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Tourists' Activities and their Impacts on Chinhoyi Caves Heritage Site, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The growing interest in heritage tourism since the 1990s has increased tourist traffic and its related activities at heritage sites. Detrimental effects have been noted at some heritage sites prompting the need to protect such sites for tourism purposes. However; there are minimal studies on the impacts of tourists' activities at heritage sites especially in developing countries. In Zimbabwe, Chinhoyi caves are one site that holds heritage value and tourists frequent it to partake in heritage tourism. This research is an empirical study which explores the impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites using a case study of the Chinhoyi caves. In-depth interviews were carried out to collect data from fifteen tourists and five employees of the Zimbabwe National Parks Authority stationed at the Chinhoyi Caves. With the aid of ATLAS.ti 8, the responses were extracted, presented and analysed. The main findings were that there are a number of both consumptive and non-consumptive tourist activities taking place at Chinhoyi Caves. These are having both positive impacts and negative impacts that need attention if the value of the heritage site is to develop sustainably for the benefit of future generations. These are new findings about tourism and its impacts on these heritage sites in Zimbabwe making them valuable for the sustainable development of such sites in Zimbabwe and beyond that might be facing similar challenges.

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1. Introduction

Heritage sites are key tourism attractions that are enjoying a growing visitation rate (Pederson, 2002). Increasing visitation also demands an increasing obligation to protect as most of the heritage sites are sensitive and are easily destroyed through tourism activities. Despite the need to promote tourism at heritage sites, the UNESCO Convention argues that protection must be prioritised over promotion hence the listing of heritage sites in danger. The question is, whilst the instruments to protect heritage sites are in place at the international level where Zimbabwe is a signatory, to what extent are the local heritage sites being protected from human activities as tourist numbers to these sites continue to increase?

Tourism generates revenue and draws world attention to the importance of world heritage sites and how they may be preserved (Drost, 1996). Since the 1970s, tourists' taste for heritage tourism has been increasing (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000) with detrimental effects on the heritage sites. With the sustainable development concept gaining popularity in managing destinations, it has become necessary to re-examine tourism development particularly the environmental and cultural integrity of heritage sites (Drost, 1996). According to Alberts and Hazen (2019), across the globe, historically significant sites are in perilous situations and in order to help prevent the distraction of such sites, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has designed an international agreement to identify and protect natural and cultural sites of outstanding cultural value.

The deterioration of heritage sites due to tourist activities is a global problem. Examples include Venice lagoon (Harrison & Hitchcock, 2005), and Donostia-San Sebastian city in Spain (Garcia-Hernandez, Calle-Vaquero & Yubero, 2017). Afghanistan's Archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley and Minaret and Jam, Yemen's historic town of Zabi, Jerusalem, Ecuador's Galapagos Islands and Pakistanian Fort and Shalamar gardens (UNESCO, 2008), Lamu in Kenya and the Zanzibar Islands (Okech, 2010), and Great Zimbabwe (Chipungu et al., 2016). But what exactly do tourists do at these attractions and/or destinations that have made it essential for UNESCO to promulgate laws to conserve heritage sites?

1.1. Tourist Activities

There are various views of tourist activities. Other scholars view them from a financial perspective where activities are tourism packages, events and offerings that a destination offers to its visitors for entertainment usually at a fee (Ciolac, Csoz & Merce, 2011; Rahim et al., 2010; Alejziak, 2013; Hughes, 2011). Examples include cottages rentals, going to a

zoo or national park, use of local transport, and trying out local cuisine among many others (Ciolac et al., 2011; Marrocu et al., 2015).

Other scholars such as Biernat (2011) go beyond the financial meaning by defining activities as the total acts and actions of people associated with participation in tourism. These range from actual activities that the tourist visits a destination to do, to other secondary activities that accompany certain activities such as taking pictures, buying artefacts and collecting memorabilia, crime, vandalism, and pollution amongst others. In this study tourists' activities are defined by Biernat (2011) that is the total acts and actions of people associated with participation in tourism.

The first set of activities is identified broadly as vandalism where there is wilful or malicious damage to property, such as equipment or buildings (Scot et al., 2007). Types of vandalism include graffiti, trash dumping, light smashing, removing/bending signage or ornamentation, breaking windows, or other defacing of property (Ceccato & Haining, 2005). Vandalism can also cover such activities as carving initials into public park trees, and public benches, writing names on store windows with a marker, breaking a building's windows, and knocking over grave markers (Albrecht, 2016). While vandalism involves damaging property, it is not always the same as the crime of "destruction of property" or "damage to property." Cohen (1973) distinguished between vindictive vandalism (a form of vengeance), play vandalism (breaking windows, graffiti), tactical vandalism (sabotage in the workplace) and malicious vandalism (out of boredom or frustration).

The second set of common tourist activities is photography which endorses good memories about travel destinations and reflects travelling experiences through pictures (Berger et al., 2007). Taking a photograph becomes a part of tourism activities which are rooted deeply in tourists' experiences (Cederholm, 2004). Most modern tourists take photographs of their destinations and share both photographs and their travel experiences with others usually through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc. (Groves & Timothy, 2001). According to Ateljevic (2013), photography has an ambivalent relationship with tourism.

Many destinations visited have a strong identity and sense of place, which is embodied in the history, physical form and social activity, photography selectively extracts from this multifaceted expression (Grooves & Timothy, 2001). Photography is one of the most common things tourists do when they visit a destination, in order to keep memories of the place (Berger, 2007). According to Cederholm (2004), taking pictures of destinations is a more sustainable way of gathering attributes to remind tourists of their visit to a particular destination as opposed to collecting physical elements and subtracting them from a destination's aesthetics. Garrod (2008), goes on to mention that despite photography being a sustainable way of gathering memories at heritage sites, the act of taking pictures may be found to be unethical at some cultural heritage sites. Hence in this light photography may be a common tourist activity at other destinations but it may actually be a taboo culturally at some heritage sites.

Thirdly there is pollution as a tourist activity (Brevik & Burgess, 2013). In regions with elevated levels of tourist operations and attractive natural attractions, waste disposal is a severe issue and inappropriate disposal can be a significant natural environment despoiler such as waterways, picturesque regions and roadsides. For instance, it is estimated that cruise ships in the Caribbean generate more than 70,000 tonnes of waste every year. Massive waste can degrade the physical

appearance of the water and shoreline and cause the death of marine animals.

According to Brevik and Burgess (2013), trekking visitors produce a lot of waste in hill regions. Leave their garbage, oxygen cylinders and even camping facilities on the trip. Such practices degrade the environment in distant regions with few waste collection or disposal installations, with all the detritus typical of the developed world. Brevik and Burgess (2013) also mention that some trails in the Peruvian Andes and in Nepal frequently visited by tourists have been nicknamed “Coca-Cola trail” and “Toilet paper trail” because of the amount of coca cola empty cans and toilet paper left behind by tourists along these trails. Tourists visit attractions mostly with the intention of seeing and experiencing the atmosphere but other activities like littering and other land polluting practices may arise and these also qualify to be named tourist activities.

Fourthly there is sightseeing where tourists travel to experience and appreciate the religion, culture, historical resources, nature and ecological resources along the road (Lee, 2011). It is a tourist activity associated with just seeing things within a destination area. Sightseeing is a non-consumptive tourist activity which normally comes hand in glove with photography and trail walking (Chang, 2009). According to Chen et al. (2014), sightseeing is an ecological tourist activity which means that the tourists can integrate with nature and have a visual perception of the environment by walking or other simple tools.

Sightseeing is considered an environmentally friendly tourist activity because there is limited direct interaction with the physical elements of a tourist sight, just seeing and taking pictures. According to MacCannell (2011), sightseeing is one of the tourist activities that speak to sustainability. The fact that the natural state of a destination is being maintained and the limited interaction with humans means that it is going to last longer hence future generations will enjoy seeing the same sight the same way previous generations saw it.

The other common tourist activity identified is the collection of historic artefacts especially at heritage sites. According to the Historic Artefact Collections Management Policy (2014), historic artefacts refer to portable objects that have been assessed to be of historic significance through their cultural and heritage value at a site or community that are not either archives or structural features examples of these would include crockery, furniture and paintings. Individuals participate in artefact collection for several reasons. Some as a hobby to enrich a personal collection and some do it for business, so they can sell the findings to those that perceive their values (Dumas et al., 2015).

According to McKinnon (2015), there are also cultural tourism divers who visit places like Chuuk Lagoon in the Federated States of Micronesia to see the remaining submerged aircraft and shipwrecks from the 2nd World War. However, some tourists keen on having souvenirs try to loot from the artefacts. According to McKinnon (2015), this type of tourism comes with human activities such as vandalism, looting or moving of artefacts, diving, snorkelling, hook and line fishing and spearfishing.

2. Statement of the Problem

Human activities are damaging world heritage sites and threatening sustainable tourism development (Chipungu et al., 2016). Globally, research has been carried out on the impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites and, out of the listed UNESCO World Heritage sites, 54 sites have been enlisted to be in danger making up 5% of the total listed (UNESCO, 2017). If this problem persists, heritage sites will lose tourism value and hence their ability to contribute to the national income. Therefore this study seeks to explore the impacts of tourist activities at heritage sites.

3. Research Objectives

1. To establish the various tourist activities at heritage sites;
2. To assess the impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites;
3. To suggest strategies that may be adopted to minimise the negative impacts of tourist activities at heritage sites.

4. Research Methods

An interview guide was designed and administered to fifteen (15) randomly and conveniently selected tourists at the study site who met during the five (5) day data collection period. The same interview guide was administered to five (5) members of staff that work at the heritage site. The staff members were purposefully selected with guides making the majority as they are in constant touch with the tourists. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 75 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded for later transcription verbatim.

The interviews were complemented by unplanned observation where the researchers took evidence of tourists' activities at the study site. The observations were recorded in the form of notes and pictures for later use.

The twenty interviews were transcribed verbatim and uploaded into ATLAS.ti 8. The pictures were also uploaded into ATLAS.ti 8. Data was coded in ATLAS to come up with themes that address the objectives of the study.

5. Results and Discussion

This study sought to explore the impacts of tourist activities at heritage sites in Zimbabwe. The phrase tourist activity is used herein to refer to the total acts and actions of people associated with tourism participation. In order to achieve this main objective three specific objectives were developed. These are i) to establish the various tourist activities at heritage sites; ii) to assess the impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites; and iii) to suggest strategies that may be adopted to minimise the negative impacts of tourist activities at heritage sites.

5.1. Tourist activities at Heritage Site

A number of activities were carried out by tourists at heritage sites in Zimbabwe. These were summed into four themes; that is consumptive land-based activities, non-consumptive land-based activities, consumptive water-based activities and

non-consumptive water-based activities.

5.1.1. Consumptive land-based activities

Tourists who visited Chinhoyi Caves engaged in a number of activities that are deemed consumptive in nature as they had the ability to alter the physical environment of the tourist destination and its overall outlook. The following five statements from research participants sum up the nature of the consumptive activities:

I saw people scribbling their names, dates and so on, on rocks, stairs, tree trunks and aloe vera leaves as mementos.

Someone was smoking and they dumped their cigarette stub on the ground.

Some visitors paint colours on rocks and tie pieces of cloth and leave behind clay pots for rituals

Some people destroy vegetation when they drive on undesignated paths and use twigs to start fires for braai.

Some tourists collect rocks, soil and water as specimens for research and as souvenirs.

These are activities that tourists engage in on land that involves harvesting and/or removal of something that alters the original state of the study site. From these activities, some can be perceived as artistic in nature. Art in its broadest sense is a form of communication, it means what the artist wants it to mean, and this meaning is shaped by the materials, techniques, and forms it makes use of, as well as the ideas and feelings it creates in its viewers, it is also an act of expressing feelings, thoughts, and observations (Hauser, 2012). The most common forms of art being done by tourists at Chinhoyi Caves are graffiti, painting and drawing.

According to Bates (2014), graffiti comes from the Italian word *graffiare*, which means ‘to scratch on a surface.’ It can be considered as a form of art as indicated by Sequera (2016). Scratching on surfaces is a very common activity at the Chinhoyi caves as revealed by both interviews and observation. Research participants indicated that they either were the ones that participated in graffiti or they saw others doing it or they noticed it on the surface on which it was displayed.

The following picture collage shows evidence of graffiti on a tree trunk and aloe vera plant at the study site.



Figure 1. Evidence of graffiti on tree trunk and aloe vera plant

Drawing is a form of visual art in which a person uses various drawing instruments to mark paper or another two-dimensional medium (Fava, 2011). Drawings can be produced using a wide variety of drawing instruments, including pen and ink, charcoal, chalk, pastels, metalpoint, silverpoint, graphite point, coloured crayons, as well as graver, burin or etching needles for incised types of drawing (Fava, 2011). Drawing is also another form of art done by tourists at the Chinhoyi caves

According to Hauser (2012), painting is the action or skill of using paint, either in a picture or as decoration. Painting can be done using coloured paint or pastels. Painting is a form of art where the artist tries to communicate through art and express his feelings. The researcher managed to gather that painting is also one of the activities done by tourists at the Chinhoyi caves although not very prominent. The activity is not very common due to the requirement of apparatus like paint which under normal circumstances are not permitted to enter the premises. However, some Sangomas are permitted to enter the study site with their pots and apparatus for rituals and are granted access to the caves. It is in such cases that paintings and other forms of drawings are made on the surface as part of cultural traditions or rituals.

The painting activity is not very common but it is significant enough to mention because it translates into the traditional significance of the study site. The research participants highlighted that the rituals are done in an effort to appease the ancestral spirits that reside in the Chinhoyi caves. The researcher discovered that the traditional stories and paintings associated with traditional culture were of interest to the tourists. Hence this art seemed to be adding to the experience at the Chinhoyi Caves as it captivated the tourists.

Bright and Porter (2004) posit that consumptive tourist activities require management as there is always a risk of depleting

the resource, harassment, associated littering and pollution. However, according to Sequera (2016) acts such as graffiti, painting and drawing may actually interpret how individuals are keen on adding character to a place therefore tourists may draw on surfaces to add to what others will see when they come. Whether or not this has a negative or positive impact might not bother them and all that matters is leaving a mark. These findings are consistent with literature that argues that after visiting a destination tourists always want to leave a mark as a memento (Branscome, 2011).

From the research participants' views, it is evident that there was also wilful degradation of natural resources through depletion of resources such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems; habitat destruction; the extinction of wildlife; and pollution at the Chinhoyi caves. The existence of these activities at the study site supports existing literature. For instance, Burke and Long (2015) stated that some individuals may just kick things like dustbins in parks for no reason and they classified it as an act of vandalism.

5.1.2. Non-consumptive land-based activities

Tourists to Chinhoyi Caves also engaged in a number of activities that are deemed non-consumptive in nature. These activities take nothing but memories from the site thus they are not detrimental to the site as they leave it as was when they visited it. The following statements from research participants sum up the nature of non-consumptive activities at the study site:

"I came to see the caves and the sleeping pool then I took pictures"

"I came to observe what people were doing"

"Some people come to see the lions and took pictures of them"

"I came to admire nature"

"Some tourists have sex in the dark caves corners"

"I saw some people taking pictures of themselves kissing"

The non-consumptive land-based activities can be classified as either viewing or expression of affection. Viewing involves the opportunity to see something for example art of scenery (Hughes, 2011). According to Lee (2011), viewing is the same as sightseeing where people travel in order to experience and appreciate the religion, culture, historical resources, nature and ecological resources. At the Chinhoyi caves, tourists wanted to see the lions, sleeping pool, caves and nature. Sightseeing also leads to other secondary tourist activities such as photography because tourists want to capture the moment and carry photographs as mementos. Sightseeing and photography seem to complement each other. Visitors that participated in sightseeing made it a point to mention that they took pictures of the area and pictures of themselves. Such a relationship between the two activities goes on to support the previously mentioned concept of tourist activities birthing secondary activities and this is an example of sightseeing giving rise to photography (Biernat, 2011).

Apart from viewing, there is an expression of affection as a non-consumptive land activity at Chinhoyi caves. Karandashez (2019) posits that the expression of affection involves showing a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something. The expression can be expressed physically for example people holding hands, hugging, leaning into each other, kissing,

and engaging in sexual intercourse amongst other expressions.

Expression of affection is not a typical tourist activity that one would expect at a heritage site and it may be difficult to understand the motive behind the action especially where no one admitted that they expressed affection. However; one participant who was an employee at the study site explained that people probably choose to have sex in the dark caves because it has a lot of hidden and dark corners. This act may therefore be perceived to be a product of adventure and the desire to explore the unknown world which is a common trait among tourists (Kuada, 2006; Moseley, Sturgis, & Wheeler, 2007).

5.1.3. Consumptive water-based tourist activities

Findings indicated that tourists took part in the following water-based activities that can be classified as consumptive in nature: catching fish, collecting pebbles in the sleeping pool, throwing stones into the sleeping pool and collecting water samples. The researchers managed to gather that most of these water-based tourist activities that were mentioned were prohibited. One research participant actually said:

“Some people jump over the fence just so they can catch fish from the sleeping pool or take pebbles from the pool”

The fact that individuals have to trespass in order to catch the fish and collect the water or pebbles indicates the unlawfulness of the act. Such acts communicate the need for more control mechanisms because evidently, physical barriers are not communicating the message they are supposed to communicate effectively. Such behaviour may be triggered by a sense of adventure or rebellion (Hammond, 2010). The fact that the heritage site has closed off access to the pool can trigger curiosity and an edge to stand out and do what others have not done before, this may be one of the reasons why tourists engage in such activities.

5.1.4. Non- consumptive water based activities

These are activities that tourists take part in any water body without taking anything away from it and in the case of Chinhoyi caves these include, diving and viewing. Some tourists actually adhere to the regulations on the heritage site and follow the correct protocol if for some reason they want to access the caves. According to the employees divers normally come to explore the depths of the blue pool. The research participants added that some divers did it as a recreational adventure activity. Others dived for research purposes. The researchers gathered that the Chinhoyi caves must be of great significance because it attracts professional divers to come and explore it and some go on to even publish their findings which may help promote the popularity of the site as a tourist destination. Other tourists simply admire the pool and take pictures. This does not remove anything from the pool. The researchers observed an element of sustainability from these non-consumptive tourist activities because they do not take away from the heritage site, therefore ensuring its ability to continue satisfying the needs of present generations and still exist to fulfil the needs of future generations.

Findings from this study are consistent with what other scholars found elsewhere. For example activities like art (Hauser, 2012), pollution (Reed & Xu, 2017; Brevick & Burgess, 2013), collection of souvenirs (Berger, 2007; Houlbrook, 2017), photography (Ateljevic, 2013), sightseeing (Mac Cannell, 2011), graffiti (Bates, 2014), and vandalism (Scott, 2007). The most commonly mentioned tourist activities were those that people actually pay to do such as cave viewing and seeing the lions but as the interview progressed other activities that would normally be overlooked were highlighted such as pollution, vandalism, trespassing, and fishing, and it's normally these activities that pose most of the impacts at the Chinhoyi Caves heritage site.

5.2. The impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites

The second objective of the study was to assess the impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites

Upon looking at the data collected, themes arose portraying the various impacts of tourist activities being done at the Chinhoyi caves. The researcher chose to group the impacts into negative land-based impacts, negative water-based impacts and positive impacts.

5.2.1. Negative land-based impacts

The following views by research participants seem to point towards negative land-based impacts of tourist activities at the Chinhoyi Caves:

"There is destruction of beauty of flora and fauna in the caves"

"Land degradation can be one of the impacts of some of these tourist activities, rocks may also wear out"

"Some plants have died or are on the verge of dying because of all the writings on them, you can notice that on some of the aloe vera plants"

"The weathering process may accelerate due to pressure and the caves may end up collapsing"

"The Chinhoyi caves seem to be moving away from their authentic state and I think the things people are doing to it are the main reason. Things like writing and drawing all over the place"

"The Chinhoyi caves are losing their authenticity due to the fact that stairs and lights were put in there, already they are no longer in their natural state and to top it of people who visit put marks all over the place be it on rocks or on vegetation which is also contributing to the loss of authenticity"

The researchers gathered that tourists to the Chinhoyi caves are voicing the gradual loss of aesthetic value of the site. UNEP (1997) acknowledges that some tourist activities result in the loss of a destination's appeal. However, not all tourists agree that some activities are detrimental to the development of the destination. This diversion of views is not unique to Chinhoyi Caves as scholars such as Chazigiannis (2015), Sequera (2016) and Bhati and Pearce (2016) noted

on impacts of graffiti that some tourists view it as degrading to the site whilst others view it as an additional attraction to the destination.

Environmental degradation is also evident to date at the heritage site, tourist activity impacts have already started to show in the form of things like the death of plant species due to acts of vandalism and graffiti. Tourists may not intend to damage the environment but some of their activities result in it. One research participant mentioned that some of the tourists' cars temple on plant life just so individuals can get to braai spots. This is not unique to Chinhoyi caves as Marikar (2012) noted that environmental degradation is a common result of some tourists' activities.

The Chinhoyi caves are a rock structure hence they are subject to weathering. Apart from chemical weathering which is predominant in this limestone structure, it can also be a victim of mechanical weathering. As highlighted by some research participants, pressure being subjected to the structure may result in its eventual collapse. The researchers also observed that tourists sometimes climb on top of the rock structures to take photos and sometimes they sit on the rocks despite there being some benches to rest on. This in itself is an indication of neglect on the part of the tourists because they seem to know the long-term effects of their actions and they still continue to participate in activities that may lead to the eventual collapse of the site. Apart from the natural and unlawful destruction of the site by natural elements and tourists respectively, Chinhoyi Caves have been structurally altered intentionally for tourism purposes. The site now has electricity and staircases meant to make it accessible.

Loss of authenticity is another apparent impact of tourist activities at the Chinhoyi caves. It involves a destination losing its original state due to various alterations normally from human activities (Thomas & Vesna, 2010). The stairs and electricity are good examples of factors leading to the loss of authenticity of the site.

5.2.2. Water-based negative impacts

The sleeping pool at the Chinhoyi caves has also fallen victim to tourist activity impacts and some of the cases include; loss of aquatic life and possible reduction of the pool's volume.

Aquatic life in the Chinhoyi Caves sleeping pool includes mainly fish. The fish add to the total thrill of visiting the Chinhoyi caves and seeing the blue pool. However, according to research participants, the fish are not safe from the tourists who come to visit despite being protected by barriers around the pool and a sign prohibiting entry but trespassing being one of the mentioned tourist activities is how tourists manage to gain access to the pool. One research participant mentioned that:

"Individuals triggered by curiosity sometimes climb over the fence that we put to block access to the pool. They jump over the fence and some try to catch the fish and in some cases others want to swim in the pool"

"Some people threw bottle caps and litter into the pool which I think is one of the reasons why some fish end up dying because they would have suffocated from the plastic."

As such the loss of aquatic life at the pool can be attributed to water pollution. This is common in the tourism industry as tourists always try to find a way of interfering with tourism resources even under the strictest conditions.

Most of the research participants mentioned a tourist activity of throwing stones into the sleeping pool. Apparently, people do it and make wishes and this is a trend that is slowly gathering momentum at the site. Others do it just to see what would happen to the mysteriously coloured water of the pool. If this trend continues, the size of the pool will be reduced in volume and the value of the attraction will diminish.

5.2.3. Positive tourism impacts

Apart from the negative impacts of tourism at the site, there were also some notable positive impacts which explain the value of tourism to these sites in the first place (Chris et al., 2015). One research participant said:

“I think tourist activities however also benefit the site. Look at it this way, we paid to get in here, others paid to go and see the lions that's a lot of money coming in and the people running this place are possibly channeling most of it to the maintenance of the site”

When tourists visit the Chinhoyi caves and pay fees to see the caves, use the facility, see the lions and other activities means that finances are being raised which will aid in the maintenance of the heritage site. The use of locally generated financial resources to maintain an attraction is a common practice in the tourism industry (Afrin et al., 2013).

In addition to financial benefits, tourism at the caves has led to global marketing of the site. The following response seems to sum up views on tourism and marketing:

“I think the fact that we take pictures and post on social media helps to market the destination because I knew about this place through my friends who were posting their pictures”

Taking pictures was one of the tourists' activities that was mentioned by most of the research participants. Some of the research participants were able to draw a benefit from the tourist activity and this involves global recognition of the Chinhoyi Caves through accessing posted pictures of the site on social media. Thus social media is becoming a fast global marketing tool for heritage sites with minimal investment from the authorities in marketing it.

5.3. Strategies to minimize the negative impacts of tourist activities

The third and last objective of the study was to suggest strategies that may be adopted to minimise the negative impacts of tourist activities at heritage sites. The research participants suggested a number of strategies to minimise the negative impacts of tourists on the heritage site. These include putting up regulatory signs, putting up surveillance, putting up restrictive barriers, and introducing strict fines for people who don't comply with set regulations.

Some of the recommended solutions were already in use at the site, however, it was observed that these need to be

revisited and be aligned with the current trends hence making them relevant.

6. Conclusion

The study sought to explore the impacts of tourist activities at heritage sites (Chinhoyi Caves). There are various tourist activities being done at the Chinhoyi Caves with some being consumptive and others non-consumptive in nature. Thus, the activities' impacts on the site also vary. Whilst there are a few positive impacts, more negative tourism impacts were noted at the site which needs to be managed using some of the strategies given. Overall, tourist activities at the Chinhoyi caves are having a great negative impact on the heritage site which if not addressed may lead to a total loss of value of this heritage tourism site in Zimbabwe.

From the study, it can be recommended that a proper system for controlling what tourists do when they visit the heritage site should be set up to minimise the noted negative impacts.

However, this study was qualitative in nature and hence was limited to the participants' views and researchers' observations. It would be equally critical that other quantitative studies be done to measure the extent to which the noted tourist activities are impacting the heritage site as this would generate knowledge on the significance of these impacts of the site and the tourism industry at large. Quantitative studies will also determine which impacts need to be dealt with urgently and more intensely.

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