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Innovation in small accommodation businesses: A comparative study of Zimbabwe and South Africa

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Orientation: The accommodation sector has been identified as the most competitive and innovative segment of the tourism offer. However, the uncertainty with regard to persistent fierce competition that often shrouds small accommodation businesses (SABs) from their large business counterparts necessitates the identification and understanding of sustainable drivers of innovation to ensure their survival.

Research purpose: The main purpose of this study was to examine and compare the influence of selected drivers (market and learning orientations [LOs]) on innovation in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Motivation of the study: This study was motivated by the absence of empirical evidence in establishing and comparing the relationship between market and LOs and innovation in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Research design, approach and method: This study used a descriptive cross-sectional comparative research design. Using simple random sampling, two samples each of 139 from SABs in Manicaland in Zimbabwe and the Free State province in South Africa were analysed using one-way ANOVA, Pearson product-moment correlations and regression analysis.

Main findings: The results demonstrate that market and LOs influence innovation in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Practical/managerial implications: In view of the strong association between market and LOs and innovation, owners or managers of SABs should embrace and invest more in these orientations to stimulate sustainable innovative behaviour.

Contribution/value-add: This study adds richness to extant research by affirming market and LOs as drivers of innovation in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Keywords: innovation; market orientation; learning orientation; small accommodation businesses; developing economies.

Introduction

Globally, tourism is associated with growth both in terms of the number of travellers and expenditure, and such growth is not only confined to mature markets but also to less developed economies (World Travel Tourism Council 2018). Indeed, with the support from institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, tourism has become an indispensable development strategy for less developed countries. In South Africa and Zimbabwe, tourism contributes 9% and 6.3% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 10% and 3.7% to employment, respectively (World Travel Tourism Council 2018). Such contributions to socio-economic development are punctuated with fierce competition across all business sizes. Large hotel brands such as Holiday Inn and Miekles in Zimbabwe and Hilton and Protea in South Africa are perceived to dominate guesthouses, timeshare and bed and breakfast establishments collectively referred to as small accommodation businesses (SABs) (Kim & Oh 2004; Ncube, Sibanda & Maunganidze 2013). In the context of this study, an SAB refers to a business that is operated by an individual or small group of people, is registered and has 100 or fewer employees including the proprietor in the case of Zimbabwe and less than 200 for South Africa. In their efforts to compete with large businesses, small businesses face two major disadvantages, namely liabilities of smallness (inability to achieve economies of scale and scope and limited market presence and power) and newness (lack of reputation and no corporate history) (Beaver & Brayn, 2014:28; Kremel 2017:51). Accordingly, these liabilities imply that SABs compete from a disadvantaged position and

therefore need to embrace survival strategies. Small tourism businesses have been observed to have a high proclivity to innovation (Žana Čivre & Gomezelj Omerzel 2015:312), and invariably SABs are also conceived to engage in innovation strategies to survive the intense competition inherent in the sector. The adoption of such innovative strategies by SABs is likely to give them the much-needed competitive advantage. However, research on innovation in tourism and in particular SABs is still scarce (Hjalager 2010:1; Pivcevic & Petric 2011:13). In particular, the literature is devoid of information about what drives innovation in SABs. The identification of drivers of innovation is believed to assist owner and/or managers of SABs to direct resources and focus on drivers that ensure the sustainability of innovation and survival. As such, this study tested and compared the influence of market and learning orientations (LOs) on four different dimensions of innovation (product, process, marketing and organisational) in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The two countries were selected for comparison because they are geographic neighbours, have similar sub-Saharan problems such as poverty and unemployment (Alsaaty 2011:1; Dekker 2009:1; IndexMundi 2017) and have similar drive for entrepreneurship, and for both, small business sizes are generally based on the number of employees (Kushnir 2010:67).

Problem statement

Because of threats from large business counterparts, innovative capabilities of SABs remain their main source of competitive advantage and survival. However, the sustainability of such innovative activities depends on knowing which factors drive innovation the most. Unfortunately, there seems to be limited research that investigated drivers of innovation in SABs in developing countries as the literature search did not reveal any such studies. Hence, the question that this study seeks to answer is which drivers of innovation in SABs enhance their survival in the competitive marketplace in Zimbabwe and South Africa? More specifically, the purpose of this study is to identify and compare the influence of market orientation (MO) and LO on innovation in selected SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Literature review

Market orientation and innovation

In view of the rapidly increasing competition from large accommodation businesses, the survival of SABs rests on the adoption of strategies that direct their action at creating, keeping and satisfying customers. According to Kok and Biemans (2009:175) and Boso, Cadogan, and Story (2012:1418), one strategy that can assist business in identifying and satisfying customers' needs ahead of rivals is MO. Market orientation refers to a process where businesses gain full understanding of the needs and expectations of customers while keeping a close look at competitors (Dibrell, Craig & Hansen 2011:467). According to Schindehutte, Morris and Kocak (2008:4), the objective of MO is to create durable relationships with customers and members of the value chain. There are three behavioural components that constitute the marketing orientation construct, namely customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional orientation. The customer orientation construct is operationalised as the extent to which the business listens to its customers, treats customers as partners in the business, encourages customer comments and complaints, is quick to detect changes in repeat customer preferences, is committed to its customers, monitors customer satisfaction, offers after sales service, trains employees' customer service and is concerned with customer satisfaction (Beverland & Lindgreen 2007:430; Narver & Slater 1990:20; Ruekert 1992:225; Suliyanto & Rahab 2012:134). Competitor orientation involves ensuring that the business identifies its competitors (both current and potential), analyses competitors' strengths and weakness, and responds swiftly to competitor strategies and actions that threaten the business (Day & Wensley 1998:13; Im & Workman 2004; Kotler 2000:152). Inter-functional coordination refers to the coordination among the various functions to ensure customer value (Narver & Slater 1990:20). The MO construct continues to be of high interest among scholars. This is because the purpose of a business is to create sustainable customers (Kotler 2004:78). However, studies on the relationship between MO and innovation tend to focus more on large businesses in the manufacturing sector (Laforet 2009:188; Salavou, Baltas & Lioukas 2004:1091) and have produced mixed results (Lukas & Ferrel 2000:239; Zhou, Yim & Tse 2005:42). While research done by Lewrick, Omar and Williams (2011) showed the absence of innovation in some models of MO, specifically customer orientation and product innovation, Narver and Slater (1990:20), Santos-Vijande and Alvarz-Gonzalez (2007:514) and Voigt (2011:845) claimed that market-oriented businesses tend to be innovative because they (1) are more responsive and positioned to anticipate rapidly evolving customers' needs and (2) have a thorough understanding of both customer needs and competitor strategies and capabilities. Consistent with these claims, other studies also state that MO and specifically customer and competitor orientation are positively related to innovation (Augusto & Coelho 2007:94; Lukas & Ferrell 2000). These studies were conducted in large manufacturing businesses in developed economies such as Finland, the United States, Sweden and New Zealand. Studies in small biotechnology industries conducted by Renko, Carsuid and Brannback (2009:331) in the United States, Finland and Sweden echoed sentiments similar to those of previous studies by Augusto and Coelho (2007:94). They suggested that MO enables businesses to excel in innovation as they meet customer needs and expectations while closely monitoring competitor strategies. Unlike previous cross-sectional studies, a longitudinal study on the relationship between MO and innovation conducted by Cambra-Fierro et al. (2011:444) concurred with previous studies. Similarly, Cadogan et al.'s (2012:1418) unique research into export businesses in Ghana revealed that MO is a driver of product innovation. Like their large business counterparts, the few innovation studies on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were also conducted in manufacturing and technology businesses and their results concur with those of large businesses. For example, Liu and Su (2013:57) found that similar to large businesses, market-oriented small businesses tend to be innovative in the manufacturing sector. The study also

showed that market-oriented SMEs facing strong competition tend to be even more innovative than large businesses. Mavondo, Chimhanzi and Stewart's (2005:1235) research into the influence of MO on small businesses brought in a new aspect of testing the influence of MO on the innovation dimensions. Their study revealed that MO is positively associated with product and process innovation, as well as administrative innovation. Kirca, Jayachandran and Bearden (2005:24) also reiterated that MO has an influence on performance through innovativeness, customer loyalty and quality. Unlike other scholars, the three scholars further posited that MO is positively related to organisational innovativeness and new product performance. However, Day and Wensley (1998:1) and Lukas and Ferrel (2000:239) found that the propensity of businesses to achieve a breakthrough in product development could be curtailed by paying attention to competitors. Their argument is that by focusing on competitors, a business loses sight of opportunities and may be forced to follow or copy the competitor's strategies, thus relegating itself from the business league. Contrary to this view, Al-Dmour, Pof and Ahmad Amin (2012:1) proclaim that competitor orientation is essential in identifying and monitoring competitors' strategies and actions. Despite the voluminous literature on the link between MO and innovation, most studies focused more on two of the three components of MO (customer and competitor) while omitting the third component (inter-functional coordination). Scholars such as Venkatesan and Soutar (2000:17) and Elliot and Boshoff (2007:1) contend that except for the inter-functional coordination factor, customer and competitor factors are the best measures of the MO construct. Elliot and Boshoff (2007) have argued that in many service businesses, the owner or manager performs many of the functions of the business, or at least has first-hand knowledge of it all. Therefore, the inter-functional coordination variable can be discounted because small businesses have no distinct departments where different activities of the business can be discussed. In addition to their bias towards large and mostly technical businesses in manufacturing, most studies (Augusto & Coelho 2007:94; Lukas & Ferrell 2000) that tested the relationship between MO and innovation are criticised for not testing the influence of market and LOs on the specific dimension of innovation, and not focusing on developing economies (Johnson, Dibrell & Hansen 2009:85; Laforet 2009:188). This study investigated the influence of MO on four innovation dimensions (product, process, marketing and organisational innovations) in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Learning orientation and innovation

While businesses are market oriented, innovation outputs do not last forever. The products or services that customers previously preferred may be completely different from what they now want. In addition, the business operating terrain is also fast changing because of globalisation (Mpofu 2009:37). As such, businesses are concerned about how they can continuously learn new ideas, identify opportunities and exploit resources (LO) to survive. Arguably, SABs need to be learning oriented to survive the competitive tide that characterises the accommodation sector. The LO construct has four components and was originally conceived by Sinkula, Baker and Noordewier (1997:305), partially used by Dennison (2000:26) and then operationalised by Calantone, Cavusgil and Zhao (2002:515). The LO constructs are (1) commitment to learning, (2) shared vision, (3) open-mindedness and (4) inter-organisational knowledge sharing. Relating previous studies (Hult, Snow & Kandemir 2003; Hennig-Thurau & Thurau 2004; Nasution et al. 2011) of LO to SABs, it can be inferred that (1) commitment to learning entails the involvement of owner and/or managers in accepting and supporting learning as the key for obtaining competitive advantage; (2) shared vision implies that SABs involve every employee, regardless of their level and discussing what the business intends to achieve in future; (3) open-mindedness refers to the promotion of an environment where employees of SABs develop a culture of critiquing and questioning in pursuit of the best in all aspects and (4) inter-organisational knowledge sharing involves the sharing of both successes and failures in order for all employees to learn from such experiences. Given that most SABs are run by owner and/or managers, it is argued that only the commitment to learning dimension can successfully be implemented because the aspect directly involves the top person in the organisation. The shared vision and inter-organisational knowledge sharing dimensions may be difficult to execute because the owner and/or manager may decide to hold on to information in fear of empowering and/or equipping subordinates with information (Murray 2002). Similarly, owner and/or managers may not be comfortable to be positively and openly criticised by their juniors (Beaver & Jennings 2005). However, the literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between LO and innovation (Salim & Sulaiman 2011:118; Tran 2008:287). Consistent with Calantone et al. (2002), Ussahawanitchakit (2008:1), Tajeddini (2009:53) and Salim and Sulaiman (2011:118) who all posit that shared vision, open-mindedness and intra-organisational knowledge sharing influence innovation, it can be argued that higher levels of commitment to learning, shared vision and open-mindedness and intra-organisational knowledge sharing result in increased innovative activity among small businesses. Hence, innovativeness in small firms can be driven by commitment to learning. However, some studies have argued that there is no significant relationship between LO and innovation and performance such as the study of Santos-Vijande and Alvaza-Gonzolez (2005:514). Such contradicting results warrant assessing and comparing the influence of LO on innovation in different industries and/or geographical contexts such as SABs in developing economies. Studies in developing economies may present different results to those in developing countries because of differences in literacy levels to comprehend the LO aspect. It is expected that the findings will provide SABs with relevant information necessary to inculcate an LO culture critical for innovation and hence their survival in the competitive tourism market.

Market orientation and learning orientation

There is empirical evidence to suggest that there is an association between MO and LO (Keskin 2006:396; Santos-

Vijande & Alvaza-Gonzolez 2005:514), although scholars still debate which variable influences the other. On the one hand, the linkage is that MO is the basis for the improvement of the learning environment (Narver & Slater 1995). For example, businesses can learn from the close interaction they enjoy with their customers (Ottesen & Gronhaug 2004:956). On the other hand, LO provides information essential to best serve customers and treat competitors as partners in business. Arguably, the two work hand in hand. Thus, businesses learn from the market as a derivative aspect of MO, while the marketing of business products and services from a learning position confirms an LO aspect. In his study of 157 small- and medium-sized industrial enterprises on MO, LO and innovation capabilities, Keskin (2006:396) introduced a completely new dimension by concluding that LO acts as a mediator between MO and innovativeness. Notwithstanding the debate on whether marketing orientation influences LO or vice versa, the two constructs influence innovation (Erdil & Keskin 2006:1) and hence business performance (Aragon-Correra, Garacia-Morales & Cordon-Pozo 2007:349).

While marketing orientation is believed to influence innovation and ultimately enhance the survival of businesses in the ever-changing business arena, some scholars (Mavondo et al. 2005:1235) have argued that MO is not sufficient to sustain competitive advantage in the long term. Instead, they argue that MO should be complemented by LO in order for businesses to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Arguably, such business orientations would be ideal for small businesses that often face fierce competition and would not be able to survive without sustainable competitive advantage.

Methodology

Study design

This study adopted a comparative research design aimed at identifying similarities and differences on the extent to which market and LO drive innovation in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa. A quantitative approach was used to quantify data and statistically analyse significant differences and relationships between MO and LOs and four dimensions of innovation (product, process, marketing and organisational). In addition, the study was descriptive in nature and explored the relationships between variables while not investigating the causes thereof. Descriptive studies are associated with surveys (Blumberg, Coopers & Schindler 2008:10), which are underpinned by the positivist epistemology (Creswell 1994:2). As such, the study adopted the survey method and examined the influence of MO and LOs on innovation among SABs. The survey method was adopted because it accommodates large sample sizes and hence results can be generalised to the target population (Borrego, Douglas & Amelink 2009:53).

Population and sample

The study was conducted in Manicaland in Zimbabwe and the Free State province of South Africa. The population comprised SABs registered with the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and the Free State Tourism Board. The population of the study was $N = 588$ small accommodation owner and/or managers comprising 257 from Manicaland in Zimbabwe and 331 from the Free State province of South Africa. The sample size was $n = 278$ (139 apiece for Zimbabwe and South Africa) selected using simple random sampling. Names of SABs for the two study sites were put in different hats and one of the research assistants was requested to pick 139 names from each of the two hats. The random sampling technique was chosen because it removes bias on the selection of study samples by giving each member of the population an equal chance of being selected (Mouton & Prozesky 2005:175).

Data collection

A structured questionnaire with 103 closed-ended questions was used to collect data from owner and/or managers of SABs in Manicaland in Zimbabwe and the Free State in South Africa. The questions for MO, LO and innovation were adopted from questionnaires developed by Narver and Slater (1990), Baker and Sinkula (1999) and Keskin (2006), respectively. The questionnaire was adjusted to suit the context of SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa. A five-point Likert scale ranges from '1 = strongly agree' to '5 = strongly disagree'. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements on the three main areas. These scales were subjected to reliability analysis. The researcher together with research assistants piloted the modified questionnaires before the main data collection among 11 owner and/or managers of SABs to check the effectiveness and efficiency of the questionnaire. After the pilot study was completed, the questionnaire was fine-tuned according to feedback received from owner and/or managers of selected SABs. The owner and/or managers who participated in the pilot survey were left out of the main study to avoid repetition of findings. Data were collected for a period of 4 months from the two provinces using a combination of self- and interviewer-administered questionnaires developed for the purpose of this study. Interviewer-administered questionnaires were used to gather data from the SABs to cater for some respondents who were not familiar with the terminology used in the questionnaires. In addition, such a method was ideal for participants who indicated that they could not spare time on their own to go through the questionnaire. Considering the nature of the study, the data generation requirements and the limit of the measurement error required, responses were only elicited from only owner and/or managers of small businesses who were presumed to be knowledgeable of the firm's characteristics, innovative activities and the business performance. During the distribution of questionnaires, owner and/or managers who were not willing to take part in the study were not coerced and in such cases, more selections were done. The researcher and the research assistants explained the purpose of the study and highlighted ethical issues before leaving the questionnaires. To expedite the data collection exercise from the big geographic areas and maximise the response rate, different strategies were pursued such as notifying respondents prior to visiting them, regular communication to check progress especially from the

self-administered questionnaires, a personalised cover letter and assurance of confidentially on information from participants. In the majority of cases, the data collection exercise consisted of two or more visits. The first was meant for introduction and either to make an appointment for an interview or leave the questionnaire for completion. The second would be either to carry out the interview or to collect the completed questionnaire. While the target number of questionnaires for each country was 139, two hundred questionnaires in hard copies were distributed to owner and/or managers of each country to cater for spoiled and non-response rate. A total of 100 and 70 completed questionnaires were returned in South Africa and Zimbabwe, respectively.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used to clean and analyse data. Both descriptive statistics such as frequencies, averages and percentages were used to analyse the responses from the sample. The inferential statistics used to test the hypotheses included ANOVA, Pearson product moment correlation and regression analysis. The statistical tests were performed at the 5% level of significance. The results of the analysis are presented below.

TABLE 1: Response rate per country.

Country	Target sample size	Correctly completed questionnaire	Response rate (%)
Zimbabwe	139	70	53
South Africa	139	100	72

Note: Average = 62.5%.

TABLE 2: Item-total correlations.

Number of dimensions	Scale	Alpha	Number of items
A	Market orientation	0.931	23
1	Customer orientation	0.905	16
2	Competitor orientation	0.917	7
B	Learning orientation	0.994	24
3	Commitment to learning	0.903	7
4	Shared vision	0.888	5
5	Open-mindedness	0.809	5
6	Intra-organisational knowledge sharing	0.917	7
C	Innovation	0.972	42
7	Product or service innovation	0.930	9
8	Process innovation	0.946	12
9	Marketing innovation	0.946	13
10	Organisational	0.856	8

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without harm to humans or animals.

Results

South Africa had a higher response rate (72%) than Zimbabwe (53%). The individual country response rates and the average (62.5%) are regarded as high considering that studies among small businesses have reported similar response rates (Chipunza 2014:123). Out of 278 questionnaires for the samples, 173 were correctly completed and subsequently used in the final analysis of the study. The specific response rates for each country are shown in Table1.

The difference in the response rate between the two countries could be attributed to general apathy of respondents in Zimbabwe perhaps because of lack of pecuniary benefits in voluntary participation.

Reliability analysis

Reliability (internal consistency) analysis of the measures of (A) MO (customer orientation, competitor orientation), (B) LO (commitment to learning, shared vision, open-mindedness, intra-organisational knowledge sharing) and (C) innovation (product or service innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation, organisational innovation) dimensions in the questionnaire was performed as measured by Cronbach's alpha. The items measuring different factors for MO, LO and their reliabilities are shown in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 show that all 10 dimensions were reliable as their respective coefficients are all above 0.7 and could thus be used for further statistical analysis. As a general rule, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 is normally considered to be an appropriate cut-off for acceptable reliability of items (Zigmund et al. 2013:305).

Table 3 shows that small accommodation businesses in Zimbabwe and South Africa have a significant difference (p = 0.039) on their level of MO.

The difference in MO is statistically significant in customer orientation (p = 0.017) and not in competitor orientation

TABLE 3: Levels of market orientation.

Market orientation	Country of respondents	Mean score (out of 100)	Significance testing	
			t	*p*
Customer orientation	-	-	-2.419	0.017*
	Zimbabwe	75.9		
	South Africa	80.8		
Competitor orientation	-	-	-1.047	0.297
	Zimbabwe	63.9		
	South Africa	67.5		
Total market orientation	-	-	-2.082	-0.039*
	Zimbabwe	72.2		
	South Africa	76.7		

*, Statistically significant (p < 0.05).

(p = 0.297). This means that although SABs in South Africa (76.7%) are more market oriented than their counterparts in Zimbabwe (72.2%), this difference is only on the customer orientation component and not on competitor orientation.

As shown in Table 4, there is no statistical significant difference (p = 0.171) on the level of LO between SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa. However, the only significant difference (p = 0.009) between the two countries' level of LO is shown on the open-mindedness component of the LO construct with South Africa (78.6%) being more innovative than Zimbabwe (72.1%).

The above results imply that generally there is no difference on the levels of LO between Zimbabwe and South Africa, except for the open-mindedness components which are higher for South Africa than Zimbabwe.

Table 5 shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the overall MO (two countries combined) and innovation (r = 0.839). Similarly, Table 5 also shows that there is a positive correlation between MO and innovation for individual countries (South Africa [r = 0.867] and Zimbabwe [r = 0.770]).

These results mean that there is a strong and positive association between MO and innovation in SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

TABLE 4: Learning orientation in businesses.

Learning orientation	Country	Mean score	Significance	
			t	*p*
Commitment to learning	Zimbabwe	75.5	-1.689	-
	South Africa	79.8	-	0.093
Shared vision	Zimbabwe	72.0	-0.804	-
	South Africa	74.3	-	0.423
Open-mindedness	Zimbabwe	72.1	-2.631	-
	South Africa	78.6	-	0.009*
Intra-organisational knowledge sharing	Zimbabwe	68.9	-0.131	-
	South Africa	69.3	-	0.896
Total learning orientation	Zimbabwe	72.2	-1.376	-
	South Africa	75.4	-	-0.171

*, Statistically significant (p < 0.05).

TABLE 5: Inter-correlations between market orientation and innovation.

Variable	Market organisation	Result	
		r	*n*
Innovation	All respondents	0.839*	168
	South Africa	0.867*	98
	Zimbabwe	0.770*	70

*, Statistically significant (p < 0.05).

Table 6 shows that both customer and competitor orientations strongly and positively correlate with all four of the dimensions of innovation in both countries.

Customer orientation has a strong correlation with all dimensions of innovation in both countries (Zimbabwe: r = 0.605, 0.612, 0.554, 0.511 and South Africa: r = 0.685, 0.639, 0.672, 0.688) for product or service, process, marketing and organisational innovation, respectively. Overall, customer orientation has the strongest correlation with product or service innovation (r = 0.667). At individual country level, SABs in South Africa showed a stronger correlation with product or service (r = 0.685), marketing (r = 0.672) and organisational (r = 0.688) innovations. Compared to all other dimensions, organisational innovation had the strongest correlation with customer orientation (r = 0.688; p = 0.000) in South Africa. In general, there is evidence that competitor orientation has a strong positive relation with innovation (r = 0.769, 0.741, 0.819, 0.659) for both countries.

Table 7 shows that there is positive correlation between LO and innovation for both countries (Zimbabwe and South Africa: r = 0.725). In addition, the table also shows positive correlations of the same constructs for South Africa, r = 0.724 and for Zimbabwe, r = 0.725.

This implies that there is a strong positive link between LO and innovation as far as Zimbabwe and South Africa are concerned. A comparison of the level of LO between SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two countries. In fact it is interesting to note that the three correlations for Zimbabwe and South Africa, and Zimbabwe and South Africa separately, are almost the same (r = 0.725, 0.724, 0.725, respectively). This suggests that SABs in the two countries have the same degree of LO and owner and/or managers of SABs have similar quests for new knowledge and skills critical for adapting and hence surviving in the dynamic and competitive tourism business environment.

Table 8 shows that all the dimensions of LO have a positive relationship with dimensions of innovation. However, there is a weak relationship between intra-organisational knowledge sharing and marketing innovation (r = 0.387, p = 0.000), as well as between intra-organisational

TABLE 7: Inter-correlations between learning orientation and innovation.

Variable	Learning organisation	Result	
		r	*n*
Innovation	All respondents	0.725*	168
	South Africa	0.724*	98
	Zimbabwe	0.725*	70

*, Statistically significant (p < 0.05).

TABLE 6: Inter-correlations among dimensions of market orientation and innovation.

Market orientation	Product or service innovation (*r*)			Process innovation (*r*)			Market innovation (*r*)			Organisational innovation (*r*)		
	All	Zim	SA	All	Zim	SA	All	Zim	SA	All	Zim	SA
Customer orientation	0.667*	0.605*	0.685*	0.643*	0.612*	0.639*	0.643*	0.554*	0.672*	0.638*	0.511*	0.688*
Competitor orientation	0.676*	0.483*	0.769*	0.708*	0.648*	0.741*	0.763*	0.648*	0.819*	0.609*	0.499*	0.659*

Zim, Zimbabwe; SA, South Africa.

*, Statistically significant (p < 0.05).

TABLE 8: Inter-correlations among learning orientation and innovation dimensions.

Learning orientation	Product or service innovation (*r*)			Process innovation (*r*)			Market innovation (*r*)			Organisational innovation (*r*)		
	All	Zim	SA	All	Zim	SA	All	Zim	SA	All	Zim	SA
Commit to learning	0.545*	0.516*	0.548*	0.576*	0.633*	0.531*	0.590*	0.513*	0.621*	0.593*	0.543	0.611*
Shared vision	0.510*	0.470*	0.543*	0.522*	0.551*	0.511	0.530*	0.541*	0.540*	0.571*	0.598*	0.562*
Open-Mindedness	0.534*	0.408*	0.579*	0.522*	0.478*	0.565*	0.580*	0.540*	0.628*	0.578*	0.462*	0.628*
Intra-organisational knowledge Sharing	0.534*	0.498*	0.487*	0.429*	0.497*	0.410*	0.451*	0.387*	0.480*	0.582*	0.475*	0.633*

Zim, Zimbabwe; SA, South Africa.
*, Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 9: Market orientation versus learning orientation.

Variable	Country	Market orientation	
		r	*p*
Learning orientation	All	0.736	0.000*
	Zimbabwe	0.647	0.000*
	South Africa	0.777	0.000*

*, Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 10: Multiple linear regression for overall innovation.

Variable	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	*t*	*p*
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Constant	-11.935	4.096	-	-2.914	0.004*
Market orientation	0.770	0.071	0.656	10.886	0.000*
Learning orientation	0.256	0.066	0.232	3.873	0.000*
Country	2.604	1.385	0.077	1.880	0.062*

Note: Model statistics, $R = 0.857$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.729$; $F = 150.912$; $p = 0.000$.
*, Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

knowledge sharing and process ($r = 0.410$, $p = 0.000$) for Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively. Commitment to learning has the stronger relationship with organisational innovation ($r = 0.593$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 9 shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between MO and learning ($r = 0.736$, $p = 0.000$). Compared to Zimbabwe ($r = 0.647$, $p = 0.000$), SABs in South Africa perceive a much stronger relationship between MO and LO ($r = 0.777$, $p = 0.000$).

To determine the relative influence of MO, LO and country in the prediction of a company's level of innovation, a multiple regression model was performed where all three variables (MO, LO and country) were simultaneously entered as predictors in the model, with innovation as the outcome variable. The results are shown in Table 10.

Because country is a categorical variable, a dummy variable was used. Table 10 shows that the three variables (MO, LO and country) collectively explain 73% of the variation in the dependent variable, which is the company's level of innovation. The multiple correlation coefficient is statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). However, as shown in Table 10, only MO ($t = 10.886$, $p = 0.000$) and LO ($t = 3.873$, $p = 0.000$) significantly contribute to the prediction of the dependent variable, with MO being the strongest predictor (standardised beta of 0.656). Country is not a significant predictor in the model and can therefore be excluded without any significant loss in the percentage of explained variation. However, if country is removed as a predictor, the model outlined in Table 11 is obtained, where MO and LO combined still explain 73% of the variability in the innovation scores.

TABLE 11: Regression of overall market orientation and overall learning orientation on overall innovation.

Variable	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	*t*	*p*
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Constant	-8.802	3.770	-	-2.335	0.021*
Market orientation	0.785	0.071	0.669	11.093	0.000*
Learning orientation	0.254	0.067	0.230	3.812	0.000*

Note: Model statistics, $R = 0.853$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.725$; $F = 221.205$; $p = 0.000$.
*, Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The results of the study showed that SABs in both South Africa and Zimbabwe are market oriented, with South African SBAs being more market oriented than their counterparts in Zimbabwe. Despite limited literature on the source of the difference, this study has shown that the customer orientation component of the MO construct is the only source of the difference in the level of MO between the two countries. This is consistent with Augusto and Coelho (2007:349), Renko et al. (2009:331) and Cambra-Fierro et al. (2011:444) who posit that the level of MO differs by customer orientation because of the variation at which businesses understand and satisfy the needs and expectations of their customers.

This study revealed that both customer and competitor orientations influence all the dimensions of innovation (product or service, process, marketing and organisational) in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, again with South African SBAs being more innovative than those in Zimbabwe. Specifically, customer orientation had the strongest relationship with product or service and organisational innovations with product or service innovation being influenced the most. The results of this study further highlight that in South Africa, the competitor orientation component mostly influence product or service and marketing innovation with marketing innovation having the strongest correlation. Overall, competitor orientation has the strongest correlation with marketing innovation. This indicates that SABs that focus and concentrate on satisfying the needs and expectations of customers engage more in product or service innovation. Concurring with this study's findings, Wong and Tong (2012:99) state that customer orientation is positively linked to new product success. On the contrary in contrast, SABs that monitor and counter the strategies and actions of competitors have a high proclivity to marketing innovation. This finding supports the view of Al-Dmour et al. (2012:391) who indicate that competitor-orientated businesses continuously monitor their own strategy and that of their

rivals in ways that facilitate the generation of new marketing ideas. It is worth noting that there is a moderate but significant correlation between competitor orientation and product or service and organisational innovation in Zimbabwe. This is consistent with Sundo, Orfila-Sintes and Sorensen (2007:88) and Silva (2007:5408) who posit that in competitive tourism industry with no ready markets, small businesses struggle to introduce new products, let alone effect structural organisational changes.

This study also found that SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa generally have the same level of LO. The only exception being on the open-mindedness component where SBAs in South Africa are more learning oriented that their Zimbabwean counterparts. These findings are consistent with the literature (Arogon-Correra, Garcia-Morales & Cordon-Pozo 2007:349; Panayides & So 2005:179; Salim & Sulaiman 2011:118; Tran 2008:287) which reported that the new knowledge and skill acquired by members of a business facilitates the introduction of new ideas, processes and products or services. The skewed variation in the level of open-mindedness in favour of SABs in South Africa over Zimbabwe is inconsistent with Nolan, Low and Tang (2018:39) who posit that in an unstable economic environment businesses tend to be more open-minded to quickly learn survival skills. This was expected because Zimbabwe is economically more unstable and South Africa is more open-minded.

The results of this study further revealed that all the components of the LO construct (commitment to learning, shared vision, open-mindedness, intra-organisational knowledge sharing) influence all the dimensions of innovation (product or service, process, marketing, organisational). These results corroborate earlier findings in the United States by Calantone et al. (2002:515) who indicated an association between dimensions of LO and those of innovation. The study also found a weak relationship between intra-organisational knowledge sharing and marketing innovation, as well as between intra-organisational knowledge sharing and process innovation for Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively. This could be attributed to the fact that generally there are more micro than small and medium SABs in both Zimbabwe and South Africa whose structure does not have defined departments (Muriithi 2017:37). This is consistent with Elliott and Boshof (2008:32) who posit that the inter-functional coordination aspect across different departments is usually missing. However, the results of the study contradict Salim and Sulaiman (2011:118) who reported strong evidence of a relationship between commitment to learning, intra-organisational knowledge sharing and product and process innovation. The study results also highlighted that overall the intra-organisational knowledge sharing and commitment to learning have the strongest link with organisational innovation. While the inter-functional knowledge sharing component of LO is conspicuous on strong correlation and organisational innovation in South Africa, in Zimbabwe commitment to learning shows the strongest positive relationship with process innovation. The findings possibly indicate that the two countries are at different stages of the learning process. In Zimbabwe, owner and/or managers of SABs focus on getting involved in the learning process. Small accommodation businesses in South Africa focus on exchanging ideas, knowledge learnt, successes and failures essential for stimulating innovation.

This study also found that there is a strong and positive relationship between MO and learning. This indicates that SABs that need to satisfy their customers and compete favourably should be ready and willing to learn and understand customers. This finding is supported by Santos-Vijande et al. (2005:187) and Keskin (2006:396) who confirm that there is an association between MO and LO and that businesses learn from their close interaction with their customers. This study also revealed that SABs in South Africa perceive a much stronger relationship between MO and LO than SABs in Zimbabwe. This may suggest that SABs in South Africa have a more diverse customer base and needs which require more and diverse learning to provide a range of competitive goods and services necessary to satisfy their customers. This result is consistent with Rogerson (2005:21) who posits that South Africa leads over Zimbabwe in terms of a higher volume of trade which comes with varying customer needs and expectations demanding fast learning from customers necessary for raising the innovativeness of businesses (Ottesen & Grouhaung 2004:956).

It was also found that owner and/or managers of SABs expressed a higher propensity to innovate when they adopt a market-oriented approach and, to a lesser extent, LO. Furthermore, this study also highlighted that the contribution of country as a predictor of innovation is insignificant. This indicates that irrespective of nationality, MO is the key driver (main predictor) of innovation among SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and LO ranks second.

Recommendations

This study highlighted the need for SABs to engage in innovative behaviour to survive the fierce competition that characterise tourism. It is therefore recommended that irrespective of nationality, SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa should embrace and invest in market and LOs necessary for stimulating sustainable innovation. To enhance market and LOs, the relevant government ministry could design education programmes to help SABs to focus and understand customer needs and expectations, as well as to develop a sustainable learning culture and become learning organisations. Such training and investment would facilitate the transformation and commercialisation of what was learned into new or improved different forms of innovation essential for the survival of SABs in today's highly competitive accommodation sector.

This comparative study was conducted in specific countries and provinces and the results could be different if it is

extended to other provinces within the same countries or other provinces in different countries. Furthermore, the inclusion of qualitative information from owner and/or managers of SABs could have added more depth to the study.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that market and LOs are important drivers of innovation for SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa, with MO being the main predictor of innovation over LO. While SABs in Zimbabwe and South Africa generally have the same level of LO, SABs in South Africa are more market oriented than their counterparts in Zimbabwe and customer orientation has been identified as the main source of the difference.

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The author has no competing interests.

Author's contributions

I am the sole author of this article.

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Data availability statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and/or its supplementary materials.

Disclaimer

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