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Self publishing: towards sustainable book development in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The research was triggered by the observations made by the researcher during his industrial attachment period at Lleon Publishers from July 2010 up to August 2011 that many manuscripts were being rejected by publishers because they were not textbook manuscripts. The researcher thought of a possible solution to this problem as self publishing, after reading a study by Bowker (2009) which stated that self published books sold twice the number of traditional published books in United States of America. The researcher was not sure about the state of self publishing in Zimbabwe and this gave birth to this research entitled self: towards book development in Zimbabwe. The researcher assumed that there are few self publishers in Zimbabwe, thus the authors with rejected manuscripts would stand a chance to publish their works, whilst book development is achieved. The purpose of the research was to identify the state of self publishing in Zimbabwe (publications published, market share and publishing stakeholder's perceptions over the self publishing phenomenon) and analyse if self publishing industry is contributing to the country's book development. Literature review revealed that there is growth of self publishing in the book industry, but self publishers need to work on improving the quality of their publications and they have to utilise the opportunity of marketing their products on the international market. To gather and collect data an exploratory research design was used. This research design was ideal for the study because it is conducted in a situation where there are few or earlier studies to refer to. Questionnaires, document analysis and interviews were also used to obtaining information relevant to the study and triangulation technique was used to measure the validity of the data collected. Judgemental sampling and snow ball sampling methods were used to help archive accuracy in the study. Selected book shops and self publishers in Harare and Bulawayo, with a total of 17 respondents were studied, although the researcher wanted to cover the whole country. Factors like limited time, lack of funds to travel the whole country, hindered the researcher from reaching the other self publishers in the other cities in Zimbabwe. Data collected revealed that most of the bookshops are aware of self publishing growth, as they have stocks of self published books, while self publishers showed that they are on a mission to cover all the publishing gaps they come across. In spite of the challenges faced, self publishers are optimistic of their growth and impact in the book business industry while competing competitively alongside the traditional publishers. It can be concluded that whilst the book industry is monopolised by the traditional publishers, self publishing industry is also growing, although very slowly as compared to that in countries like United States of America and South Africa. The researcher recommends self publishers to be more than just self publishers, but to be active-training authors self publishing, forming a self publishing association, while also lobbying for support from the developmental agencies.