improving service delivery, for we have acquired machinery for road maintenance and solid waste management, revamping public infrastructure and we have used some of the funds in streets lights repair”

However, tourism players bemoaned the poor services being delivered by the City of Victoria Falls Council. One of the hoteliers who operates in both Victoria Falls and Livingstone noted that in an interview,

“The Victoria Fall Council’s failure to provide basic services such as clean water provision and refuse collection, amongst other services, affect, negatively affects our business, and some of us have resorted to investing in Livingstone, Zambia, for there are better services compared here.”

Nyathi (2020) notes that basic services such as water provision, sewer reticulation, refuse collection, and road maintenance are the backbone of the tourism sector. Without them, hotels and lodges would be unable to do business. The research established that the country is losing potential investments in the sector as investors resort to investing in neighbouring countries with better services.

Public-Private Partnership

The research also established that the local authority partnered with the other private players in the sector to develop strategies to boost the tourism sector, with the council also benefitting from the ripple effects. The Public Relations officer, in an interview, noted that

“The local authority has partnered with the private sector to promote the sector's growth. Victoria Falls City Council, Africa Albida, Green Life Africa and Petreco-Zim have engaged in a waste recycling project to make Victoria Falls a green city by engaging in recycling activities to ensure a clean, safe, litter-free environment for the tourism sector.

From the above, Makova, (2019) notes that a clean city can attract more tourists as the place markets itself. Furthermore, a safari operator in the city interviewed noted that

“We have partnered with the Victoria Falls City Council and other private players in the sector to build a park that will have a variety of activities and services to cater for the tourists.”

Another private player in the tourism sector also noted that.

“The local authority has engaged into a partnership with Spencer Creek, a private company in the tourism sector whereby they leased out amenities, in return sharing profits from the activities and services offered at the facility”.

The findings above are in tandem with the (Stangl & Schegg, 2017) view that partnerships build on the experience of each partner to meet clearly defined needs and contribute to the benefit of all parties concerned through the appropriate allocation and use of resources risk and profits sharing. The finding also aligns with the stakeholders’ theory that recognises the importance of forming partnerships for developing the tourism sector.

Community Training and Capacity Building

The research established that the local authority, in partnership with the players in the sector, has driven to train communities on environmental management and how to interact with tourists. As local authorities are responsible for developing their local communities, training should be offered on tourism management to support the sector adequately (McKay, 2013). The Public Relations officer of Victoria City Council noted that

“We have ongoing partnership programs with lodge owners, curators, and safari operators, training the communities that frequently interact with tourists in the city on environmental conservation, tourism business management, and learning the basics of dominant foreign languages.”

Community training and capacity building create indigenous capabilities for the local people, aiding the sector's growth. According to UNDP (2009), tourism has various connections with other economic industry sectors; hence, training people in tourism is a strategic part of promoting its development and, ultimately, local economic development.

Challenges Faced by Local Authorities in Promoting Tourism

The researcher established that Victoria Falls City Council faces several challenges in trying to facilitate the growth of the tourism sector. The most important topic that came out through this research was financial constraints. The local authority noted that year in and year out, they fail to collect revenue as they would have stated in their budgets. The Victoria Falls City Council Finance Director, in an interview, noted that;

The city was the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought a standstill to the tourism sector, negatively affecting revenue inflow into council coffers. We mainly depend on the tourism sector players for revenue, and due to the pandemic, they have also experienced a sharp business drop because of travel restrictions. In the 2020-2021 financial year, we only collected a fifth of what we had budgeted for. The result, therefore, has been us failing to provide services to our stakeholders.”

In addition, one of the interviewed residents noted that;

“We depend on tourists for survival as we sell them different African clothing and artefacts. However, because of Covid-19, we had no one to sell to, failing to pay for the council services.”

As a result, the quality of services declined, and the local authority must devise innovative ways to raise revenue so that the sector is not affected by the failure to provide basic services such as clean water and refuse collection.

The researcher also established the failure of the local authority to formulate local tourism development plans apart from the national policies. Integrated development planning for the local authority should include all within the sector and move towards one goal. Council plans are silent on the sector's potential, and there is little about the tourism sector.

According to (Nyathi, 2020), there is poor marketing to promote the tourism sector by the local authorities to the local, regional and international markets. This was confirmed in an interview with the Victoria Falls City Council Public Relations Officer.

“They have a limited budget for marketing activities such as attending international tourism trade fairs and expos. Cities like Durban and the eThekweni Municipality have international agents and offices that represent the area's tourism sector and promote it by engaging directly with the clients abroad, giving them a competitive advantage for they engage directly with clients”.

Lastly, the Engineering Department highlighted ageing infrastructure and equipment that can no longer accommodate the increased population and service the city. This has resulted in high maintenance costs because of frequent breakdowns. According to (Nyathi, 2020), there were constant water and sewer bursts in the city which expose the residents and tourists to waterborne diseases. The council also noted the machinery was now absolute making it difficult for the local authority to keep the city clean.

Conclusion

Local authorities can contribute significantly to the growth of the tourism sector, complimenting central government efforts and other non-state actors. The Zimbabwean government efforts has been encouraging capital investment in the tourism industry by offering tax breaks and duty-free import privileges for specific capital goods categories to the tourism sector. The government has launched a large marketing campaign to position the nation as one of the top tourist destinations. This effort has also helped to fuel the sector's growth, and it was carried out through the Ministry responsible for tourism. However, the other key stakeholder which was the focus of this research are the local authorities which are pivotal in ensuring tourism development as they partake in infrastructure development, attracting more tourism investors. Their role includes place marketing which ensures that tourism in the area is published and made known to tourists among others. However, local authorities encounter challenges, including limited budgets to finance efficient and effective service delivery and implement capital projects. This has led to the failure of local authorities to complete different projects, with some having the potential to assist in the growth of the tourism sector. Local authorities tend to have limited sources of revenue as those that are high yielding have been taken over by the central government, thus affecting tourism development. Financial constraints have led to the failure to acquire the required instruments for tourism development. There is a lack of ICT infrastructure at local authorities which hinders place marketing on the organisation's website.

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