

Tourism Marketing Strategies and Domestic Tourism Demand in Kariba Resort (Zimbabwe)

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Abstract

Poor marketing of domestic tourism hinders the development of domestic tourism. The domestic tourism market lays the foundation of the tourism industry. Using a qualitative research this study sought to explore tourism marketing strategies that can be used to optimise domestic tourism in Kariba Resort. Results from this study may be useful to stakeholders of Kariba resort in marketing of Kariba to the Zimbabwean tourist market, to enhance domestic tourism demand. This can help Kariba as a destination to have a competitive edge over other local destination in the country. The results showed that there is close relationship between tourism marketing and tourism demand, tourism players are using various marketing strategies to appeal to locals. The results showed that Kariba as resort destination is adversely affected by lack of stakeholder cooperation in the marketing of the destination to the Zimbabwean tourist market.

Keywords: Tourism; Marketing strategies; Tourist market

Introduction

According to World Tourism Organization WTO [1], domestic tourism is the travel of people residing in a country who travels to places within their country, outside their usual environment for a period not exceeding twelve months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. Domestic tourism throughout the world is a predominant but invisible portion of total tourism activity [2]. International tourism is only one part and certainly in number of arrivals and in domestic tourism in developed countries is several times larger than international tourism. In countries like United States few tourists leave their country and the numbers of domestic tourists within China exceeds that of all inbound tourists and shows also an even larger growth [3].

In developing countries such as in Africa domestic travel is more restricted due to low income levels with the exception of few countries like South Africa. Due to over dependence on international tourism, developing countries have not come up with strategies to encourage and tap into the vast potential in the domestic tourism market. Studies that have been carried out in developed countries have proved that out of the 60% revenue generated from tourism activities, 70% comes from domestic tourism [4]. Globally domestic tourism has continued to grow. In developed countries domestic tourism contributes to 60% of the total tourist revenue.

According to the WTO [1] domestic tourism has led to employment creation, high economic growth and the overall development of the tourism industry. Marketing strategies therefore relate to how marketers seek to meet their objectives and usually points to the destination's main lines of direction [5]. Tourism marketing involves finding out what tourists want (marketing research) and developing suitable offerings (product development), telling them what is available (promotions) and providing instructions as to where they can buy the offerings (place) so that they in turn receive value (pricing) and the tourism organizations make money [6].

Tourism is one of the major sectors in many countries with highest growth potential. The neglect of domestic tourism is partly a result of the emphasis by governments and policy makers to the foreign exchange earnings derived from international tourism flows [7]. Tourism marketing strategies can be used to stimulate demand for

domestic tourism as the marketing strategies relate to how marketers seek to meet their objectives and usually points to the destinations main lines of direction [5].

Zimbabwe tourism was greatly affected for the past years of political instability and economic recession which adversely impacted on the domestic tourism demand. In 2009 the Government of National Unity was formed and the economy started recovering but yet the domestic tourism demand in the country is very low, with local residents mainly visiting friends and relatives. Traditionally developing countries have relied heavily on the international tourist arrivals, often at the expense of promoting domestic tourism [8].

Kariba resort is a hive of activities for the tourists, it is unique and a place of outstanding beauty, great inland sea, rested in mountains and guarded by enormous reserves of game. Domestic tourism demand in Zimbabwe is low resulting in Kariba resort receiving a few numbers of domestic tourists. There are no proper marketing strategies for domestic tourism and tourism marketing is biased towards attracting international tourists. The study focuses on tourism marketing strategies that can optimise domestic tourism in Kariba by focusing on building awareness and promoting the destination product. Tourism marketing strategies will enable the domestic market to develop and form an enduring foundation of the demand for tourism facilities and services by domestic tourists.

Methodology

The research study was done using qualitative research design for data collection and analysis in order to find the tourism marketing strategies used to market domestic tourism in Kariba resort and their

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Received March 01, 2018; **Accepted** March 29, 2018; **Published** April 05, 2018

Citation: Basera V (2018) Tourism Marketing Strategies and Domestic Tourism Demand in Kariba Resort (Zimbabwe). J Tourism Hospit 7: 344. doi: [10.4172/2167-0269.1000344](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0269.1000344)

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effectiveness in influencing domestic tourism demand. Qualitative research design allowed the researcher to gather in-depth data about the subject. This design enabled the researcher to gather data on the nature of tourism demand, current domestic tourism marketing strategies used in Kariba and perceptions of tourism service providers pertaining to domestic tourism marketing. Qualitative research design enabled the researcher to gather data in depth through close contact and high level involvement with the informants to get a clear picture of what is really transpiring in the domestic tourism marketing [9]. The research design used to explore marketing strategies that can be used to optimize domestic tourism in the resort town of Kariba.

The research employed both probability and non-probability sampling. The researcher used purposive sampling technique in collecting data in the study area. Stratified convenience sampling was applied in this study for domestic tourists. This is mainly because the population from which the sample was drawn was not easily accessible for data collection. Thus stratified convenience sampling helped to obtain data from person to person. The population was stratified into a number of non-overlapping sub-population or strata and sample items were selected from each stratum [10].

Personal interviews were conducted in order to achieve the objectives, since it is the most versatile and productive method of communication. The researcher used semi-structured face to face interview with area manager from Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) in Kariba resort. The interviewer used a checklist of topics which was designed before commencement of fieldwork. These assisted the researcher to remain focused throughout the study. The researcher used both open and closed ended questionnaires driven from the literature review and the research objectives. The questions were given to respondents in order to obtain their views on domestic tourism marketing.

The population in the study includes tourism services providers in Kariba resorts which include the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (Kariba), hotels, lodges, tour operators, safari companies, boat operators and domestic tourists. The researcher focused on key people on the various tourism services providers and also included junior staff from the tourism services providers in the Kariba resort. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

Results

Two interviews were targeted to be conducted with ZTA Kariba

area manager and Kariba Publicity Chairman but only one interview was done with ZTA manager. Response rate from questionnaires were as follows, twenty questionnaires were distributed to management in various tourism services providers in Kariba and out of those twenty questionnaires issued the researcher managed to collect fourteen which gives a response rate of 70%. The researcher also distributed twenty questionnaires to domestic tourists visiting Kariba and out of those twenty questionnaires distributed the researcher got eighteen from the domestic tourists and the response rate was 80%. 40 questionnaires were distributed only 32 were responded to, resulting in a response rate of 80%. Some respondents were too busy to respond. Adequate information was gathered and various opinions from the public and the private sector of tourism stakeholders were received.

Out of two groups of respondents that included the management of tourism service providers and domestic tourists 56% were males and 44% were females. The issue of work experience was a factor to consider as far as marketing of domestic tourism is concerned because it requires experience to know and study the behavior of domestic tourists and know how to segment and target the market effectively.

Sources of domestic tourists

Domestic tourists who participated in the research come from six provinces which include Harare, Matebeleland South, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Manicaland and Mashonaland Central. The findings show that Harare has highest number of domestic tourist visiting Kariba from an economic perspective it is as a result of affluence. The findings shows that there were no respondents from other provinces such as Masvingo, Bulawayo, Matebeleland North and Midlands this can be attributed to the distance of these provinces which is very far from Kariba compared to other provinces (Figure 1).

Domestic tourists travelled to Kariba resort for different reasons with 61% being business travellers, 39% leisure travellers and no domestic tourists were visiting their friends and relatives. Determining the purpose of travel for domestic tourists is crucial for successful marketing strategies and ensuring that they reach the correct segmentation or target group to be most effective [8]. Three types of travel were categorized in the questionnaires which are visiting friends and relatives, business and leisure. The results showed that most domestic travellers were visiting for business trips which show there is need to improve on marketing for leisure. Business trips dominated because Kariba offers good conference rooms in hotels and boats as

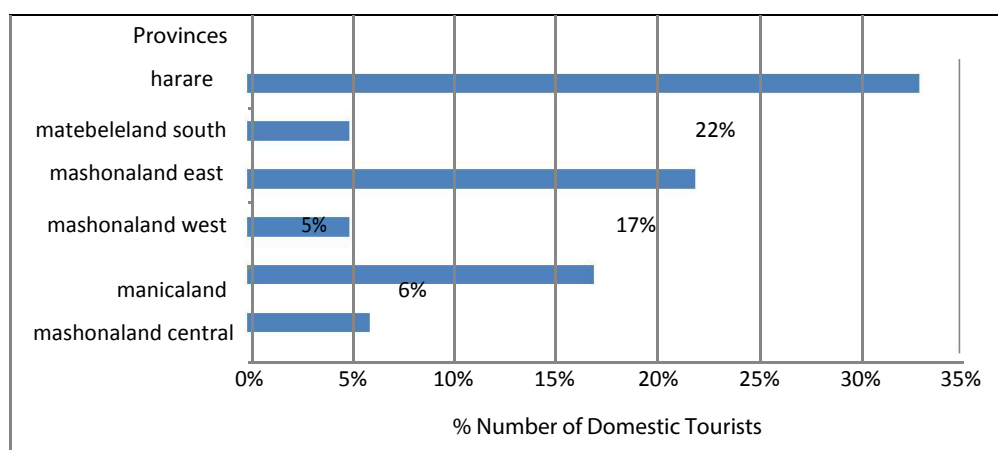


Figure 1: Provinces where domestic tourists come from.

most business people prefer having business seminars and conferences away from routine environments.

Strategies used to market domestic tourism to the Zimbabwean tourist market

The findings showed that tourism services providers in Kariba marketed their offerings and destination using various marketing strategies. The marketing strategies being used to market tourism to the domestic tourists in Kariba are media (radio, newspapers, brochures, internet), hosting tourism events, low priced packages for the locals, creating a local positive image of the destination, branding, exhibitions and road shows, market segmentation, providing familiarization trips to the locals, creating a local positive image, hosting events, tourism workshops and tradeshows and branding. The findings showed that media is the most used strategy in marketing the resort with internet being the most used followed by brochures (Figure 2).

Creating a local positive image of the destinations: This marketing strategy seeks to create a good image of the destination such that locals make buying decision upon mental image of destination offerings rather than being able to physically sample alternatives.

Providing familiarisation trips for locals

The findings shows that a few number of tourism services providers in Kariba are using this method in marketing themselves to the Zimbabwean tourist market. However this marketing strategy involves offering a visit to potential domestic tourists, designed to acquaint them with specific local facilities and services and in way stimulating them to participate in domestic tourism. Davidson and Rogers [11] revealed familiarisation trips are used as a means of giving locals or potential domestic tourists first-hand experience of destinations. This would help in making Kariba a visible destination for the domestic market as shown by tourists who indicated that they only got to know more about Kariba after listening to a radio programme.

Low priced packages for locals

According to the research findings low price package for locals is another marketing strategy being used to market the Kariba resort to the domestic tourists. The strategy is meant to encourage locals to

participate in tourism as the services or packages will be lower than of international tourists.

Media

The results of the study shows that media is also used in marketing domestic tourism to the locals. Media channels that include internet, brochures, newspapers and radio were mentioned that they are being used. Internet has the highest percentage. Working with the media is a strategy that ensures a wide coverage of publications to the local people about domestic tourism.

Hosting of tourism events

The research findings also highlighted that some of the tourism services providers in Kariba are using hosting of tourism events as a marketing strategy to attract domestic tourists to Kariba resort like the Kariba fishing tournament.

Branding

From the findings some respondents pointed that they are using branding as marketing strategy in luring domestic tourists. Meer [12] said branding in tourism has become a very important issue because it has the potential to influence the success of a destination. The issue behind branding is to identify the tourism services from one provider or group of providers and differentiate them from those of competitors, in this those of Kariba against its competing destinations.

Exhibitions and tradeshows

Most of the respondents showed that they partake in exhibitions and tradeshows as a marketing strategy to attract the Zimbabwean tourists to Kariba resort. Most respondents highlighted that every year their organization go and exhibit at travel expos, Harare Agricultural Show, Trade Fairs held yearly in the country. The results are in agreement with earlier study by Davidson and Rogers [11] that exhibitions and tradeshows are events in which destination operators can develop awareness of their services and products to the domestic tourism market.

Discussion

From the findings the researcher concluded that domestic tourism

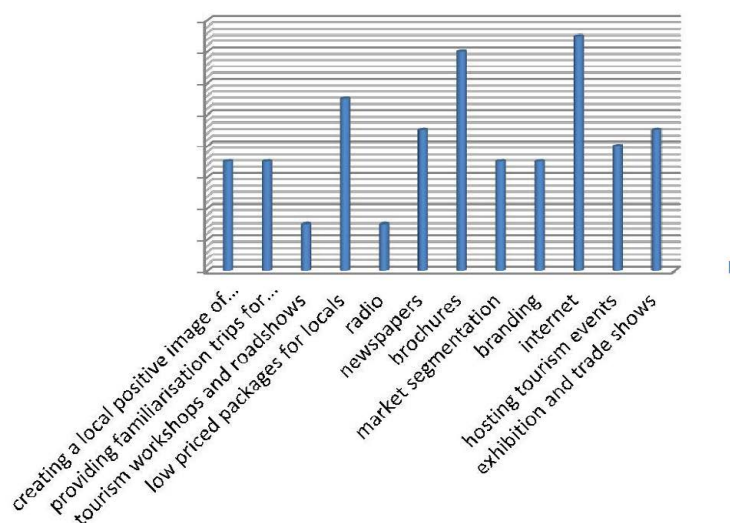


Figure 2: Marketing strategies used to market Kariba Resort.

demand is still low besides the marketing efforts being done in the bid to attract many domestic tourists to Kariba resort. Some respondents pointed that demand is low because locals are opting for outbound tourism in neighbouring countries like Mozambique and South Africa as they are perceived to be better destinations and cheap. This concurs with Heath [13] who revealed that tourists travel decisions are based on destination competitiveness attributes such as image and cost. Other respondents argued that the numbers of domestic tourists are still low because of poor marketing being done to attract tourists to the destination. Some said the pulling out of Air Zimbabwe from the Kariba route has adversely affected the progress of domestic tourism as some tourists used to rely on air transport and as a result there is no fast scheduled transport to the resort town. Page and Lumsdon [14] pointed that scheduled transport system of tourist destination has an impact on the tourism experience which explains how domestic tourists travel and why they choose different forms of holiday, destinations and transport.

All the respondents from the tourism services providers affirmed that tourism marketing is important to their organisations and they agreed that there is a relationship between tourism marketing and domestic tourism demand. Most of the respondents pointed out that tourism marketing creates awareness, stimulates locals to want to travel there by stimulating demand, sensitise domestic tourists of the products offered and they get to know the prices and it ensures that they are known that they exist and what they offer.

Tourism marketing creates awareness to the domestic tourists so that they know what is being offered and where to find it. The respondents highlighted that tourism marketing creates awareness about the services and prices for the offerings. The respondents highlighted that tourism marketing is important to their organisations as it creates awareness to the potential clients. This observation strikes resonance with Moseley et al. [15] who revealed that tourism marketing involves the tasks of creating awareness to the domestic tourists, identifying and choosing the target segments in where the actual and potential customers are living and desired to purchase the product.

All the organizations in Kariba resort partake in the marketing of the destination and their aim is in line with what was revealed by Mazimhaka [16] as to sensitise and create awareness among domestic tourists on the benefits of domestic tourism. The findings are also agreeing with George [6] who pinpointed that tourism marketing involves finding out what tourist want and developing suitable offering, telling them what is available and providing instructions as to where they can buy the offerings so that they in turn receive and tourism organization make money. Marketing strategies creates awareness as some of the domestic tourists who participated in the research where from provinces which are quite a distant from Kariba and some said they get to know about the resort from brochures and during exhibitions and tradeshows held in the country annually.

The findings show that marketing of domestic tourism stimulates demand to the local tourists to want to travel and visit places. Buhalis [17] who pointed out that destinations with strong, positive images are likely to be considered and chosen in travel decision process. When locals get know about a destination and its offering they develop the need to go and experience the services on offer in doing so creating demand for tourism services and activities. This was highlighted in the observation that most of the respondents pointed that through marketing it increases their business and sales and some even pointed out that it increases their market share in the domestic tourist market. The findings shows that through marketing that's how tourism services providers get their business as demand will be increased by marketing

efforts. According to Rogerson and Lisa [18] tourism marketing can influence domestic tourism demand as it encourages many domestic tourists who would like to travel but do not know where to go, how to find transport to their destinations to eventually participate in tourism.

Tourism marketing increases business performance as most managers who responded to the questionnaires pointed out that it increases organizational sales. Managers showed tourism marketing is one of their key result areas as they know that the marketing efforts they make has something to do with tourism demand thereby ensuring the survival of the business. The findings show that there is a relationship between marketing and business performance as all the respondent highlighted that marketing has a positive effect towards the success of business. These findings are in agreement with Australian Tourism Marketing Guide [19] who stated that, marketing is an essential part of running a business and tourism businesses need to undertake some basic marketing initiatives to be successful. Hartl [20] pointed that the best hotel, tour or attraction in the world will not succeed without a planned approach to marketing. The marketing of domestic tourism has the potential to improve business performance as it stimulates demand. Respondents revealed that as a result of their marketing through various strategies they have seen increase in hotel covers, bookings for activities with tour operators and boat cruising.

The findings highlighted that marketing of Kariba is being affected by lack of tourism stakeholder co-operation resulting in low domestic tourism demand. Respondents highlighted that instead of organizations putting their efforts together and market the destination collectively they are actually competing with one another for the share of the market. The lack of cooperation of tourism services providers is adversely affecting the progress of domestic tourism as the numbers of domestic tourists visiting the area are still low apart from marketing efforts being done. Lack of cooperation was also pointed as a challenge in destination marketing. Buhalis [17] revealed that the most challenge of destination marketing is to bring all individuals partners to cooperate rather than compete and to pool resources towards developing an integrated marketing mix.

The results show that stakeholders have different interests as some organizations are only interested in international tourists compared to domestic tourists. The stakeholders overlook domestic tourism yet domestic tourism maintains the tourism industry during dips in the tourist market and sustains demand for tourism where there are seasonal variations in international tourism [16].

Many tourist destinations are fragmented in the sense that they contain a mixture of stakeholders. This makes special demands on a mobilization strategy of the organizations although at times tourism players often have interests that overlaps. Wang and Fesenmaier [21] revealed that stakeholders must consider the destination as a brand implying that the actors delivering the components of the tourist product are interdependent. They all have an interest of attracting domestic tourists to their destination and what they offer and how they do this affect their own brand image and the image of the destination.

Most respondents highlighted that organizations are competing with other to get tourists which creates rivalry between organizations. The organizations are worried about their organization image not destination image. There is need for cooperation by stakeholders in order for a destination to be competitive. The findings are in agreement with Buhalis [17] who pointed that there is need for close cooperation instead of rivalry between stakeholders in order to develop a competitive destination. By working together in alliance stakeholders

in the destination can derive greater impact from their joint marketing activities. Middleton [22] revealed that from a consumer perspective the destination tourist product can be seen as an integrated tourist experience where the components are delivered by different actors. This calls for stakeholders to treat a destination as an entity or brand in the marketing process rather than as a means in promoting the offers made by every single player in the destination. According to Buhalis [17] destination marketing is becoming complex as tourists consume regions as experiences often ignoring that tourism products consist of a great number of individual products and services.

Most respondents highlighted that their marketing efforts are being affected by lack of discretionary income on the part of locals hindering them to participate in the domestic travel. The findings show that marketing is being done and assumed reaching many locals but the challenge is that the domestic tourist does not have money to visit places for leisure. Most of the domestic tourists pointed out that tourism services are expensive which agrees with Cooper et al. [23] who noted that tourism is an expensive activity that demand a certain threshold of income before participation is possible. The researcher is of view that disposable income plays a pivotal role in determining an individual's decision to participate in tourism and this affect the propensity to travel of locals as they rely on the insufficient disposable income and it becomes difficult to promote domestic travel in the country. The situation in the country is characterized by high unemployment which is at 85% and most of the people who are working are earning salaries below poverty datum line pegged at \$572 making it difficult to engage in leisure travel. These results are in line with earlier findings by Rentschler [24] who identified that individuals and families who had limited incomes felt they could not participate or engage in leisure travel.

Many respondents pointed out that many domestic tourists have perceptions that tourism is expensive and it's for the white people and foreigners. According to Moseley et al. [15] lack of knowledge and negative perception that participating in tourism is not for them has led them not to engage in domestic tourism. So the findings show that perceptions are difficult to change and they are really affecting the progress of domestic tourism. There is a social stigma that most people prefer to visit their rural areas during holidays than visiting resorts destination for holidays. Another respondent pointed out that there is need to fight this stigma of people "preference of going to rural areas during holidays and encourage the visit of tourist destinations and resorts towns. The researcher also agrees with these findings as it has become a norm to travel to rural areas during holidays, they take it as time they meet with their extended families which inhibits them visiting tourist destination. These finding agrees with Rorgerson and Lisa they were of the view that a lack of past engagement, poor past experience or lack of socialization with tourism activities makes engagement more difficult. Buhalis [17] alluded that encouraging locals to participate in tourism is similar to getting consumer to try a new service for the first time; the more difficult the consumer perceives the experience to be the less likely they are to try it.

The domestic tourism package involves the total holiday required for the one to travel. It includes low transport cost, low accommodation fees, price for food and beverage packages and tourism related activities to be at a cheaper price for the locals. This enhances the need of residents to travel exploring the country's destination. Zimbabwe Tourism Authority directed players in the players in tourism industry to come up with packages affordable to locals in order to boost domestic tourism. Moseley et al. [15] said such packages would enable local people to visit most resorts in the country. This marketing strategy think if it is well

implemented by all tourism players it will boost the domestic tourism demand as locals will be able to pay for the packages and demand will rise as the prices will become relatively cheaper to the locals. Moseley et al. [15] revealed that most tourism players are reluctant to lower their cost to accommodate domestic tourists because it would result in a loss of income that could be easily gained through continuing efforts to attract the foreign market. This is adversely affecting the progress of domestic tourism as locals do not afford to pay the prices paid by the foreigners. An example where this strategy was successful is in Turkey according to Dilys et al. [25] who said that domestic tourism market increased as they introduced favourable local tourism packages.

The researcher strongly feels that if all tourism players in Kariba embrace this strategy of offering low priced packages to the Zimbabwean tourist market demand will rise. This is because currently our economy is not performing well and most people are getting salaries that make them to be price sensitive. Think in the bid to improve domestic tourism performance in Kariba low priced local package is a perfect fit to increase domestic tourism demand.

The findings of this study show that a very few tourism players in Kariba resort are using market segmentation marketing strategy. This strategy if used by many organization it yield results that will improve domestic tourism demand in Kariba. Market segmentation is the strategic tool to account for heterogeneity among tourists by grouping them into market segments which include members similar to each other and dissimilar to members of other segments. Market segmentation provides the basis for precise customer-focused and targeted marketing and it provides a roadmap for effective decision-making to meet business goals and stimulate and grow domestic tourism [8]. Market segmentation allows tourism regions and organisations to focus resources on those potential customers who are most likely to be persuaded to visit (or re-visit) the destination or to buy their product/service, and who fit the type of customer the destination/operator wants to attract [20-30]. According to Seaton and Bennett [26] the most basic segmentation strategy is segmenting the market using trip or tourist descriptors. Trip descriptors divide the market into smaller groups based on the type of trip the consumers would like to engage on and descriptors can include VFR, holiday and recreational trips as well business as trips. Effective use of segmentation can help the marketers to reach out to domestic tourist in a more effective way by using different marketing programs for the different groups [6].

Through market segmentation they will get to know actual people they are targeting and be in a position to know their travel behaviour, patterns and satisfy them. Market segmentation tends to produce depth of market position in the segments that are effectively defined and penetrated. Market segmentation will help Kariba as a destination to gain competitive advantage because competition will be reduced from other competing destinations. Market segmentation is a strategy any entity in the tourism industry can use to strengthen their competitive advantage by selecting the most suitable subgroup of tourists to specialize on and target [31-45].

According to Mallou [27] image emerges as a key in the marketing of tourism for many destinations where potential consumers makes buying decisions upon mental image of the product offerings rather than being able to physically sample alternatives. Aaker [28] revealed that image is critically viable in tourism marketing mix since the 1990s and studies have highlighted its many roles and in the marketing of tourism covers a wide range of activities and agencies. Its role reflects marketing specifically which is aimed at influencing attitudes and behaviour of domestic tourists in three main ways: to confirm and reinforce, to create

new patterns of behaviour. Pearce [29] has commented that image is one of those terms that will not go away, a term with vague and shifting meanings. Fifield [30] pointed out collectively that; destination image is an amalgam of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations and feelings towards an area. Tourism services providers in Kariba must invest in creating a local positive image in way that will fight competition with other destinations in the country as Crompton and Christie [31-50] argued that positive local image of a destination will enable domestic tourists to use it as basis to make decision to travel to their preferred destination. Etchner and Ritchie pointed out that unprecedented growth of tourism has created major challenges in tourism marketing and one of the most significant marketing challenges arising from this situation is the need for an effective destination position strategy. A key component of this positioning process is the creation and management of a distinctive and appealing perception, or image, of the destination. Buhalis [17] pointed out that destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in travel decision process. In this regard all tourism players in Kariba need to create a positive image of the destination to the domestic tourists so that Kariba becomes a priority when they make their travel decisions [51-79].

Conclusion

It can be concluded that tourism marketing have been embraced by tourism service providers although they are biased towards international market than domestic market. The service providers are using various marketing strategies in reaching the Zimbabwean tourist market but there is need to increase coverage that will see Kariba as domestic destination known countrywide. The domestic tourism demand is also being affected by a lack of discretionary income of locals which is also hindering them to travel because many people are earning below the poverty datum line. The organizations are using marketing as way of creating awareness to the local market and also a way of improving their business performance as it enhances their sales and this is agreeing with literature.

This study has also established that the progress of domestic tourism is being affected by lack of stakeholder's cooperation. The tourism players are actually competing with each other instead of collaborating and market the area together as nowadays tourists are consuming destinations. The service providers also revealed that marketing costs are high which affect marketing of the destination to the locals.

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