

Examining the Factors that Impact the Stages of Growth in Rural Trade among the Cultural Communities in Hwange

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the elements that impact the stages of rural retailing development in the Hwange villages, namely in the areas of Jambezi, Mununa, Milonga, Ndlovu, Chikhandanda, Mashake, and Monde. The study used a quantitative technique with a sample size of 400 people, recruited by stratified random sampling. The data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.0. The survey's main findings reveal that rural residents have a preference for firms that value outstanding customer service and offer a broader range of recreational choices. Furthermore, the condition of road networks was recognized as a crucial element impacting the operational effectiveness of rural businesses. The presence of essential services such as water and electricity was discovered to have a substantial influence on the condition of the retail sector. The paper provides numerous recommendations based on the findings. The implementation of these recommendations is anticipated to stimulate economic expansion, boost living standards, and promote overall welfare in rural regions. By effectively dealing with the highlighted causes, the communities in Hwange have the opportunity to experience positive changes in their retailing industry, which will result in sustainable development and an enhanced quality of life.*

Keywords: Ethnic groups, rural retail, Hwange, consumer preference

1. Introduction

In the expansive terrains of Hwange, a mosaic of cultural communities intertwines to form a multifaceted fabric of traditions, livelihoods, and trade activities. Embedded inside this complex fabric is the heartbeat of rural commerce, a crucial mechanism that drives the development and survival of these communities. Comprehending the determinants that influence the different phases of development in rural commerce is not solely an intellectual endeavor but also a method to enable and elevate the cultural communities residing in Hwange. This article explores the ever-changing rural trading environment and focuses on the cultural communities in Hwange. It aims to identify the complex elements that impact their trade activities. The study seeks to analyze how tradition, socioeconomic conditions, and external influences interact to influence the growth of rural trade in this region. It strives to identify the factors that drive or hinder this growth.

Hwange District is located in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland North Province, in the northwestern region, and has a population of 133 940 people [1]. The Zambezi River divides the country's northern and western boundaries, while Botswana separates the western border. Hwange district also houses Victoria Falls resort town. Hwange has a semi-extensive mixed farming system that includes small stock and cattle production, as well as maize, sorghum, pearl millet, and groundnut crops. November to April is the rainy season, with the rest of the year being dry. The district's five Chiefs are Chief Shana, Chief Hwange, Chief Nelukoba, Chief Nekatambe, and Chief Mvuthu. The Rural District Council (RDC) of Hwange is divided into twenty administrative wards, 18 of which are rural.

Despite being a small town intended for a small number of inhabitants, Victoria Falls has become overrun. The remote areas surrounding Hwange and Victoria Falls have little to offer in terms of job creation. Everyone migrates to urban areas in search of a better life that does not exist. Al-Maruf, Pervez, Sarker, Rahman, and Ruiz-Menjivar [2], believe that people migration generates various issues in the city center while also providing certain benefits. The authors continue, by mentioning that the repercussions of rural-urban migration are already being felt, and the rural economy is going down, leading to extreme poverty and food insecurity. Many young people are drawn to cities, resulting in depopulation in rural areas. Rural markets present a large, untested opportunity [3]. A significant share of the population still lives in rural areas [4]. They said that the expectations of rural clients are rising in lockstep with the passage of time. Because of such a large population, rural areas are encouraged to grow business such as farming business [5].

Retailing in Hwange has been challenging for years, despite having greater infrastructure than neighboring rural villages. Other ethnic groups who work in Hwange's retail sector have had little success [6]. Dhombe, Tonga, Nambya, Nyanja, Shona, and Ndebele ethnic groups make up the majority of Hwange Rural's population. Most residents in Hwange's rural districts have tried their hand at retailing, but most shops and businesses fail within a few years after opening. The majority of the infrastructure in rural areas has been degraded. People put money into structures like shops and supermarkets, but they all seem to be aging and failing to deliver the expected returns. Some townships that were viable just a few years ago are no longer in use. As rural-to-urban migration has become more common, a new challenge has arisen.

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Although rural communities provide the majority of the farm products in Hwange District, a notable proportion of retail companies in these areas fail. Nonetheless, not enough research has been done on the particular reasons why ethnic groups in Hwange District experience retail failure. Developing solutions to assist and sustain rural retailing requires an understanding of the variables that contribute to the high failure rate of retail companies in rural areas, despite their proximity to agricultural output. Thus, research into the transformative factors influencing the development of ethnic group-driven rural retailing in Hwange, Zimbabwe, is necessary to pinpoint the opportunities and problems facing these companies and suggest practical solutions that will boost their prosperity and advance rural development. Therefore the goal of this study is to examine the factors that impact the several stages of growth in rural trade among the cultural communities in Hwange.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to maintain impartiality, this research study utilizes a positivist research methodology and applies a quantitative research technique utilizing SPSS software version 26.0 for data collecting and statistical analysis. The study comprises a cohort of 400 individuals, specifically retail proprietors and merchants that reside in Hwange district. Stratified random sampling is used to estimate the size of the sample, which is necessary because of limitations in data gathering. Previous research findings corroborate the use of this sample approach. Arunachalam and Spence [7] present novel methodologies for conducting stratified random sampling, offering a comprehensive framework for evaluating reliability. Expanding on this approach, Lee et al. [8] utilize the identical process to calculate an intricate characteristic.

3. Results

The results of the study focused on the demographic of the participants, challenges affecting retailers in Hwange district, consumer preferences and the role of government in rural retailing. The results were presented below.

Demographic results

The study had a heterogeneous sample of 400 participants. The majority of participants (44%) were between the ages of 18 and 25. The age group of 26-35 represented 22% of the participants, while the age groups of 36-45 and 46 & above made up 19% and 15% of the sample, respectively. In terms of gender, the majority of participants were male, making up 57% of the overall sample, while female participants comprised 43%. The study also included volunteers from several tribes. The Dombe tribe had the largest representation, consisting of 81 participants, which accounted for 20.25% of the entire sample. The other tribes present in the area were Nambya (22.25%), Nyanja (13%), Ndebele (16.25%), Shona (13.25%), Lubale (6.5%), and Tonga (8.5%). Participants were situated in various geographical locations. Chikhanda and Cross Dete had the highest frequency, with each accounting for 15% of the entire sample. Mununa, Jambezi, Matetsi, and Milonga represented 14%, 13%, 13%, and 11% of the sample, respectively. Kamativi had the smallest number of

participants, with 32 individuals, which accounted for 8% of the overall sample. These demographic statistics offer valuable information about the study sample's characteristics including the representation of various age groups, genders, tribes, and locales. Gaining insight into the demographics is crucial for evaluating the study findings and taking into account possible variances or viewpoints associated with these demographic parameters.

Challenges Affecting Rural Retail

The survey revealed that participants encountered diverse obstacles impacting rural retail. Of the obstacles listed, a substantial proportion of participants (30%) reported encountering difficulties as a result of natural disasters. A significant obstacle faced by rural shops was the absence of credit lines, as reported by 73% of interviewees. 54% of interviewees claimed that the absence of infrastructure posed a barrier, while 49% stated that a lack of suitable land was causing obstacles. Regarding political backing, 60% of respondents indicated a dearth of assistance from the government. Nevertheless, the geographical isolation of the location and inadequate inventory did not result in a notable disparity in the reported difficulties among the participants.

Consumer preference

Participants had diverse preferences for their shopping experiences when it came to customer preferences. 84% of respondents expressed a preference for in-store music, indicating its considerable role in improving the shopping experience. Convenience was also a significant factor, as 73% of participants expressed a preference for shops located within a short distance, and 65% placed value on shops with convenient operational hours. 62% of participants emphasized language and cultural barriers as a priority, underscoring the importance of tackling diversity in the retail setting. The participants greatly appreciated shop dependability, with 77% expressing a preference for shops that are reliable and trustworthy. Nevertheless, there were no notable disparities discovered in preferences for efficient delivery services, ample stock availability, and a diverse selection of products.

Role of government

Participants held diverse perspectives on the government's involvement in assisting rural shops. Approximately 60% of the participants held the belief that the government offers grants, whilst 40% did not perceive any such assistance. Regarding loans, 40% of interviewees indicated that they received them from the government, whilst 60% did not. Furthermore, a significant proportion of participants (38%) expressed that the government offers instructional programs on retail, underscoring the significance of such educational endeavours. Regarding the overall level of government support, 52% of respondents stated that the government is supportive of retailers, but 48% did not perceive substantial support. The study identified various obstacles that impact rural retail, such as natural calamities, limited access to credit, inadequate infrastructure, scarcity of land, and insufficient political backing. Consumer preferences emphasized the significance of in-store music, convenience, language and cultural inclusivity, and shop reliability. The government's involvement in assisting rural shopkeepers was subject to diverse interpretations, with differing viewpoints

on the provision of subsidies, loans, education, and overall assistance. These findings offer valuable insights into the variables that influence rural retail and can guide the development of strategies to tackle the issues and cater to consumer preferences in such environments.

4. Discussion

The research on the determinants impacting the stage of progress of rural commerce in the cultural communities of Hwange has produced numerous significant findings.

Challenges: The study has found a multitude of obstacles that rural shops encounter. These factors encompass the absence of financing facilities, infrastructure, land availability, and political backing. This assertion is corroborated by Kabonga [9], who contends that young entrepreneurs engaged in informal trading face challenges related to limited financial resources and persistent persecution. Muchapireyi [10] attributes the underperformance of small firms to the detrimental effects of hyperinflation. The findings emphasize the necessity of tackling these issues to promote the expansion and advancement of rural retailing in the cultural communities of Hwange.

Consumer preference: The study uncovered significant consumer preferences in rural retailing. Factors such as efficient logistics, pleasant in-store ambience, and proximity to brick-and-mortar stores, linguistic and cultural compatibility, reliable customer service, flexible operating hours, and diverse product offerings were identified as key drivers of consumer preferences and contentment. Srinivasan and Vijayalakshmi [11] are of the same sentiments with the findings, stating that pricing, quantity, shopping convenience, and relevant services are crucial determinants of satisfaction with rural retailing. According to Tuli [12], some research suggests that rural consumers are motivated to visit village shops due to the shopping experience and the expenses associated with purchasing products. In a study conducted by Yejin [13], it was discovered that affluent and recreational enterprises have a significant impact on people's preferences and choices when it comes to shopping locations. When formulating their strategy to attract and retain customers, retailers should take these preferences into account.

Government role: The government's intervention and assistance are crucial in rural retailing. The government may play a significant role in supporting the growth of rural stores through grants, loans, and retail education. However, additional endeavours may be required to improve the assistance and efficacy of government initiatives in this matter. The government plays a pivotal role in providing support to rural retailers, as demonstrated by research conducted in India [14] and China [15]. These studies emphasize the significance of unorganized retailers in rural communities, the influence of government policies on the behaviour of local government and the market, and the necessity for a nuanced and localized approach to rural planning. The government plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term viability of rural shops and promoting

economic growth in the region by offering support, direction, and recognition.

The study highlights the significance of tackling obstacles, comprehending customer inclinations, and bolstering government assistance in fostering the expansion and prosperity of rural retailing in Hwange's cultural communities. By considering and tackling these elements, those with an interest in the matter can collaborate to establish a favourable setting that promotes the growth of rural retail enterprises and improves the general economic prosperity of the community.

5. Conclusion

The study on the factors influencing the level of development of rural business in the cultural groups of Hwange uncovers several significant discoveries. The report highlights the obstacles encountered by rural retailers, including limited access to financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, scarcity of people, and insufficient political backing. Furthermore, important consumer desires in rural commerce encompass streamlined logistics, appealing in-store atmosphere, proximity to physical stores, language and cultural suitability, dependable customer service, flexible operation hours, and a wide range of product options. The government plays a vital role in promoting the expansion of rural stores by providing financial assistance through grants and loans, as well as offering retail education. However, further measures are necessary to improve the effectiveness of government initiatives. To promote the growth and success of rural retailing in Hwange's cultural communities and enhance the community's economic well-being, it is crucial to tackle these problems, comprehend consumer...

6. Recommendations

The government should provide financial assistance to rural businesses in Hwange's cultural groups, simplifying the application process and investing in infrastructure development. Other organizations should collaborate with the government to support rural retailers through market research and mentorship programs. This will help tailor products, services, and marketing strategies to rural consumers, leading to improved economic well-being and sustainable growth in Hwange's cultural communities.

Statement of competing interest

There are no competing interests.

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