

# Sustainable Tourism Growth and Marketing in Zambia: The Case of Natural Endowments as Drivers for Tourism

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## Abstract

This paper emanates from an analysis of secondary literature on sustainable tourism and marketing with a specific focus on nature-based tourism in Zambia. The Victoria Falls, bordering Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the wildlife assets are the two major categories of natural resources that are the draw-cards for especially international tourists travelling into Zambia. The protection, conservation and management of these natural resources are, therefore, essential for the survival and sustainable growth of the tourism sector over both the shorter and longer terms. This will ensure that the benefits derived from these natural resources accrue to and meet the needs of both the present and the future generations within the context of sustainable development. Together with the inputs from the tourism industry, the analysis is intended to showcase sustainable tourism in Zambia. The paper then raises questions for future research that will seek answers the questions of guiding principles for achieving sustainable tourism, marketing and promotion of local and international visitation to the country's tourist attractions.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism, Growth, Natural Endowment.

## Introduction and Background

Zambia has been a tourist destination of choice for many years, for both local and international tourists, even pre-dating the country's political independence in 1964. The country's tourism sector comes only third after mining and agriculture in contributing to the nation's Gross Domestic Product. The tourist attractions are its abundant beautiful natural endowments that include water falls, with the Victoria Falls which is the a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the seven wonders of the world and further boasts of being the largest water fall in the world; twenty National Parks (NPs) and thirty-six Game Management Areas (GMAs) with one of the largest concentrations of wild animals in Africa; conservation areas for a spectacular variety of wild animals and bird species; a rich cultural heritage; a number of traditional ceremonies and adventure activities. The Victoria Falls, because of its

uniqueness both locally on the world stage, is currently the major attraction for tourists coming to Zambia (Liu & Mwanza, 2014; Mbewe, Siamatowe & Kalifungwa, 2014).

The analysis and understanding of the national and international value of Zambia's tourism and its sustainability must be contextualised within the larger space of sustainable development. To be sustainable, tourism "must take full account of its current and future economic, social-cultural and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNEP, 2005). Tourism, as an economic activity (job creation, foreign currency earner, source of disposable income, growth of transnational corporations, stimulates inward and industrial investments), has an effect on the environment of the destination, which inadvertently contributes to the desirability and attractiveness of a tourist destination. Thus, the protection and conservation of environmental resources, upon which the tourism industry depends as primary inputs in the production of the tourism output, are prime considerations for the industry (Swarbrook, 1999; Lim & McAleer, 2003).

Naturally, the aim of sustainable tourism is to carefully integrate tourism into the local and regional culture and not to integrate culture into tourism. The locals at tourist destinations need to be given the opportunity to not only keep their traditions for visitors, but also live their family culture and rites to the exclusion of strangers (Baumgartner, 2008). Socially, the quality in tourism is determined by the quality of service and, therefore, the improvement of the education and social protection systems of those employed in the tourism industry are of utmost importance. Tourism must address such social problems as unemployment of women and must desist from the reliance of season workers, a phenomenon that perpetuates casualization. Legislative input as well as enforcement must be upheld in order to ensure the marginalised demographics are advantaged and potential abuse of citizens thwarted.

Then there are needs of special guest groups comprising aged, those with special needs such as the physically challenged, Muslim tourists who seek halal services, non-smokers, families with small children, single travellers who have special requirements on accommodation, destinations and transport service providers. In order to be successful with these various touristic groups, potential special needs have to be considered. Thus, there is need for equality to ensure that all stakeholders in tourism are treated fairly. There must be equal opportunities as well as matching benefits for operators, employees, communities as well as tourists. The tourism industry must uphold ethical conduct in its dealings with both tourists and suppliers and the host governments must equally adopt ethical mien in dealing with host populations and tourists. Tourists must also treat those who serve them as equal partners and not as elements only good for meeting their needs (Baumgartner, 2008; Swarbrook, 1999).

## Methods and Material

Available secondary literature on sustainable tourism and marketing in Zambia in general and on the Victoria Falls as well as wildlife assets in particular, were reviewed and analysed. Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) and Descriptive statistics were used to test for differences in visitors to the national parks as well as employment and income levels in the tourism sector. Trend analysis was used to analyse differences in visitors to the Victoria Falls since there were only two variables; year and number of visitors. For the  $X^2$  analyses, the probability of committing a type-1 error (alpha) was set at 0.05.

## Findings

### Zambia's Tourism Marketing Strategies

The Zambia Tourism Agency (ZTA), the agency entrusted with the responsibility of marketing tourism, targets both domestic and international markets. The international market is the major focus with 60% of the financial expenditure on marketing targeted at international markets while the other 40% targets domestic markets (ZTB Annual Report, 2013).

#### *Domestic Tourism*

Domestic tourism marketing targets middle class families, who mainly travel for leisure purposes, focussing on travels to specific destinations within the country. ZTA promotes, supports and markets domestic tourism by participating in various local tourism-related events including the Zambia International Trade Fair, Agriculture and Commercial Shows and Traditional Ceremonies. The institution also hosts tourism programmes related to the marketing of Zambia's tourist attractions on national and private television and radio stations.

#### *International Tourism*

The ZTB often undertakes marketing initiatives in different existing and potential tourism source markets to create destination awareness for Zambia; mainly in African, Europe, China, India, North America and Australia. The institution also markets Destination Zambia via international media and travel agents in these regions. ZTA holds its own brand of international tourism fair, called ZATEX (Zambia Tourism Expo) as well as the hosting its own brand of international cultural festival called LICAF (Livingstone International Cultural and Arts Festival).

### Visitors to Zambia's National Parks

Over a five-year period, 2009-2013, a total of 314,069 national and international tourists visited Zambia's National Parks (ZTB Annual Report 2013; Ministry of Tourism and Arts:

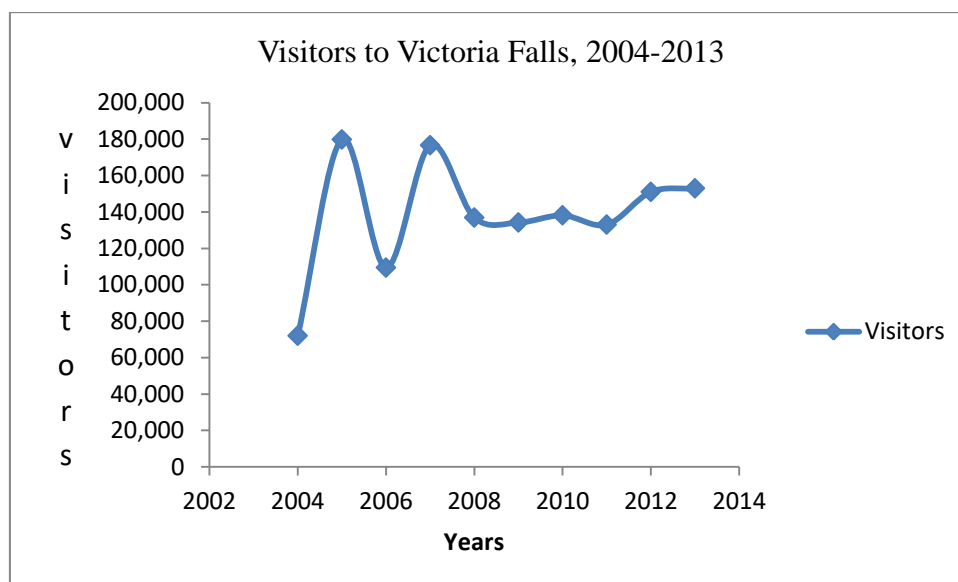
Tourism Statistical Digest, 2013).The majority of visitors originated from Europe followed by those from Zambia. On a yearly basis, however, the numbers fluctuated, but substantially increased in 2013, Table 2. The distribution of visitors was different and statistically significant on origin ( $X^2 = 9556.763$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $df = 16$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2. Chi-Square Tests for national and international visitors to Zambia’s National Parks (2009-2013)**

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	$X^2$	$P < .0001$	df
Visitors	64,761	50,518	63,897	57,702	77,281	314,069	9556.765	0.000	16

### National and International Visitors to the Victoria Falls (2004-2013)

A total of 1,384,090 tourists visited Victoria Falls from 2004 to 2013 (Government of the Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Tourism and Arts, 2013). A trend analysis indicated fluctuations across the years in the number of visitors, with the year 2005 having recorded the highest number, according to Figure 1. In that year, Zambia launched the “Visit Zambia Campaign”, which saw the sharp rise in the number of visitations to the Falls. The sharp reduction in 2006 could have been due to the worldwide economic downturn that affected many tourist destinations in that period of time. There was, however, a modest visitor-increase from 2011 to 2013 probably a sign of improvements in the world economy.



**Figure 1. Visitors to the Victoria Falls, 2004-2013**

### Employment Levels and Accommodation Earnings

Between 2012 and 2013, a total of 101,629 people were employed in Zambia in the tourism industry consisting of 45,035 males and 56,594 females (Government of the Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Tourism and Arts, 2013).The distribution of employees was different and statistically significant on Province ( $X^2 = 273.383$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $df = 9$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 3. Chi-Square Test for employees in the tourism sector across ten Provinces of Zambia (2012-2013)**

Number of Provinces	10	X <sup>2</sup>	P < .0001	df
Total number of employees	101,629	273.383	0.000	9

Lusaka and Southern Provinces of the Zambia recorded the highest number of employees due to the increase in the number of hotels and lodges established in those regions. Southern Province is home to the Victoria Falls and the Mosi-o-Tunya National Park. The two nature-based tourist sites support eco-tourism. Additionally, Livingstone, Zambia's tourism capital is located in Southern Province and attracts a lot of international and domestic tourists visiting the tourist attraction sites. These numerous tourist visits have increased the need for investments in the tourism establishments that, in turn, have resulted in increased employment levels.

In terms of annual direct tourism-related earnings, Zambia earned a total of USD 441,062,536.48 and USD 540,209,718.40 in 2012 and 2013, respectively (Government of the Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Tourism and Arts, 2013). The descriptive statistics on earnings indicated statistically significant differences on the type of tourism earnings in the two years analysed ( $p < 0.0001$ ) (Table 4). The highest earnings came from accommodation establishments followed by car hire, travel agents and hunting concessions.

**Table 4. Descriptive analysis for annual earnings from Tourism**

Year	2012	2013	Total	P < .05
Number of Provinces	10	10		
Mean	208645434.29	272629306.68	240637370.49	0.000
Standard deviation	423877619.15	55169463.02	479957375.10	

The Southern Province recorded the highest earnings from accommodation establishments due to high tourism activities in Livingstone and Siavonga, an attractive tourist destination on the banks of Lake Kariba. Tourist draw-cards in Livingstone, besides the Victoria Falls and the Mosi-o-Tunya National Park, include bunji jumping, elephant back riding, walking with the lions, boat cruise, flying over the Victoria Falls, water rafting and visits to the museums.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The Victoria Falls and the wildlife assets make up Zambia's mainstay of tourism. The Falls as well as the national parks are frequented by tourists from around the world although as has been indicated, a substantial number of these visitors to the sites are from within Africa, with Europeans equally coming in considerable numbers. This suggests need for the Zambia Tourism Agency to upscale its tourism promotions on the African market in order to attract more revenue into the country's economy. It is logistically more plausible and even cheaper for African tourists to visit Zambia since they only have to cover shorter distances sometimes

even via road. The appeal is to the Zambia Tourism Agency to target markets on the African continent and especially in the sub-region, to attract tourists who can easily access Zambia and can take leisure trips to Zambia's tourism sites.

Local tourism (domestic) also seems to be doing well and promises significant numbers of travellers provided extra marketing efforts are instituted targeting this demographic with negotiated packages for them. The high employment figures in tourism activities, especially accommodation, in Lusaka and Southern Provinces suggest high and selective concentration of tourism investments at the expense of other regions that may need to benefit from tourism. It may also suggest that there are no potential and attractive tourism destinations in the other regions of Zambia. There is need, therefore, for in-depth studies to discover and understand how best Zambia can strategically and aggressively market its tourism in these otherwise neglected regions to create possible employment opportunities for local communities.

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