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Diversity, Technology and the Predatory Transformation of Traditional Taxicab Enterprising in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of diversity and technology on the operations of the traditional taxicab sector in Zimbabwe, highlighting the costs involved, the administrative concerns and the future prospects of this vital economic sector. Leveraging on case study and phenomenology research designs, convenience and purposive sampling of the taxicab sector's stakeholders such as taxicab operators, users, public officials, law enforcement and traffic safety agents, the study obtained data from interviews with stakeholders, document analysis, personal observations, and experience. It identified consumer appetite for diversity in intra-city shuttle service, the desire for efficient, cost-effective, user-friendly and convenient shuttle service, enhanced safety for both the users and the operators, Vision 2030 national policy drive, and the quest to move with the times as the major spurs for the taxicab market's transformation. It also highlighted piracy, the demise of traditional taxicab's modus operandi, declined profits for traditional taxicab operators, administrative corruption, a dire situation for techno-phobia and computer skills-deprived traditional taxicab operators as being among the major predatory effects of diversity and technology on traditional taxicab enterprising in contemporary Zimbabwe. The study recommends the enactment of legal administrative instruments for the purpose of saving and safeguarding the traditional taxicab industry from the effects of an uncontrolled diversity and technology driven transformation. It also urges the traditional industry taxicab to urgently adopt technology and to also unionise in order to safeguard its market. The study both advances the body of knowledge on this vital economic sector, and provides useful data for researchers, investors and public officials.

Key Words: Diversity, Technology, Predatory, Traditional Taxicab

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INTRODUCTION

The traditional taxicab enterprise sector in Zimbabwe appears to be undergoing immense transformation in the post-millennium era. The sector's modus operandi, dating back to pre-independence and post-independence generations, has appeared to be fast transforming in recent years, possibly catalysed by market inefficiencies, sector invasion by piracy, administrative ineptness, and uncontrolled innovation and technology. Of these, diversity and technology appear to have struck the biggest blow on this particular sector. For instance, the traditional taxicab is frequently finding itself struggling to survive the growing competition with pirate taxis and other competitors such as the recently emerged Global Positioning System-(hereinafter referred to as GPS) backed *e-taxicab* operators. On account of these, customers can now choose from various service providers for their taxi services, thus prompting the traditional taxicab to seek to innovate its modus operandi to remain relevant and competitive. The *e-taxicab* operators are also currently making a huge impact in the taxicab industry in the country, thus also prompting an increased reduction of the traditional taxicab's market share.

Although there are no published statistics or facts to confirm these claims, at least those that this author is aware of, personal observations and the views of some previous researches on topics related to this study provide an authentic indication of the growing impact of this invasion trend on the market welfare of the traditional taxicab industry in Zimbabwe. For instance, online journal and newspaper articles such as the *Global Press Journal* of 29 January 2024, *The Standard* of 28 September 2024, Business *Weekly* of December 20, 2024 and *The Chronicle* of June 20, 2024, all shed valuable insights on the trends of taxicab service digitalization and its impact in Zimbabwe. In its analysis, *The Chronicle* of June 20, 2024, also further states that the *e-taxicab* had "rapidly gained momentum and revolutionized the transport industry in Zimbabwe thereby providing stiff competition to conventional taxis".

Meanwhile, though the traditional taxi industry's transformation is highly applauded, and indeed generally welcome, at least in view of the contemporary generation's deep-seated desire for diversity in the choice range for their intra-city shuttle services, the modern society's insatiable

appetite for moving with the times, the perpetual socio-economic and politico-cultural demands exerted on the country's modern society by the fast engulfing waves of globalization drifting across southern Africa, as well as government's national policy trajectory anchoring local industries towards modernisation and middle-income economy status by 2030, this study suggests that this same transformation is predatory in nature, and highly threatening on that traditional taxicab industry's sustainability. Indeed, if it goes on unabated, and if the sector's competitors are allowed to grab more market shares, the outcome will likely soon engineer the gradual demise and relegation of the traditional taxicab sector in Zimbabwe.

Clearly, therefore, there is much need for Zimbabwe's taxicab industry's transformation process to be properly guided through appropriate policy measures that eliminate the industry's ensuing market imperfections so as to ensure its survival, productivity and well-being. Unfortunately, there is currently an elaborate literature gap on this vital sector of the country's economy. Scholarly research with a focus on the phenomenon that this study attempts to interrogate appears to be significantly scant. Hence, the need to generate empirical data on the implications of the ongoing rapid transformation of the country's traditional taxicab industry and its associated impact on that sector's contribution to the country's economic growth, becomes imperative. Such empirical data and theorisation are vital for laying a firm foundation in facilitating the production of relevant, effective and efficient policy interventions needed for guiding appropriate change in this critical sector.

Given the above observation, therefore, the need to undertake this study is basically prompted by the desire to fill this scholarly gap through the generation of science-based knowledge and literature that will be vital for establishing policy mechanisms necessary for securing the sustainability of traditional taxicab enterprise sector in Zimbabwe. Indeed the literature herein generated is expected to refresh scholarly interest in the welfare of taxicab enterprising in the country and to advance the body of knowledge on the nature, scope, organisation and the inherent challenges faced by the traditional taxicab market in Zimbabwe. The next sections of this study highlight the study's problem statement, the research objectives and literature review. The study's theoretical framework, its methodology as well as its findings are also further expatiated before a discussion and conclusions wind it up.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is urgent need for government intervention to save, preserve and uphold Zimbabwe's traditional taxicab industry in the face of uncontrolled diversity and technology bedeviling it since the turn of the millennium. The impact of diversity and technology in this sector appears to threaten the industry's survival, as depicted in the views aired in some online publications and newspaper articles like the *Global Press Journal* of 29 January 2024, *The Standard* of 28 September 2024, *The Business Weekly* of December 20, 2024, as well as in *The Chronicle* of June 20, 2024, which all paint a gloomy picture of stiff competition in this industry due to diversity and technology. These depict compromised industry output, given that the competitors are non-conventional, unregistered and with no tax obligation to state coffers. In such a scenario, therefore, it becomes imperative for the government to intervene through corrective and adaptive policy measures to rectify this anomaly to ensure that the sector remains a vital part of the national economy contributing to safe, fast and convenient urban and intra-city shuttle and transfer services, to national fiscus through tax remissions, and to job creation and poverty reduction becomes imperative. As Statista, an online database projects (as at 31 January 2025), Zimbabwe's taxicab market revenue may reach US$0.68 million by 2025. Unfortunately, however, the problem is lack of comprehensive scholarly studies covering the situation of the traditional taxicab industry in Zimbabwe. Such a dearth of empirical, science-based knowledge poses as a crippling deprivation of a firm foundational basis for guiding the formulation and implementation of any corrective or adaptive policy measures that might be deemed a necessary remedy. This study has, therefore, committed itself to setting about to fill this scholarly and literature gap by investigating the nature and scope of the traditional taxicab industry's current challenges owing to the effects of diversity and technology that are presently subduing it. The study's results are, therefore, expected to create a vital data-base upon which officials in the ministry of transport and the country's municipal agencies could be guided to apply corrective and/or adaptive measures needed to preserve the traditional taxicab industry's sustainability. The results of this study are also poised to influence scholarship, knowledge accumulation and the advancement of further research in the sector under review.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

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1. To explore the nature, scope and modus operandi (manner of incorporation, administrative oversight, regulatory compliances and customer service practices) of the traditional taxicab in Zimbabwe as well as the extent, motivation for, and effects of diversity and technology.

2. To assess the sector-based costs and administrative concerns stemming from increased and unfettered diversity and technology in Zimbabwe's taxicab enterprise sector.

3. To establish the attitudes of traditional taxicab operators to diversity and technology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An assiduous survey of literature related to this study revealed that taxicab enterprising, in general, is a lucrative worldwide phenomenon. According to Statista - an online database (as at 31 January 2025), "the taxi market in the United States is anticipated to achieve a revenue of US$22.33bn by the year 2025 …. (and) … a projected market volume of US$18.67bn by 2029". In the United Kingdom, IBIS World (2024), an online research database, projected taxi enterprising' s overall revenue in the five years through 2024-25 at £9.8 billion. In the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe, Statista (as at 31 January 2025) projects taxicab market revenues of US$0.32bn and US$0.68m, respectively by 2025. Statista (as at 31 January 2025) further predicts China to "generate the highest revenue in the taxi market, reaching US$54,110m in 2025". Apart from revenue, this study also learnt that the taxicab market worldwide is a significant creator of jobs and a vital player in poverty reduction and economic development.

At the international level, literature review also identified some very important information regarding the taxicab industry. For instance, Seymour et al. (2018) discuss the nature and scope of taxicab regulation in major United States of American cities of New York, Boston and Los Angeles. These included: (i) price regulations, which constrained operators to adhere to municipal prescribed fare structures on specific taxicab routes, specific number of passengers ferried and on specific times of the day etcetera; (ii) entry regulations, which controlled the procedures required for entry into the industry as a driver and as an entrepreneur; (iii) service-level regulations, requiring operators to maintain prescribed number of fleet and to restrict operations in specific zones of specified metropolitan areas; and

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(iv) safety and quality of service regulations, that enforced passenger safety by insisting on valid and clean drivers' licenses for taxicab drivers, vehicle insurance, taxicab cleanliness, and controlled substance tests for drivers. Wang (2015) also observes the operations of the Transportation Network Companies (TNC) which mostly included *Uber*, *Lyft* and *Sidecar* in the United States of America, also highlighting that these had established business in over 100 cities world-wide. She, however, laments the unfair competition between the taxicab enterprise and the TNCs.

Mbowa & Dladla (2014), also shed valuable insights on the various challenges faced by traditional metered taxicab operators in Metropolitan Durban, South Africa, which included: high interest paid on loans for vehicles purchased for use as taxicabs; high expenditure of fuel; lack of assistance from metropolitan police when needed with regards to illegal taxicab operations and crimes perpetrated on taxi operators; lack of taxicab operator associations; need for licensing vehicles at local government level; the need to negotiate with banks for easy access to loans; need for more taxi related infrastructure; the need to fast-track the issuance of operational licenses; and the need to ensure proper regulation of the industry. Adebayo (2019) highlights the conflicts encountered in South Africa between *e-taxicabs* and the drivers of metered taxicabs following the launch in 2013 of that country's popular digital *e-taxicab*, *Uber*. These included riots, violence, injuries, deaths and damage to cars. Cramer and Krueger (2016) also argue that leveraging on their advanced performance and efficiency, the *Uber* cabs in South Africa took away significant proportions of business from the traditional taxicab.

With regard to Zimbabwe, published research studies on the traditional taxicab industry are scanty, thus contrasting well with the relatively rampant publications dedicated to *Mshikashika* pirate taxis – which are a form of unregulated emergency taxi and the *Kombi-mini-bus* taxi operations. Despite this situation, the internet proved to be a useful source of critical data relevant to this study. Though largely unscholarly in nature, internet-based data, which included online journals, online newspaper articles and other valuable data on the websites of specific stakeholders such as government ministries and public agencies have been significantly useful. For instance, online journals and online newspaper publications inclusive of the *Global Press Journal* of 29 January 2024, *The Standard* of 28 September 2024,

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Business *Weekly* of December 20, 2024, and *The Chronicle* of June 20, 2024, all shed valuable insights on the trends of taxi service digitalisation in Zimbabwe. *The Chronicle* of June 20, 2024, states that the e-*taxicab* had "rapidly gained momentum and revolutionised the transport industry in Zimbabwe thereby providing stiff competition to conventional taxis".

Altogether, the above-stated newspapers and online publications identified *Indrive*, *Bolt*, *TaxiF* and *Hwindi*, among many others, as some of the thriving *e-taxicabs* in Zimbabwe. The publications also threw valuable insights on a number of issues associated with the *e-taxicab*, such as the earnings of taxi operators that were affiliated to the technological *e-taxicab* apps, the subscriptions that they were required to pay the app providers, the dangers and risks that were encountered by taxicab operators using *e-taxicabs*, clashes between operators of *e-taxicabs* and operators of traditional metered taxicabs, the advantages of *e-taxicabs* such as convenience, safety, affordability, easy-of use, cost-effectiveness to consumers, flexibility, and transparency, the traditional metered taxicab's stiff regulatory and legislative operational conditions, the unfair competition between the two, the need for authorities to, instead of viewing *e-taxicabs* as disruptive and illegal, but to seek to reform the industry's legal framework to make it adaptive to new technology in order to foster its sustainability, the need to benchmark with regional and international standards, the need for dialogue between industry stakeholders such as taxi operators, their associations and consumers, and the need to align with the country's legal framework. The internet also served valuable information on (i) the step-by-step guidance and procedures for setting up taxicab business in Zimbabwe, (ii) the nature of operation of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development, and the Road Motor Transportation, in whose ambit the traditional taxicab enterprising herein studied falls.

Outside the internet, other notable literature included Dumba's (2017) case study on the city of Harare's informal public transport experiences which shed light on the causes of the negative externalities manifested in the behaviour of informal public transport drivers, some of whom are undeniably part of the traditional taxicab sector herein studied. In particular, Dumba (2017) unpacked "the relationship between informal public transport driver behavior and the prevailing regulatory framework" in Zimbabwe. Meanwhile Kuri (2015) also highlights the benefits of placing tracking systems on the

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taxi enterprises' vehicles. According to Kuri (2015), such GPS- and GSM-backed real time taxi monitoring and passenger inventory systems were valuable mechanisms that boosted taxicab profits and prevented vehicle abuse by its crews.

As a capstone, this literature review's major strength was its insights on the impact of technology on the taxicab industry in Zimbabwe, South Africa and the United States of America. It revealed that while currently surging in the country's taxicab landscape, issues of technological revolution in the taxicab market were not actually new abroad. The major loophole in this literature review, however, was its feebleness in resolving the knowledge gap on the nature, scope and challenges of the traditional taxicab sector in Zimbabwe, at least from a scholarly point of view. While issues of diversity in the traditional taxicab industry abroad were only reflected as stemming from changing consumer tastes diverting options towards e-based taxi services, in Zimbabwe, apart from this dimension being also a reality, diversity basically meant industry invasion by piracy, and this is a critical aspect of this study, but one that was not covered in the reviewed literature. The literature review did not cover issues to do with the attitudes of traditional taxi operators, apart from simply highlighting that they were in conflict with *e-taxicab* drivers. There was, therefore, need for research to unveil their deeper responses, what they were doing outside the "clashes" such as those noted in the case of South Africa, for instance, to deal with their situation. Reviewed literature did not also cover sector-based costs of the industry's transformation, let alone the administrative concerns it invoked. These loopholes catalysed the clarion call for more comprehensive research studies on this critical sector of the economy. Hence, failure of the reviewed literature to squarely delve into the predatory nature of the industry's transformation provided a firm justification for this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The emergence of diversity and technology in the traditional taxicab enterprise sector in Zimbabwe appeared to represent a potential incident of uncontrolled change or transformation to the situation and operation of that sector which if unabated had the potential of annihilating it. This study was, therefore, informed by Change Theory. As propounded by Kurt Lewin (1947), Change Theory's three-stage step-by-step model of unfreezing, changing and refreezing explains the discourse of the process of change,

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providing insights on how appropriate transformation of the social world may be initiated and administered in a manner that is amicable with desired goals (Hussain, 2018:124). Reinholz and Andrews (2020) regard Change Theory as a subset of change research and as a "framework of ideas, supported by evidence that explains some aspect of change beyond a single project….. (and) ….. represent(ing) generalised knowledge about how change works". According to *Prosci*, in an online Blog, (*Prosci* 2024), Change Theory examines "how and why transformations occur within individuals and organizations. It provides frameworks and models that explain the processes, mechanisms, and factors driving or hindering change……. (and) offers a structured approach to implementing, managing and sustaining transformation". Reinholz and Andrews (2020) argue that "change initiatives that are not informed by change research (including theory) have two major limitations: (1) the initiative is less likely to succeed, because it does not leverage the wealth of knowledge already developed by change researchers, and (2) without building on what is already known in the field, the initiative itself is less likely to contribute to generalizable knowledge, because it will be more difficult to cast the findings of the study in terms of existing scholarship".

Apart from identifying drivers of change, stages of change, resistance to change and ways of making change sustainable as key components of effective change, Prosci (2024) also identifies *Prosci's* ADKAR model, Kurt Lewin's Change Management Model and John Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, among others, as useful models for guiding effective change. As Reinholz and Andrews (2020) allude:

"Change Theory and research can inform our understanding of the context of a change effort, including relevant communities, actors, and stakeholders; existing policies, practices, and beliefs; capacity and receptiveness of the targets of the change effort; and historical, political, and sociocultural factors. Viewing change as occurring within a complex system is important because context will influence the impact of a change intervention".

Hence in this study, Change Theory was appropriated to provide the background framework for initiating and administering the desired change in the taxicab sector.

In this research study, the situation of the country's traditional taxicab sector was

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designated as the dependent variable, while all forms of uncontrolled diversity and technology emerging and flourishing in that sector were juxtaposed as the independent variables. The study, therefore, supposed that as the uncontrolled proliferation of diversity and technology in the traditional taxicab market increased, the potential of causing/influencing undesirable changes in the sector also increased, and vice versa. This scenario was confirmed in *The Chronicle* of June 20, 2024 and *The Standard* of 28 September 2024, for instance, which both painted a grim situation of the traditional taxicab in Zimbabwe on account of the uncontrolled influx of e-*taxicab* operations. Sætren and Laumann (2007), view competent change management as a necessary framework that advocated for properly-designed and effective transitional process from a traditional business culture to new desired business conditions, further arguing that unless appropriate care is exercised, poorly-planned change is almost always disruptive, while effective change ensures the safety of all stakeholders affected by it. Competent change is also one unobstructed by uncontrolled conflict or violence. As Prayogi (2023:38) notes, such should be viewed as a "normal condition" necessary for catalysing positive change in society. Hence this raises calls for violence- and conflict-free change in the taxicab sector to afford it the much needed harmonious settlement of operational schisms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Case study and phenomenological research designs were used in this study. Despite the limited generalisability of its findings (Annamalah, 2024), the case study design was chosen on account of its powerful potential to generate rich qualitative data "in the real world rather than in artificially created settings" (Krusenvik, 2016:6). The case study was chosen for its rigor in examining real world scenarios in which the studied phenomenon's contextual factors needed to be captured for the purpose of unlocking broader insights of its characteristic (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019:109). The case study design made the situation of the traditional taxicab herein studied clearer, and its environment more informative in the pursuit of the study's objectives. As Takahashi and Araujo (2019:109) observe, the case study design provides an in-depth and contextual analysis of the phenomenon under study. It also provided the researcher direct engagement with the taxicab sector's stakeholders, prompting appreciation of its situation from

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the perspective of people involved in its day to day operations. As for the phenomenological design, its preference in this study was hinged on a criterion that sought to provide the researcher with the opportunity to immerse himself into the studied phenomenon, that is to say, the situation of the traditional taxicab in the case-study city. As Adeniran and Tayo-Ladega (2024:90-91) aver, "The researcher becomes a participant in the phenomenological research by employing self-perceptions of the world …. (and) delves deeper into reality to unearth common life experiences and examines the researcher's viewpoint as an obvious event".

A major city located in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province was selected for the case study. However any other location in the country could have been chosen for the study as long as it had a definable traditional taxicab industry. The choice of the case-study city for this study was merely a product of a mix between convenience and budget factors, and was, therefore, influenced by limited resources and its proximity to the researchers' location. In the case study, in-depth investigative interactions between the researcher and the industry stakeholders, namely the taxicab operators, taxicab services users, e-taxi platform providers, and the officials of administrative agencies mandated to administer, supervise and regulate the operations of this vital industry were conducted. The administrative officials involved included municipal agency officials, tax collection agency officials, law and order maintenance and enforcement agency officials, vehicle inspection and traffic safety control officials, and Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Development officials. Involving these stakeholders both enabled the researcher to understand the operational environment of traditional taxicab enterprising in the case-study city from the view-point and the experiences of that industry's stakeholders.

This was also expected to guarantee data credibility, validity, reliability and dependability, as the data obtained would have been generated right from the participants or people that operated or benefited directly from business transactions in the sector and who, therefore, because of their vested interests in the sector and their proximity to its day-to-day operations, naturally possessed first-hand knowledge and experience of what was really transpiring in that specific sector under review. Hence, data collection involved drawing knowledge or experiences from the views of industry stakeholders.

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On account of the limitations on time, financial resources and access to official statistics of the traditional metered taxicabs, the pseudo-traditional taxicab, *Mshikashika* pirate taxi and the novel *e-taxicab* in the case-study city, convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants from the myriads that were available. Each particular participant was carefully selected on the basis of convenience - their availability and willingness to participate. Selection was also purposive in that it pursued a preplanned criterion that, among other factors, took into consideration mainly each individual's relevance and their official responsibilities within the framework of their respective organisations. Thus, a total of one municipal official, one official from the national tax collection agency, one official from the Ministry of Transport, one official from the national law and order enforcement agency, one official from the national traffic safety control agency, and two officials from one e-taxi app provider, were interviewed. Additionally, 20 taxi operators and 10 taxi service users were also interviewed. On two occasions, this researcher also had to pose as a ride-hailing operator in order to gain deeper insight into the enterprise's operations.

A good deal of the interviews and discussions with taxicab operators were conducted while the operators rested or waited for their next clients. While a couple of taxicab operators generously granted opportunity for the researcher to chat with their clients, agency officials were visited and engaged at their offices. Throughout the study, elaborate steps were taken to strictly observe the necessary ethical considerations. Individual consent was first sought ahead of participation. Effort was also made to ensure that participants both understood the academic nature of the study and that the protection of their identities and credentials was guaranteed. Individuals, therefore, participated freely, without fear, prejudice or coercion.

Finally, data presentation involved the systematic outline and projection of individual interviewee's views or statements, personal observations and experience that were brought in from the field. Data analysis entailed interpreting (in the manner of verstehen) the meaning that the industry stakeholders that were involved during data collection in the field placed on their own experiences, views, thoughts or intellectual reflections regarding the interview questions that were posed before them. Thematic analysis was used as the technique for data analysis. Thematic analysis involved the

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identification of salient themes in the responses obtained from stakeholders during interviews and discussions with the researcher. The themes were then analysed in relation to the study's objectives, in a manner that drew meaning out of the participants' views. The research's results were presented in the form of explanations of the interviewee's views or statements, personal observations and experience.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Modus Operandi of the Traditional Taxicab Sector in Zimbabwe: the Extent and Motivation for and Effects of Diversity and Technology

Based on the evidence obtained from the researcher's observations and participatory experience, interviews and discussions with stakeholders, this study was able to establish that traditional taxicab enterprising in the case-study city was indeed a vital economic sector – one that constituted an indispensable citadel of fast logistical intra-city shuttle transfer services for consumers, and at times, also of special consignments of cargo, transiting within, across or through the city's central business district, often connecting with business partners in other parts or ends of the city, transacting business deals in one location of the city or the other, as well as connecting home with the office or with educational institutions or recreational spots. Taxicab services satisfied a variety of consumers who included walk-in clients; previously served clients calling for repeat services; and or completely new clients walking-in or referred by previously served clients; or who used telephones to contact the operators for service.

Although the administrative legal framework only recognised the regulated taxicab, this study found at least five taxi variants operating in the case-study city's taxi sector. The first one, the traditional metered taxicab, was the most original and, therefore, the official version of traditional taxicab enterprising in Zimbabwe. The second, herein code-named the *pseudo-traditional taxicab*, was found to be relatively new, having emerged roughly at the turn of the new millennium. The third variant was the *Mshikashika* pirate taxi, followed by the *Kombi-mini-bus taxi* and then, lastly, the novel *e-taxicab*. While the rest were generally unregulated, the operations of the traditional metered taxicab were regulated under the Road Motor Transportation Act, Chapter 13:15 (which repealed Chapter 13:10 of 1997), which fell under the purview of the

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Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development.

According to this Act, a metered taxicab is "a motor vehicle which has seating accommodation for not more than seven passengers and which is used to carry passengers for hire or reward." On the basis of this definition, other taxi variants like *Mshikashika* pirate taxi and kombi-minibus taxi did not fit this category, as they conveyed more passengers than those prescribed by law. However, the pseudo-traditional taxicab and the *e-taxicab* did fit this criteria, save only for their non-regulatory nature. This study further established that the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, via specified municipal legal instruments, had oversight regulatory and/or supervisory obligations over the metered taxicab once its incorporation to do business within its areas of jurisdiction is completed. Similar administrative mandates over the traditional metered taxicab were also enjoyed by the departments of law and order maintenance, taxation, traffic safety and control agencies.

The study established that the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development's Road Motor Transportation unit was responsible for the incorporation of taxicab enterprises. It first issued an operator's license, and then afterwards, through its subsidiary - the Central Vehicle Registration (CVR), registered the vehicle as a taxicab. The vehicle then assumed a pair of red-on-white registration plates which distinguished it as a public service vehicle. The Department of Road Motor Transportation then further issued a route authority, which restricted the taxicab's operations to a radius of 40 kilometers from the city's centre. The municipal authority then issued a parking rank and a renewable three-months parking disc. A price-gauging meter and an overhead 'taxi' label were also mandatory, as distinguishing features separating the taxicab from other non-taxi traffic. After its incorporation, the taxicab was further subjected to supervision by the law and order maintenance, and traffic safety and control agencies, which invoked the Road Traffic Act to demand the vehicle's roadworthiness, the possession of a valid driver's license, a defensive driver's certificate and legal age restrictions.

The study further found that the legal framework for taxicab enterprising in Zimbabwe, as administered under the Department of Road Motor Transportation, mandated the taxicab to religiously honour its tax obligations to the relevant authorities.

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Ability to produce a tax clearance certificate from the national revenue authority (ZIMRA), and the national social security agency (NSSA)'s certificate of affiliation constituted a strict pre-condition for the renewal of one's operational license by the Department of Road Motor Transportation. The study observed also that the local authority levied revenue from the taxicab by way of enforcing the purchase of or renewal of parking discs on their expiry at the end of three months.

Nature and Extent of Diversity and Technology on Traditional Taxicab Enterprising

At the time of this study, the operations of the traditional metered taxicab appeared to be overwhelmed and terminally choked by the operations of four formidable non-regulated entrant taxicab variants that fiercely competed to do business in the taxicab market. These were Mshikashika pirate taxis, the *kombi mini-bus*, the *pseudo-traditional* and the *e-taxicab*. The first two had steadily risen into an integral part of the urban commuter transport system in Zimbabwe, following that sector's market inefficiencies apparently dated back to the mid-1980s and 1990s, and which worsened in the post-millennium austerity era. Although they did not use the traditional metered taxicab's modus operandi in their operations, their clientele-base was gnawing the business orbit of the traditional metered taxi industry. Their gladiator behaviour in the taxicab sector stemmed from their ability to charge very low prices for shared rides, their omni-presence and easy availability at almost every corner of the city, their quicker fill-to-capacity, and romping maneuvres through congested city streets, avenues and highways. The study noted that competition for clients between the traditional metered taxicab and the duo was both aggressive and formidable, thereby elbowing out the former into oblivion.

The *pseudo-traditional taxicab*, relatively subtle in its operational manner, was quite impactful, devouring much business from the traditional metered taxicab. This taxicab was in fact a proto-type of the traditional metered taxicab, at least in terms of its modus operandi, save only that it was, among other essential things, non-regulated, non-red-on-white plated, non-metered, seldom labeled and deficient on the use of the price-gauging meter. Evidence showed that the *pseudo-traditional taxicab* variant was, in fact, a reminiscent product of much transformation

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of the traditional metered taxicab that had taken place over time owing to its resilient struggle to survive the predatory operational conditions that were brewed mainly by the country's inflationary post-millennium economic decadence, a declined clientele-base owed to constrained consumer spending; spiked taxicab operational costs, and the formidable competition from the *Mshikashika* pirate taxi and *kombi-minibus taxicab* variants. It appeared that during the heat of the competition, straddling the regulations and operational standards upheld by law was the traditional metered taxicab's survival tactic in the face of its bewilderment at the lapse in administrative control - a control which was certainly expected to restrain the spiraling inflation and also to keep the unregulated market intruders at bay.

While the traditional metered taxicab had to strictly adhere to regulations and operational standards, the unregulated competitors simply walked off with zero-tax surplus, without ever caring to acquire the costly parking discs from council or to renew any operating licenses at the Department of Road Motor Transportation's offices. Thus the *pseudo-traditional taxicab* was not only competing fiercely with, but was also depriving traditional metered taxicabs of, a significant amount of their potential market share. Apart from the pressures of piracy-instigated diversity, and the voracious *pseudo-traditional taxicab*, the predatory revolution of the traditional taxicab industry, was also powered by bouts of innovation and technology that had lately manifested itself in the form of digitised *e-taxicab* operational apps. The effects of this new innovation dawning on the traditional taxicab market in Zimbabwe are currently not much researched, at least in a scientific dimension, and therefore remain relatively unexplored. There have lately been notable strides committed to innovating the traditional taxicab market in the country. Literature review showed that these efforts were leveraged on the global technological achievements to invent digitised *e-taxi* operational apps. In 2021, for instance, the country's major cellular service provider, Econet, introduced a digital operational app called *Vhaya.* Other digital e-taxi apps to come aboard lately included *Hwindi*, and *Indrive* both set up in 2023, *Bolt*, *TaxiF*, *Toda*, *QuickRide* and *iTransi*. This study observed that on account of the paralysing and predatory effects of the *e-taxi* operations, the traditional metered taxicab was being forced to gradually transition into the mist of oblivious antiquity.

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Motivational Factors for Diversity and Technology in Traditional Taxicab Enterprising

This study identified a number of factors in the case-study city that appeared to power the dynamo of the traditional metered taxicab market's transformation. Chief among these were consumer appetite for diversity in intra-city shuttle services, appetite for cost-effective, user-friendly and convenient taxi service, desire for enhanced safety of both the users and the operators; desire to boost the efficiency of the taxicab sector leveraging on technology, the influence of the country's national policy drive baying for upper middle income economy status by 2030, and the quest to move with the times by aligning industry to standards and norms of international practice. It seemed that the traditional metered taxicab's modus operandi was generally becoming viewed as archaic, antedate and antediluvian. Consumers in the case-study city's taxi market appeared to be obsessed with moving out of the 'tradition' and flirting with other transportation options available for their intra-city shuttles and transfers, thereby affording the traditional metered taxicab's rivals significant profit shares in the taxi market. It also appeared that the insurgency of hordes of unregulated intruders in the traditional taxicab market was motivated by the desire to enter that market but in a manner that eliminated the costly administrative protocol which, if strictly adhered to, had the potential to restrict entry. It is also possible that the traditional taxicab sector was regarded as a ready and convenient safety net for hordes of young employment seekers roaming the streets in the case-study city.

Predatory Effects of Diversity and Technology on Traditional Taxicab Enterprising

At the time of this study, a capstone observation revealed a gloomy situation for the traditional metered taxicab. Its council-designated parking ranks were both undiscernible owing to lack of clear and proper markings and largely deserted by the rightful taxicab but infested by the unregulated taxicab or by ordinary traffic whose owners carried out business nearby. Where the red-on-white registration plates were occasionally spotted, they rarely patronised the correct parking ranks, the vehicle was seldom labelled, price-gauge meter was sure to be missing, and the overhead 'taxi' label was either missing or mounted on non-designated vehicles. Competition from rivals was so intense that

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steadfastly clinging to the modus operandi of the traditional taxicab was tantamount to voluntary self-dissipation. As diversity intensified, the sector's market share melted; and as customers' loyalty became unsettled, metered taxicab operators lost confidence. The success of diversity in the taxicab market was, therefore, essentially predatory and a paralysis of the traditional taxicab sector.

On the other hand, the predatory effects of technological innovation on the traditional metered taxicab market were also observed. Premised on the urgency to promote state-of-the-art efficiency and effectiveness in taxi service delivery, internet-based digital apps downloaded and saved on one's smart-phone afforded unmatched convenience to both the taxi driver and clients. *E-taxi* clients now connected their taxicab simply by invoking the digital app saved on their smartphones, clear of the hustle of having to keep telephone contact numbers of their favorite taxicab in their diary or having to walk to the nearest taxi rank to look for a taxicab as was the case for yester-year metered taxicabs. Hence, one could now contract taxi services while enjoying the comfort of their home, office or from wherever they were located in the city. Taxi drivers affiliated to such *e-taxi* apps also now simply sat in their cars waiting to connect with prospective clients as they logged-in for service on the *e-taxi* app. Ultimately, such huge *e-taxi* attractiveness and favorability to both the taxi operator and clients exacerbated the predatory paralysis of the traditional metered taxicab in the case-study city's taxi market.

Sector-Based Costs and Administrative Concerns Stemming from Increased and Unabated Diversity and Technology in Zimbabwe's Taxicab Enterprise Sector

This study unearthed a streak of challenges and administrative concerns associated with the traditional metered taxicab market's ongoing uncontrolled transformation. These appeared to cumber the traditional metered taxicab's efficiency and effectiveness in the case-study city.

Sector-Based Costs

This study observed that the diversified taxi-operator-flooded market had financial and social effects for the traditional metered taxicab. Owing to the unabated skewed competition and the shrinkage of the traditional metered taxicab's market share, some traditional taxicabs were closing shop

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and drivers were getting redundant. *E-taxi* enterprising tended to be exclusive rather than inclusive or universal. Only younger people with sound information communication technology (ICT) literacy or with access to smartphones or computers could enjoy it. For this reason, *e-taxi* service appeared to appeal mainly to the younger generations with such endowment, thus excluding the majority of older non-technologically empowered persons. However, possession of smart-phones or computers did not guarantee access to e-taxi services as one still needed data bundles purchasing power. This was a serious huddle as un-affording e-taxicab drivers could not be constantly available online to be visible to online clients.

Another challenge observed was that the *e-taxi* app providers did not screen out non-taxicab operators from providing e-taxi services. Rather, provision of *e-taxi* service was open to anybody with a car. Hence, immeasurable hordes of non-traditional taxicab enthusiasts such as the *Mshikashika* pirate taxi, pseudo-traditional taxi and ordinary motorists were found competing fiercely with the traditional metered taxicab in the case-study city. A dysfunction of such stiff competition was its distortion of taxi-rides' prices. *E-taxi* prices for rides were far below cost and therefore non-cost-effective. Nevertheless, the non-taxicab enthusiasts never minded it, and still snapped business from the disillusioned traditional taxicab even at such 'unprofitable' prices, for their 'loot' still left them well-off - shy of mandatory regulatory overheads obligation familiar to the traditional metered taxicab and with zero-tax incurred. This study also noted some safety and security loophole in case the taxicab or the client's app-carrying smart phone 'accidentally' fell in the hands of unscrupulous third-parties. While e-taxi clients were almost always sure to get taxi drivers that were rigorously screened by the digital app provider, it was worrisome that the same privilege was un-partaken by the drivers.

Administrative Concerns

Although competition in the traditional taxicab sector was viewed as applaudable for the purpose of boosting efficiency, the imminent dissipation of the traditional metered taxi sector and its associated repercussions was apparent. While *e-taxi* service was viewed as an antidote to 'backwardness' in the traditional metered taxi market, some contentious views regarded it as fueling the process of taxicab de-ranking, which in turn huddled municipal

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revenue accrual from sales of the renewable parking discs. De-ranking also compromised the traceability of any given taxicabs if that became necessary for administrative and or security purposes. Tax collection agencies also suffered the hardship of compromised revenue mobilisation from the elusive hordes of non-taxicab enthusiasts competing in the market. Since *e-taxi* service was a relatively novel development, there were fears too that its supervision or regulation might be incompatible with the legal operational frameworks upheld by the Department of Road Motor Transportation, law and order enforcement and traffic safety and control agencies.

The study further noted among other infirmities, much disunity in the traditional taxicab community and deficiency in collectiveness cum trade unionisation. Fragmented inter-agency collaboration among administrative agencies with supervisory and regulatory obligations over the taxicab sector was also blamed for weak policy coordination, innovation and adjustment. When asked whether the administrative agencies in the case-study city ever met to deliberate on issues affecting the traditional taxi market, the responses showed this had but not happened in a long time. Ultimately, some critical administrative matters in the taxicab market appeared to end up as 'nobody's or anybody's business', with some agencies claiming or disclaiming or in some situations, contesting responsibility over them. Some agencies were apparently unclear on the delineation of their roles over taxicab enterprising. This complicated the traditional metered taxicab's clarity over who exactly it was accountable to - for instance between the municipal authority and the ministry of transport – regarding its overall day to day welfare.

Attitudes of Traditional Taxicab Operators towards Diversity and Technology

The study found that the attitudes of traditional taxicab operators towards the ensuing piracy instigated diversity and the unabated effects of the *e-taxi* service were varied. Some expressed anger while others showed disillusionment. No cases of injuries, fatalities or damage on cars were noted in the case study city as compared to those stated in the literature review in the case of the South African taxicab operators responding to similar scenarios. The traditional taxi operators in the case study city did not leverage on unions or any form of collectiveness as conduits for dealing with challenges besetting the sector. Their

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conspicuous reluctance on enlisting the support of state authorities in restraining piracy and the *e-taxi* service's devastating influence appeared to indicate their doubts on the potential of their own *locus standi* on the matter. However reliance on vehement expression of annoyance at the market intruders as a way of protecting their share of the market did not seem to pay much dividends. While intruders were sometimes deterred by such expressions, the study found that they still succeeded to pick up clients at sites in the city which the traditional taxicab operators were not able to man.

The study also observed the traditional taxicab's attempt to sustain its market share by using cleanliness of both the car and the driver; ensuring high customer care and etiquette standards as a way to retain loyalty of their established clients in the face of growing diversity and the influence of *e-taxi* service. It was also notable that, of the twenty taxicab operators that were interviewed or discussed with, nearly half were already registered on the *e-taxi* digital apps. However, these were relatively younger operators with sound ICT literacy skills. This meant that they could double dip in their operations, on one hand as full-time traditional taxicab operators and on the other hand also doubling as *e-taxi* service providers, almost to the chagrin of their ICT skills deprived counterparts who seemed effectively stuck in the romanticism of the traditional taxicab. The ICT skills deprived traditional taxicab operators also pretended to ignore the *e-taxi* service - often denigrating it and pouring contempt and scorn on its growing influence and taking solace in the flaky hopes that the *e-taxi* would soon collapse due to its reliance on distorted pricing systems. Such hopes were reinforced by their *e-taxi* affiliated counterparts' lamentations over their inability to consistently stay online on the digital *e-taxi* apps on account of the costly data bundles and the formidable smartphone maintenance costs.

DISCUSSION

The study confirmed the observation obtained in the literature review, that central to the modus operandi of traditional taxicab enterprising in Zimbabwe, lay a legal and regulatory framework anchored on the Road Motor Transportation Act, Chapter 13:15 which repealed Chapter 13:10 of 1997 and which is administered through the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development. This, therefore, meant that any purported taxicab enterprising activity including that of the four taxicab variants identified in this

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study namely the *pseudo-traditional taxicab*, the *Mshikashika* pirate taxi, the *Kombi-mini-bus taxi* and the *e-taxicab* is *ultra vires* of this regulatory framework and is thus an intrusion in that sector. The intrusion appeared to be leveraged by the archaic, antedate and antediluvian condition of the traditional taxicab's modus operandi and catalysed by growing consumer appetite for diversified, faster, cheaper, user-friendly, convenient and app-based service options in the sector and the prospective investor's desire to enter the taxicab market in an informal, regulatory-free and non-costly way.

While part of the reviewed literature pointed to some of the above stated factors, the unabated contravention of the taxicab sector's legal and regulatory framework raised numerous outcomes that invoked significant sector based and administrative concerns. For instance, stiff competition with unregulated contenders elbowed out the traditional taxicab operators from business, thereby depriving them of substantial market returns and jobs. In addition to concerns over potential administrative ineptness, fragmented inter-agency collaboration and weak policy coordination, innovation and adjustment and its usual associated potential for administrative corruption, this study also raised worries over the uncontrolled taxicab market turbulence's influence towards fueled taxicab de-ranking in the case-study city, which effectively lead to compromised municipal revenue from sales of renewable parking discs required to clear traditional taxicabs for operation. Furthermore, the unregistered taxicab operators' ability to easily evaded tax, safety and traffic control obligations was also a matter of concern.

In light of the above, the cardinal point to digest in this discussion is that the findings of this study showed that unregulated transformation of the traditional taxicab enterprise herein studied has subdued and deformed the nature, scope and modus operandi of the traditional taxicab sector in the case-study city in much impactful and far-reaching ways. The study's findings showed that piracy-instigated diversity in the taxicab sector and the euphoric obsession with the growing influence of the *e-taxicab* had thoroughly dealt an extensive defoliation on the traditional taxicab's business. Unfettered diversification and the associated technological innovation in this vital sector of the economy appeared to manufacture undesired outcomes, at least in view of their potential negative impact on the country's economic growth and development. At the time of this study, the traditional taxicab sector appeared so heavily predated by this

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uncontrolled revolution that its survival and sustainability seemed to hang precariously in the balance. Given these observations, it may be asserted that the traditional taxicab sector in the case-study city was grappling with a serious threat of annihilation, which warranted its situation a critical issue of national concern. This is important, for in terms of the legal framework, the traditional taxicab is a recognised provider of a critical service, a contributor to national fiscus and municipal revenue and a staunch creator of employment.

On account of the above facts, this study, therefore, recommends that government or its subsidiary agencies mandated for such functions ought to consult and engage widely in the affairs of this vital sector of the economy in order to institute relevant and appropriate corrective or adaptive policy measures and initiatives that seek to safeguard and optimise the operations of the traditional taxicab sector and its vital contribution to the country's socio-economic development. In the same vein, there is need for enhanced safety and security for the traditional taxicab operators, service users and the protection of the sector against potential dissipation on account of uncontrolled change or development in the sector. There is also need to find ways to: (i) encourage the adult age-group of ICT-deficient traditional taxicab operators and their clientele to seek to embrace technology; (ii) promote firmer inter-agency collaboration for effective administrative decision-making and control; and (iii) assist the traditional taxicab sector to unionize in order to protect and defend its own sector's interests. In addition to contributing to the body of knowledge on the nature, scope and challenges of the traditional taxicab enterprise in Zimbabwe, this study is also impactful for researchers, entrepreneurs and public agencies with a keen interest on the country's taxicab market.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of diversity and technology on the traditional taxicab industry in Zimbabwe. The aim was to obtain empirical science-based knowledge of the costs and administrative concerns involved and the possible future prospects of this vital sector of the economy. The study's results were hoped to fill the scholarly and literature gap existing on the effects of diversity and technology in that critical enterprising sector. The study was also intended to generate reliable facts that could

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be useful in guiding policy and administrative interventions targeted at instituting corrective and adaptive measures to save, rejuvenate and further develop the traditional taxicab industry in the face of the threat posed by the effects of uncontrolled diversity and technology besieging the sector. The findings from the study show that the traditional taxicab enterprise sector in the case-study city is indeed at a dire cross-roads with its sustainability facing imminent demise on account of the disruptive toll of a grid-lock of predatory cross-cutting market imperfections and inefficiencies stemming from the uncontrolled sector invasion by piracy and technological innovation. Non-regulated operators such as the *Mushikashika* pirate-taxi, GPS and app-based *e-taxicab* and the *pseudo-traditional taxicab* were found to be major contenders that grabbed significant shares of the industry's market in stiff competition with the traditional taxicab. However, since the business of these three unregulated competitors was extensively *ultra vires* of the conventional taxicab's legal and regulatory framework, it meant that the taxicab sector's market was grossly imperfect and inefficient and therefore required administrative intervention for urgent rectification.

The study also showed that until or unless such administrative intervention came to materialise, the traditional taxicab sector in the case-study city might be sliding into the annals of antiquity books; with the country missing out on the sector's potential and significant contribution to national development. Two significant limitations however appeared to plague this study. On account of the constraints on time and financial resources, the study fell short of netting a larger sample of participants, which probably limited its scope. Furthermore, since the findings were reflective of the situation existing in the case-study city, their generalisability across other contexts might probably require a little amount of caution to allow room for any possible variations that might arise in other cities of the country. Naturally, this study is hoped to stimulate reflections leading to further studies on this topic. An exploration of what administrative and regulatory agencies are presently working on in a bid to resuscitate the traditional taxicab industry and its success is probably an inviting area for further study.

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