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TOWARDS DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK THAT OPTIMIZES INNOVATION IN HERITAGE TOURISM IN ZIMBABWE: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

Despite Zimbabwe being home to a rich and diverse cultural heritage, it is imperative to note that innovation in cultural heritage remains glaringly absent and under researched. In the meantime, evidence from the emerging compartments of research in developed countries brightens the significance of cultural heritage innovation to cultural tourism and tourism development in general. Noteworthy is that the significance of a framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism may at no time be valued unless its welfare are well articulated, understood and unpacked. An analysis based on the focus of several studies that were conducted to date on cultural heritage reveals the existence of a gap or break in the search for a framework for enhancing the innovation in cultural heritage tourism in developing countries that include Zimbabwe. Despite a rich array of frameworks for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage development none has been able to achieve set policy targets in developing countries. We observe that tangible cultural heritage tourism has been under-researched such that the product has become tired yet a lot can be done to keep sites attractive to tourists. Using content analysis, this conceptual analysis paper seeks to develop a framework for enhancing innovation in cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe. The conceptual analysis paper also may provide insights on the basic tenets of an ideal framework for enhancing innovation in cultural heritage tourism. The conceptual analysis paper also is used to explore literature that will lead to the contribution on cultural heritage innovation in terms of scope and veracity and also to craft informed policy on cultural heritage tourism development. Laura Simbisai Dongo who is a PhD student at Chinhoyi University of Technology researching on the topic: Developing a framework for innovation in cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe. The study findings would inform and enable policy makers to adopt appropriate policies that would enhance innovation in heritage tourism in Zimbabwe. The development of a framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism products will be a major call to developing countries/nations to take suitable action in the planning and utilisation of limited cultural heritage resources, especially in Zimbabwe.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Richards (2018), cultural heritage tourism is a subset of tourist activities where the primary goals of the traveler are to find, learn about, engage with, and enjoy the destination's tangible and intangible cultural assets or products. It is home to a rich and varied cultural heritage, yet innovation in cultural heritage is conspicuously lacking and understudied (Sirayi & Sifolo, 2020; Richards, 2019; South African Cultural Observatory, 2017; Chili & Ngxongo, 2017). About 40% of foreign visitor arrivals are thought to be the result of cultural heritage tourism, making it a significant sector of the global tourism market (Kaleli & Tamer, 2024 and UNWTO, 2018). Meanwhile, data from the growing body of studies conducted in industrialized nations highlights the significance of cultural heritage innovation for cultural tourism and the growth of tourism in cultural

(Han *et al.*, 2019; Fagerberg, 2016). Noteworthy is that the significance of a framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism may never be appreciated unless its benefits are clearly articulated, understood and unpacked. A close analysis of the focus of many studies conducted to date on cultural heritage (Moyo *et al.*, 2016; Mumbengegwi *et al.*, 2019; Woyo & Woyo, 2019; Linders, 2018; Macheka, 2016), reveal the existence of a gap in the search for a framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism in developing countries like Zimbabwe. Despite a rich array of frameworks for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage development (Medici *et al.*, 2019; Council of Europe, 2019; Beretic *et al.*, 2018; European Commission 2015; Lusiani & Zan, 2013), none has been able to achieve set policy targets in developing countries (Woyo & Woyo, 2019; South African Observatory, 2017). Mugunzva, (2016), Han, Tom, & Jung, (2019) and Fagerberg, (2016) observe that tangible cultural heritage tourism has been under-researched such that the product has become tired yet a lot can be done to keep sites

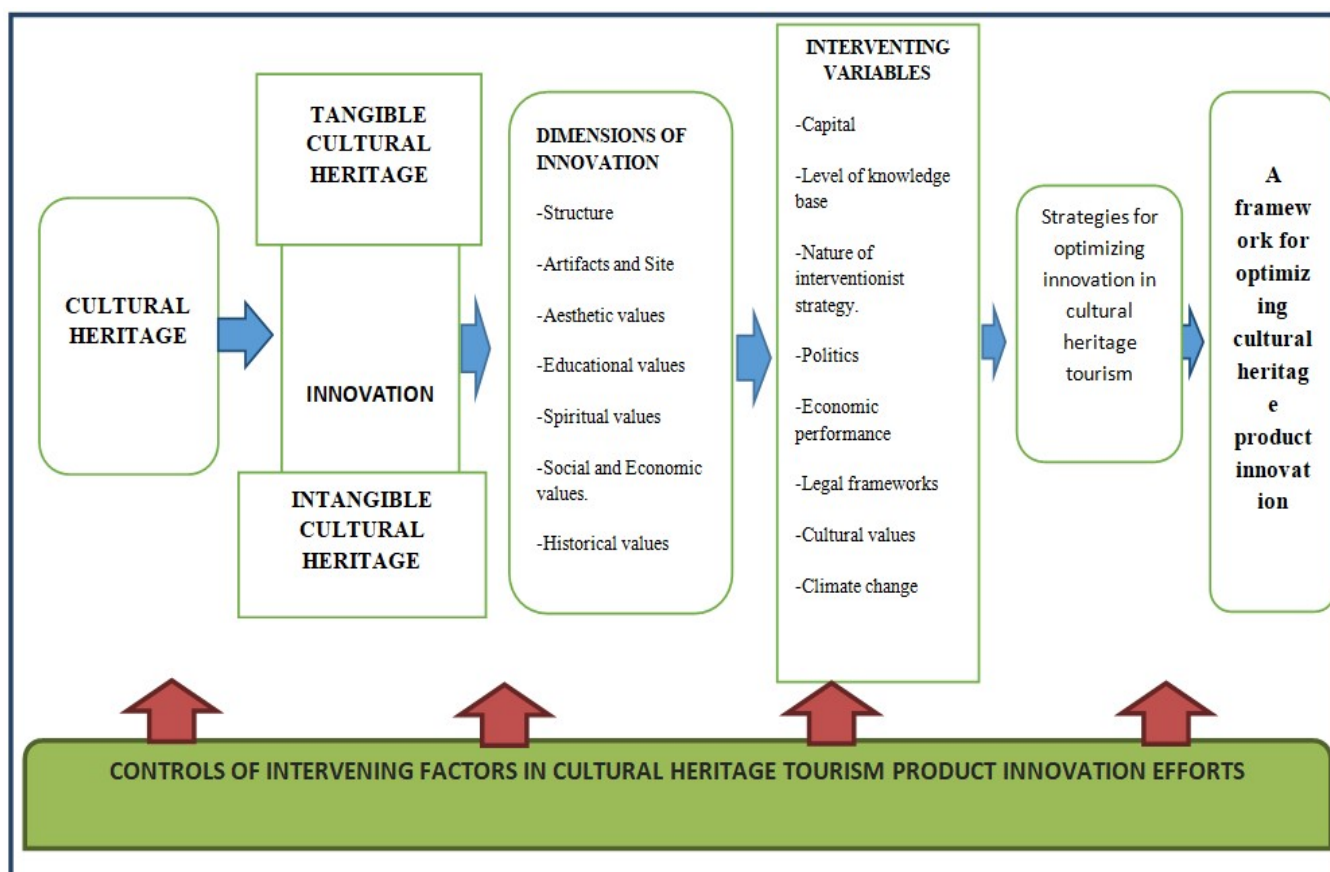
attractive to tourists. Due to cultural heritage's failure to provide the expected returns, cultural tourists have not purchased many cultural heritage products (see Wilson, 2016; Dupraz *et al.*, 2019). Though a great deal of research has been done on the topic of innovation and cultural heritage tourism (Han *et al.*, 2019; Hill, 2017; Bonn *et al.*, 2016; Brandth & Haugen, 2014; Inverson & Jacobsen, 2015), there isn't a single significant study that has looked critically at the institutional and management frameworks that currently support innovation in cultural heritage tourism and developed a framework for doing so in developing nations like Zimbabwe. Without such a structure, stakeholders would not exploit cultural heritage resources sustainably, which would make Zimbabwe's proposals for cultural heritage tourist products less competitive. It is concerning that this could lead to a sustained decline in the value of cultural heritage tourism for shareholders. Consequently, this concept paper, which reviews the literature, is a step toward creating a framework that maximizes innovation in Zimbabwe's historic tourism industry.

BACKGROUND

Heritage seems omnipresent today and operates as a constant process that involves cultural resources and operates massively through social and institutional arrangements at different international, national and local levels (Smith, 2009). In recent years, a host of countries across the globe have actively sought to promote cultural heritage as an alternative form of tourism (see Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Chivandi, Olunjuwon & Mammo, 2020; Kotsiwe & Vossler, 2019). Most tourist destinations have undergone significant changes and embraced the pivotal role of innovation in cultural heritage tourism to ward off the growing international competition among countries and locations (see Chen *et al.*, 2017; Zach & Hill, 2017; Urtasun & Gutiérrez, 2017; Dioni *et al.*, 2018). However, the fly in the ointment has been the successive failures of these initiatives to achieve set policy targets (Woyo & Woyo, 2019) particularly in developing countries like Zimbabwe. Cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe has a lot of potential for economic growth, however the sector has been left undeveloped. There are limited cultural heritage tourism products in Southern Africa, which opens avenues to establish ways of promoting cultural tourism products in this region specifically in Zimbabwe. However, despite the continued failure of many of these afforestation initiatives (Woyo & Woyo, 2018; Richards, 2019; South African Cultural Observatory, 2017; Chivandi *et al.*, 2020), it is noteworthy that the world at large still regards cultural heritage as a viable alternative form of tourism. To date, a plethora of studies on afforestation have been done (see Garcia-Rosell *et al.*, 2017; Woyo & Woyo, 2018; Richards, 2019; South African Cultural Observatory, 2017; Chivandi *et al.*, 2020), however, none of the studies has seen it fit to focus on the development of a framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism in a developing economy such as Zimbabwe. As a result, what is of intellectual curiosity in this paper is to establish a framework for optimizing and enhancing innovation in cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe. Come up with a concept paper building that is towards developing a framework that enhances and optimises innovation in heritage tourism in Zimbabwe.

Optimising innovation for cultural heritage development: The introduction of optimising innovation in culture tourism should be used to change the look of cultural heritage as well as a sustainable system of cultural heritage consumption. The optimisation of innovation should be several categories of the cultural heritage site that include heritage tourism, rural/farm tourism, ecotourism and student exchange programmes between educational institutions. Like any other type of tourism, optimising innovation in culture tourism potential export industry of less developed nations and the major source of foreign exchange earnings in the enormous bulk of these, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development through showcasing of cultural heritage (ICOMOS, 2011). It also has the potential to provide a substantial amount of international earnings for environmental conservation, as well as providing economic gain to cultural heritage of any destination (Arnason, 2011). ICOMAS (2011) further opines that, optimising innovation in culture tourism a form of tourism created on gathering people together, so as to learn

about and comprehend one another, nurturing shared respect and tolerance. Through the development of sustainable businesses and decent employment around heritage sites, optimising innovation in culture tourism gives the required security and stability many people globally to build better lives (ICOMAS, 2011). Optimising innovation in culture tourism gives essential break throughs or opportunities for reasonable income, gender equality, social protection, personal development and social inclusion (IICOMAS, 2-11; IUCN, 2011). Recent advances in technologies has boosted the innovation of business frameworks by leveraging context-awareness, ubiquity and pervasiveness (Felicetti *et al.*, 2019). From the supply side, one of the digital enterprises, the massive flow of data generated by cultural tourists and captured by sensors, devices, cameras across cultural tourism destinations, along with the phases of travel, represents a promising basis for enhancing the tourism firms' capability to personalize their offering of products and services (Ardito *et al.*, 2019). Digitalization has allowed the production and simultaneous consumption (prosumption) of cultural services, ensuring there is a way toward new methods of offering value to tourists, providing consumers cultural tourism services that would be more responsive to their expectations and needs. technologies that are rising and would be interesting for digital enterprises not only to provide support to cultural tourists while performing travel activities but also as core business enablers of marketplaces), in the cultural travel market. Despite there being technological advancements like the countless technologies dispensing continue to lag behind in developing countries especially in cultural heritage sites and in a variety of services for cultural travellers. Limited research has been dedicated to characterizing digital business frameworks of mobile apps for cultural tourism, with particular regard to their value proposition in developing countries. Restored or replaced cultural heritage structures have become common in Europe. Extensive restoration or replacement projects have been undertaken in developed countries. Dubai, for example, has unveiled plans for building a replica of the Taj Mahal, named Taj Arabia, as part of the Falconcity of Wonders project (Medici *et al.*, 2019). Taj Arabia had been planned to be three to four times larger than the original and would also incorporate the famous Mughal Gardens and other architectural landmarks of the original heritage site. However, the plan to have a similar world heritage site in UNSECO and in Dubai has induced a strong criticism in India. The unique Taj Mahal in Agra, India took over 22 years to build in the 17th century and many considers that creating a replica, made of glass, in a city of Dubai, represents an inappropriate and degrading act of duplication of an exquisite, universally important cultural heritage. Critics, however, highlight that this kind of presenting one of the world's most important heritage sites is a bad example of staging an unauthentic heritage with no connection with its true historic or cultural values. The introduction of optimising innovation in culture tourism should be used to change the face of cultural heritage as well as a sustainable way of cultural heritage consumption. The optimisation of innovation should be several categories of the cultural heritage site that include heritage tourism, rural/farm tourism, ecotourism and student exchange programmes between educational institutions. Like any other type of tourism, educational tourism potential export industry of less developed nations and the major source of foreign exchange earnings in the enormous bulk of these, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development through showcasing of cultural heritage (ICOMOS, 2011). It also has the potential to provide a substantial amount of international earnings for environmental conservation, as well as providing economic gain to cultural heritage of any destination (Arnason, 2011). ICOMAS (2011) further opines that, educational tourism a form of tourism created on gathering people together, so as to learn about and comprehend one another, nurturing shared respect and tolerance. Through the development of sustainable businesses and decent employment around heritage sites, educational tourism gives the required security and stability many people globally to build better lives (ICOMAS, 2011). Educational tourism gives essential prospects or opportunities for adequate income, social protection, gender equality, personal development and social inclusion (IICOMAS, 2-11; IUCN, 2011).



Source: Author

Figure 1. The conceptual framework

Many cultural heritage development oriented projects have stumbled along and eventually faded away (CIFOR, 2018). As a result, innovation in cultural heritage in Zimbabwe has remained insignificant to almost no existent (Woyo & Woyo, 2017). Though anecdotal pockets of research are beginning to emerge (see Chen *et al.*, 2017; Zach & Hill, 2017; Urtasun & Gutiérrez, 2017; Dioni *et al.*, 2018), little has been done to interrogate the current cultural heritage institutional management frameworks and the development of a new framework for institutionalisation and management of cultural heritage and innovation in Zimbabwe. Although a host of studies have been done on cultural heritage innovation across the globe (see Chen *et al.*, 2017; Zach & Hill, 2017; Urtasun & Gutiérrez, 2017; Dioni *et al.*, 2018), and a framework for cultural heritage innovation has remained elusive. Existing, institutional and management regimes for cultural heritage innovation have failed to measure up to policy expectations (see Richards, 2019; Lovell *et al.*, 2017; Dupraz *et al.*, 2019). Research on innovation in cultural heritage tourism in the Zimbabwean context is however limited. Existing research studies on cultural and heritage sites in Zimbabwe have been done focussing on the Great Zimbabwe Monument, an attraction located in Southern Zimbabwe (Macheka, 2016; Fontein, 2006; Ndoro, 2001; Matenga, 1998). Dominant issues explored in literature about Zimbabwe include the preservation of cultural and heritage sites, conservation and redressing historical and colonial legacies (Macheka, 2016), and tourist visitation factors (Woyo & Woyo, 2017). The development aspect of cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe is a new phenomenon, which has only begun to attract the attention of scholars (Macheka, 2016). It is against this background that the researcher seeks to come up with a framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe.

Towards a conceptual framework that optimizing innovation in cultural heritage: A framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism product portfolio in developing countries such as Zimbabwe still remains a clutter within the knowledge society.

Therefore, a conceptual framework projected below attempts to illuminate the building blocks in the development of a framework for optimizing and enhancing innovation in cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe. The framework above presents a road map for establishing the framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism product portfolio in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. In qualitative studies, a conceptual framework projects a process (Jabareen, 2009; Tamene, 2016). According to Jabareen the concept possesses specific functions, characteristics, attributes, distinct perspectives, related assumptions and limitations. Tamene, (2016) argues that a conceptual framework is a revisionary theory that guides the study. If concepts are interlinked, they create a conceptual framework (DeVierville, 1998; Tamene, 2016). The framework above depicts a tripartite relationship of concepts. The framework is based on the identified key concepts including the relationship amongst these key concepts. In this study, the process commences with reviewing the available cultural heritage tourism product offering (both tangible and intangible) in Zimbabwe. The reviewing of the product offering will lead to the interrogation of the available dimension for innovation and their constraints. After reviewing the dimensions for innovation and current innovation, the study will isolate the common or key building blocks in each strategy that leads to optimization of cultural heritage tourism product innovation. These isolated elements would then inform the framework for innovation optimization in cultural heritage tourism. However, the framework will also take note of the intervening variables and isolate ways that cultural heritage tourism stakeholders have been coping with the intervening variables in efforts to optimize innovation in cultural heritage tourism product portfolio.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative content analysis is used to group unstructured material into categories or topics based on reliable deduction and interpretation (Tunison, 2023). Through the application of inductive reasoning, themes and categories are extracted from the data by the researcher

after rigorous inspection and continuous comparison. The qualitative part of content analysis establishes linguistic units of analysis (such as words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs) and categories for those units, starting with the text body. Any activity that takes a substantial amount of qualitative data, reduces it, and attempts to make sense of it while attempting to find its fundamental coherence and meaning is referred to as qualitative content analysis. This approach is typically appropriate when there is a dearth of recent theory or research on a particular topic. Content analysis, in the opinion of Matović & Ovesni (2023) reveals crucial trends, themes, and divisions in social reality. The method analyzes social phenomena in an unobtrusive manner as opposed to simulating social interactions or collecting survey data. The paper's data was compiled from a review of journals, books, papers, and other relevant sources looked at an infinite amount of materials on the subject, with the majority of them coming from 2019 to 2022. Additionally, classical literature was looked at, with an emphasis on the authenticity part (Rosendo-Rios, Trott, & Shukla, 2022). Themes were employed by the researcher as a basis for analysis. The results and an explanation of the conclusions based on the specified unit of analysis are presented in the following sections (themes).

Ensuring Validity and reliability: During the conduct of the research paper, methods used include content triangulation method to cross check results. Stake (1995:114) stated that triangulation includes, "data triangulation (from other sources), investigator triangulation (use of observers), methodological triangulation (using multiple sample types and sources)." Data triangulation involves the use of more than one method of collecting data to produce reliable findings (Bell, 2010). Key informers were used to triangulate data received from the Heritage tourism players. Saunders *et al* (2012), state that validity is concerned with the extent to which the research measures what it was intended to measure. Triangulation is the process of checking reliability and completeness of qualitative data by consulting a variety of sources of data relating to the same topic (Walliman, 2011). The researcher also uses interviews, observation and analysis of secondary data as a triangulation method to promote research credibility. Notes and pictures from observation are used to supplement what is highlighted by respondents during the interview process.

DISCUSSIONS

Conceptualising innovation and cultural heritage tourism

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH): Literature supports that Intangible Cultural Heritage is the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills (OrifjonovHusniddin Sohibjon.,2023) as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (Petronela, 2016). The intangible cultural heritage transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. In this context ICH will be used to help in developing a Framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism.

Culture heritage tourism: Collected works highlight that it is a broad field of specialty travel, based on nostalgia for the past and the desire to experience diverse cultural landscapes and forms (Gu, Xiong, Zhang, & Chen, 2023 and Scarpi & Raggiotto, 2023). Cultural heritage tourism includes travel to festivals and other cultural events, visit to sites and monuments, traveling to study nature including folklore or art or pilgrimages. Owing to its role as a carrier of historical values from the past, heritage is viewed as part of the cultural tradition of a society. In this circumstance culture heritage tourism will be used to help in building literature that will developing a Framework for optimizing innovation in culture heritage tourism.

Sites: authors argue that Heritage sites as indicated Jiang, Moyle, Yung, Tao & Scott, (2022) works of humanity or the combined works of nature and human beings, and areas including archaeological sites those of which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

Radical innovation: Findings show that it is the new system blows up the existing system or process and replaces it with something entirely new through creating new markets and value networks. The theory will help to assess how culture heritage tourism can achieve competitive advantage in the market. A. Tiberius, *et al.* (2020), stipulates that the temporal distributions of both publications and citations clearly indicate that the research field is in a stage of growth and that the interest in radical innovation research has strongly increased over the last 20 years. Radical innovation could have been expected that the financial crisis which also had consequences for the real economy could have had an increasing effect on the research output, both because firms had to cut research and development costs or because generating radical innovations could have been a coping strategy. However, such an effect is not detectable. It is unclear what effect the current COVID-19 crisis might have on the innovation-related research output (Kraus, *et al*, 2020).

The key constructs of innovation in the existing product portfolio of cultural culture heritage tourism: Studies point that world-wide, innovation in culture heritage tourism has been taken into account as one of the sectors with the best growth prospects that has positive effects on the number of new working places. The influx of tourists and visitors in different regions has been determined by the attractiveness, value, quantity and quality of tourist attractions in these areas, and the level of knowledge and presentation. Cultural heritage tourism is a vital source of income and heritage site structure. It is fundamental for many parts of Europe and some of them are even indispensable as it is an important factor to improve competitiveness. Cultural heritage tourism destinations give rightful importance to innovation on Cultural heritage tourism, which contributes substantially to its economic and social objectives. European Cultural heritage tourism faces many challenges: global economic crisis, increasing competition with other destinations, the consequences of climate changes or its seasonal nature. Discussions agree that on the one hand, the industry must adapt to innovation developments that will influence demand in the Cultural heritage tourism, on the other hand, it has to face the constraints of the current structure of the sector, its specific characteristics, as well as its economic and social context (Nicula, Spanu and Neagu, 2013). Scholars Tri Anggraini, Sadasivam, Alpana (2015) consider that the culture heritage tourism offers identity to a country and also innovation sustains development. In this domain, if there are any possibilities to bring back to live the potential of the regions through innovations that can give unique products in the heritage tourist market and complementary activities, that have the role to increase heritage site structures, with positive externalities on quality of life. Collected works highlight that cultural heritage has become a significant asset in destinations that seek to package culture as an attraction. Tourists are attracted by the desire to experience the places, cultural activities, cuisines and activities that are said to represent the identity of an ethnic group in a given area of region (Csapo, 2012). Mamimine and Madzikatire (2016) posit that cultural tourism as a domain thrives on the visitor's desires to enjoy the experiences of "Otherness". Sirayi and Sifolo (2020) posit that interest in the traditional cultures, habits, customs, and artefacts of others, together with a general desire to push the boundaries of knowledge are traits coexisting in humanity itself. Cultural heritage tourism manages to combine different resources for tourists' attractions and different activities for their entertainment (Richards, 2018). Studies indicated that researchers and operators alike show more interest in the relevance of local identity and to those distinctive territorial resources that can represent a source of competitive advantage for destinations through established studies of product innovations connected to re-imagining the past (Wu, 2014).

Literature note that cultural tourism development has been identified as a key economic developmental tool for South Africa's key growth

areas (Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013). In Namibia, cultural heritage tourism is placed as a critical development aspect for enhancing community involvement and poverty reduction (MET, 2018; Lapeyre, 2016; Kavita & Saarinen, 2016). The Namibian tourism ministry has used cultural heritage tourism for community participation and poverty eradication. The prospects of cultural heritage tourism are very significant, though in the context of Zimbabwe, the development of the sector is largely neglected (Woyo & Woyo, 2018). Cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe has a lot of potential for economic growth, however the sector has been left undeveloped. Such a status quo does not augur well with the current performance of the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. Studies highlight that tourism has been on the decline since 2000 following the government's land reform exercise. Having reached about 2.1 million arrivals in 1999, this number dropped to 1.87 million and continued to decline (Woyo and Woyo, 2019). By 2005, arrivals were as few as 750,000, and the sector's GDP contribution was less than 3 per cent (ZTA, 2006). Tourism revenues also fell from US\$700 million to US\$43.9 million by 2007 (ZTA, 2008). The land reform was characterised by large-scale dispossession of commercial farms, ranches and wildlife conservancies (Manwa, 2007). Conservancies were quite significant for the tourism industry in Zimbabwe (Manwa, 2003). Due to the land reform exercise, the reliance on wildlife as a draw card for Zimbabwean tourism is no longer viable (Manwa, 2007) as tourists are seeking newer tourism experiences. In circumstances where traditional industries have declined, cultural tourism has been found to be an effective alternative source of revenue for cities and regions (Smith, 2003; Sacco and Blessi, 2007). Based on the above facts, the development of innovation in cultural heritage tourism in Zimbabwe is critical. The development of cultural heritage tourism could be beneficial in terms of increasing the attractiveness of Zimbabwe as a tourism destination (ZTA, 2019). Collected works highlight that Zimbabwe has exceptionally rich tangible and intangible cultural and heritage resources which are under the management of National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ). These cultural resources include the Victoria Falls, Great Zimbabwe, Mana Pools National Park and Khami Ruins which are all listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Their inclusion on the World Heritage list represents a worldwide recognition of historical and cultural significance of Zimbabwe's cultural heritage ecosystem to the world. Great Zimbabwe and Khami Ruins are managed by NMMZ while Victoria Falls and Mana Pools are managed by Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife. The cultural heritage tourism product of Zimbabwe is recognised in literature as unique (Manwa, 2007; Macheke, 2016; Woyo & Woyo, 2017). The Victoria Falls and Great Zimbabwe are famous icons that draw many tourist arrivals to the country (Manwa, 2007).

Innovation in the product portfolio of cultural heritage tourism: Discussion argue that due to its reputation as a catalyst for heritage site structure development, innovation is crucial to the economy. High-tech innovation, however, is even more significant since it offers the potential for value and the creation of jobs in the economy of the future. There are only six widely accepted definitions of technological innovation, according to a study by Bailetti *et al.* (2012) that examined over 90 articles. Technology innovation, according to Bailetti *et al.* (2012), is best described as an investment in a project that brings together and uses specialized people and heterogeneous assets that are intricately related to advancements in scientific and technological knowledge in order to create and capture value for a heritage site structure. By comprehending client demands and how they should be met, design technology can therefore find new market chances while traditional innovations on heritage structure continue to provide their current products and services and contend with several other companies in the marketplace. They apply technology to deal with issues in the real world. The needs of the clients and contemporary technology must be met by these solutions. Technology innovations on heritage structure can also update outdated technology in response to changes in the client environment (Minke, 2022). Studies show that Innovations that optimise cultural heritage on heritage sites will play an important component which potentially create a role in character, identity and image of city. Secondly, it is a

glass or mirror which show the social and intellectual circumstances of our time. Thus, innovations through technology, demographic and economic changes have influence on the cultural heritage and therefore innovation and heritage are not stable and they can transform and change dynamically. Cultural values are define by Mateja, Davis and Pipan (2015) some kind of a territorial capital or developmental source, which is to be experienced and enjoyed not only by tourists, but also by local inhabitants, and which can cause positive economic, social and environmental effects. Even though innovations on heritage and its preservation have long been regarded as opposition to economic development, they are seen as effective partners in the development of a country. The economic value can be determined by measuring the gross added value, the multiplier effects on the economy, tourist visits and their consumption, whereas the social value can be determined by measuring social cohesion, community empowerment, skill and development learning. Authors have added the advantages of innovations potential to the list because they discovered that sustainable heritage management is related to sustaining the complexity and stability of ecosystems.

Literature show that another opinion about the innovation of a country is offered by Balan and Vasile (2015) strongly has influence at the history of economic development. Culture contribution is seen through products, expressions and insights that has the role to improve the social and economic situation of a community. Innovation imply different things like as: habits, customs, folklore, the sentiment of belonging to a nation with certain features, and education. Vasile *et al.* (2015) consider that are many facilities, assure by mass-media, traditional touristic products are attractive for a diminished group of consumers, especially for conservative persons. Furthermore, the residents in their free time are interested in a cultural consumption, which help them to obtain more information about the local heritage Kolesnikova, Salyahov and Fakhruudinov (2015) think that the category immaterial heritage imply different parts as immaterial wealth and immaterial property. The immaterial national wealth is describe as knowledge, level of innovation, traditions, national morale and etc. In the context of the new economy, the economic crisis and the fight between nations to achieve competitive advance in the regional development policy can be considered as a defence tool against the possible threats made by globalization. Literature concludes that heritage structure design and technology innovation. To begin with, it is crucial to comprehend the traits of female innovation in general. Because innovation is the generator of value, jobs, consumption, new investments, and tax revenue, it is crucial to recognize its significance in all economies. Additionally, Heritage structure owners might develop a concept to boost the economy and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Kazungu, 2023). For instance, innovations on heritage structure use their investments to produce new products, new consumption, and jobs (Bailetti *et al.*, 2012). They provide value by making high-quality products that draw buyers. They do not content themselves to create unique and innovative products and services, but they add value to the community. This value added includes job creation and economic security. An entrepreneur is someone who creates innovative products whose functions are the improvement of the economy. Innovations on heritage structure need to receive extra attention because their abilities, aspirations, and willingness are what sustain the heritage site structure. It is crucial to understand that the cultural heritage belief or mindset is a growth-oriented approach that encourages adaptability, creativity, ongoing innovation, and regeneration. Utilizing their creative and problem-solving abilities, innovations on heritage structure generate new opportunities that draw in other cultural heritage sites to share resources and establish robust commercial and cultural heritage support networks (Riedy, 2022).

Mechanisms for infusing and strengthening innovation in the existing main product portfolio of cultural heritage tourism: It has been argued that the cultural heritage tourism can take a digital form, ranging from clearly defined spaces at the museum website to accidental mentions in third-party portals, to serve a digital visit from tourist seeking leisure activities online (Akhtar *et al.* 2021). Other researchers Zheng *et al.* (2017) focused on the prediction of a

tourists' next location using GPS and the research contributes towards tourist attraction administration and real time crowd control. Recognizing the importance of this area, Hardy *et al.* (2017) developed a methodological approach for tracking tourists' movements through smart phones and global positioning systems. This means that innovation in cultural heritage tourism could support processes that include check-ins, check-outs, self-service and personalized experiences, bookings, orders, reception and food delivery just like in other sectors.

Innovation in cultural heritage tourism: Studies reveal that the process of innovation involves radical changes in the structure of the industries due to the diffusion of digital technologies, such as the Internet of things (IoTs), additive manufacturing, big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and augmented and virtual reality (Vial, 2019; Lu *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, a study by Akhtar *et al.* (2021) found that innovation in heritage tourism including: information communication technologies (ICT), achievements in energy generation from renewable resources as the third industrial revolution, the potential for providing information, collected by sensors across assets of interest for sustainable development via Internet of Things (IoT) platforms in real time, opens opportunities for better-informed and participatory decision-making. Moreover, the fourth industrial revolution, comprising of artificial intelligence, machine learning, gene sequencing, nanotechnology and quantum computing and the interaction of innovations across the physical, digital and biological domains is noteworthy (Pleyers & Poncin, 2020). Other studies have investigated the use ICT and interactive mobile technologies in transactions facilitations for guests in cultural based tourism. The use of such innovative technologies can improve service delivery and experience for guests at cultural heritage tourist destinations (Wendy Zhu & Morosan, 2014). Furthermore, social media sites allow for visual representations of destinations through user-generated content such as sharing of images on social media sites, and also allow for visual representations of destinations through user-generated content such as the sharing of images. This is crucial because heritage tourism is one of the significant forms of leisure and more recently an important resource for the tourism industry.

Coussement and Teague (2013) addressed the paradigm shift from management-facing technology to the new customer-facing technology which is very relevant in cultural heritage tourism. This helps the industry to manage clients' expectations better by developing suitable mobile technologies. In addition, Cabiddu *et al.* (2013) looked at the role of Information and Technology (IT) in value co creation and strategic advantage in tourism. Likewise, Buonincontri and Micera (2016) deliberate on how involving tourist as active co-creators of their own experiences has led to the emergence of smart tourist destination where technologies are embedded in all tourist experiences leading to the destination's increased competitiveness. It is crucial for tourism players to implement this for cultural heritage tourism innovation. According to Breukel and Go (2009) modern ICT may offer support to establishing networks in the cultural heritage tourism sector that shape a physical and virtual environment for the delivery of services to developing client demands. This ensures that cultural heritage tourism meets the market demands though other studies indicate the significance of technologies in a strategic manner in terms of social media and online presence. For instance, Leung *et al.*, (2017) and Wozniak *et al.* (2017) examined the importance of strategic social media message strategies. Furthermore, Baggio *et al.* (2011) focused on online web presence strategies whereas Reino *et al.* (2016) advocated for the adoption of interoperability solutions for online tourism distribution. A study by Egger (2013) reveals the vast number of applications that near field communication technologies have for the tourism industry. Similarly, Meehan *et al.* (2016) argued for the use of intelligent context-aware recommender system that takes into account temporal and social context in tour guide applications and Mohammed (2017) discussed the strategic use of customer relationship management systems in tourism as whole. Studies also established that the availability of information freely available online is expected to influence cultural heritage leisure activities, including visits to the

museum (Lu *et al.*, 2022), and to contribute to the destabilization of leisure activities in relation to place and time (Huang *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, digital technologies enable and make it increasingly possible to visit the cultural heritage sites from anywhere, at any time. Some studies argue that authenticity is an important element for selecting destinations and activities (Russo-Spena 2022). Other researchers argue that tourists seek entertaining, enjoyable, transformational, meaningful, memorable, and extraordinary experiences (Duerden *et al.*, 2018), perhaps believing that replicas are sufficient for a good experience (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, Lu *et al.* (2022) established that when heritage tourism context is implemented, technologies have been argued to provide tourists with unique and authentic experiences.

Various researches established that the last decades, virtual reality (VR) has become one of the most prominent innovations in the tourism industry, providing tourism operators with cutting-edge media to enhance the customer experience, while giving tourists the opportunity to have an early and easy access to experiences of a destination or site (Buonincontri & Marasco, 2017). Furthermore, one study noted that in the context of cultural and heritage tourism, virtual reality technologies are recognized to play a relevant role across the whole visitor experience, and to positively influence visitors' satisfaction and loyalty in the post-trip phase (Raimo *et al.*, 2021). Other studies recognise that virtual reality technologies have also been implemented in the tourism industry, especially in attractions, historical collections, heritage sites and museums (Hudson *et al.*, 2019), to provide tourists with novel and immersive experiences (Lin, *et al.*, 2020). Many cultural and heritage attractions have particularly extended their experience portfolio by adding virtual reality applications to enhance the tourist experience before, after and during the visit (Errichiello *et al.*, 2019). However, Pleyers & Poncin (2020) argue that since very few studies have focused on virtual reality tourism experiences through non-immersive technologies, which are easier to use and less costly compared to immersive gear further research is needed to investigate their role in providing a satisfactory environment for consumer experiences in relation to cultural heritage tourism. Moreover, despite the determinant role of perceived authenticity, particularly in heritage tourism, in eliciting tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions, very few studies have focused on the role of perceived object-based and existential authenticity in a virtual reality experience (Duerden *et al.*, 2018) and non-immersive virtual experiences of visiting cultural heritage sites are particularly under-analyzed (Hudson *et al.*, 2019).

Operational framework for optimizing innovation in cultural heritage tourism products in Zimbabwe: Studies have been conducted on operational frameworks in relation to the era of digital transformation and innovation (Caputo *et al.*, 2021). The advent of technology means both researchers and practitioners should deal with the changes in cultural heritage tourism operations (Langley *et al.*, 2020). This indicates that successful cultural heritage tourism depends on understanding the different perspectives of tourism operators, heritage managers, and communities and then establishing common ground, building relationships and forming partnerships to develop a sustainable heritage product. Pellicano *et al.* (2018) described an example of a for cultural heritage tourism model based on stakeholder engagement and value co-creation. This means, indicators should be developed to monitor visitor management actions, to anticipate problems and to manage change. On the same note, one study found that business transformation involves new processes for integrating the growing body of digital technologies and the resulting customer, product and operational data (insights) into the organization to increase value creation capabilities (Russo-Spena & Bifulco, 2021). Therefore, operational framework in cultural heritage tourism must also include meaningful visitor experiences and should convey conservation messages and the spirit of the place. Another study found that a sustainable operational framework involves experiencing a far-reaching shift in their business models due to digitalization (Matzner *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, Raimo *et al.* (2021) established that cultural heritage and the services shaping the cultural industry have been affected by the advent of digital technologies, from basic

issues, such as the introduction of websites, to more complex features shaping visitors' experiences. Cultural heritage tourism should effect transformations, rethinking what customers' value, and creating operating models that are sustainable. Manser Payne *et al.* (2021) established that the recent COVID-19 crisis has accelerated digital transitions, especially of service-based industries, with the result that many organizations have been forced to move rapidly to a digital provision and the cultural heritage tourism sector is no exception. In addition, in the cultural heritage sector, the policy and practitioners debate started to recognize digital transformation as a main area of interest, based on the assumption that the notion of digital transformation demands higher-level socio-technical transitions that are beyond mere digitalization of resources (Amit & Zott, 2020).

Studies have also discovered that an innovation framework in cultural heritage tourism sector should involve a model promoting ways for an organization to create, deliver, and capture value (Teece, 2018). In addition, another study established that digital technologies as innovation have changed the traditional way of doing business through collaboration (Manser Payne *et al.*, 2021). Hence, a framework for cultural heritage tourism sector should envision a model created through innovative technologies that advance stakeholders' management and interactions and engender more productive business collaborations to create and share value. Another study established that an innovative framework in cultural heritage tourism should allow capabilities to be combined across boundaries into innovative new offerings and solutions that create and capture value (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019). A framework for optimizing cultural heritage tourism addresses the noteworthy challenge of how tourist destinations enhance their service delivery can (Bican & Brem, 2020). Furthermore, Langley *et al.* (2020) noted that optimization is determined by involving all stakeholders including their collaboration and integration at all levels. Contrary, one study reveals that but a digital transformation also affects partnerships at the industry and competitor levels (Remane *et al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, new market opportunities have increased uncertainty, with special reference to the service sector, leading to the definition of disruptive digital-based business models showed the impacts of Internet of Everything on business models and highlighted the changes occurring in cultural heritage tourism at all levels (Langley *et al.* 2020). Moreover, a research agenda in the cultural heritage tourism business domain should be set in coming up with an operational framework so as to understand how digital technologies may benefit the industry. Bican and Brem, (2020) argue that scholarly contributions show that the digital transformation of cultural heritage is increasing in parallel with the improvement of the quality of technical equipment and digital tools, and that it creates and addresses customers' accurate reproductions of cultural artifacts and sites. A study by Zhao *et al.*, (2020) found that cultural heritage businesses are particularly challenged by rapid changes in their activities and competitive context; likewise, several examples show that firms in this industry are far from reaching a standard in business models. Another study discovered that the cultural heritage tourism industry requires a logic that embeds multiple aspects (Russo-Spena & Bifulco, 2021). Furthermore, many organizations that are part of the cultural industry are still more "welfare-dependent" or "publicly funded" and technologies represent new levers for incorporating a commercial logic and defining appropriate ways to compete in the new context. A study by Zhao *et al.* (2020) found that investments in digital technologies in cultural heritage entities have been encouraged and are still increasing. For instance in 2014, a pool of experts, including Nick Poole the chief executive of the Collections Trust, an organization operating with a network of 23,000 museums and Kimmo Levä the secretary general of the Finnish Museums Association suggested investing in new technologies to digitize all functions (NEMO, 2014). Similarly, the Museum Sector Alliance invited museums to capture all the potentialities brought by new technology infrastructures, especially in countries with a digital divide in this sector (e.g. Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania) due to a lack of investments (Mu.Sa, 2017). In addition, the UK government planned to invest £19 million to increase the accessibility of Britain's

cultural treasures, and called for increased investment to adapt to offering to new conditions (NEMO, 2020b). Another study established that for cultural heritage tourism, an operational framework encompassing digitalization is meant to be a not-to-be-missed step in the management of museums and this idea was addressed in the Smithsonian Magazine in 2013 to stress the universality in the use of digital technology to innovate its offering and to let people share in museums' research (Stromberg, 2013). Furthermore, NEMO (2020c) considered the obstacles to overcome in the innovative operational framework in cultural heritage tourism.

Another study revealed that regarding navigation strategies the hotels optimize their websites to enhance the power of travel search engines and keyword search (Assiri & Shamsudeen, 2019). Moreover, one study found that one key goal of adopting new technologies is to achieve high levels of user satisfaction (Huertas, 2018). Another study unearthed a large amount of research focuses on the consumers, ranging from their expectation, attitudes and behaviours towards various forms of technologies in different tourism and hospitality settings (Balouchi *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, travelers would benefit if the hotel websites can provide information to make one-stop shopping possible and facilitate tourism development in the destination by adding price information so that consumers can get an immediate idea of the cost of their stay (Assiri & Shamsudeen, 2019). Likely innovation cultural heritage tourism framework should therefore, include virtual tours, travel schedules and plans, and web tools, if sites do not have them already. In addition, an original study found that virtual tours would familiarize customers with the facilities and surrounding environment, which would in turn enhance the guest's virtual experience and intention to stay in the hotel and extra revenue can be gained through providing the itinerary arrangement and attraction and shopping information to the travelers (Assiri & Shamsudeen, 2019). Using Web tools such as Twitter and Facebook can help to promote the cultural heritage tourism globally by sending the most updated information to the customers and regard to online processing hoteliers should add interactivity features so that customers' problems can be resolved immediately and save the cost of communication such as telephone and fax (Russo-Spena *et al.*, 2022). An innovative operating framework is therefore, relevant to cultural heritage tourism for sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This research study concluded that cultural heritage tourism is an important facet of the tourism industry. The development of cultural heritage tourism must provide economic benefits to all stakeholders, without negatively affecting the resources available for future generations. Moreover, an operational framework effecting innovative technologies plays a vital role in the achievement sustainability in cultural heritage tourism. Furthermore, various forms of technologies in different tourism and hospitality settings and interactions among tourism, environment and travelers have gained researchers and practitioners' attention. This then calls for sustainability in cultural heritage tourism like all other sectors viable through a viable innovation operational framework.

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