



Formerly the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, Botswana¹ adopted its new name upon independence in 1966. Four decades of uninterrupted civilian leadership, progressive social policies, and significant capital investment have made Botswana one of the most dynamic economies in Africa.

Mineral extraction, principally diamond mining, dominates economic activity, though tourism is a growing sector due to the country's conservation practices and extensive nature preserves. Botswana has one of the world's highest known rates of HIV/AIDS infection, but also one of Africa's most progressive and comprehensive programmes for dealing with the disease.

Due to the country's location in the sub-tropical high-pressure belt of the southern hemisphere in the interior of Southern Africa and away from Oceanic influences, rainfall is low and temperatures are high. There is, therefore, high inter-annual variability of rainfall and drought is a recurring element of Botswana's climate.

Economy

At Independence in 1966, Botswana was dependent mainly on agriculture for its livelihood. Beef production was the mainstay of the economy in terms of output and export earnings. Prospects for rapid economic development seemed bleak and Government depended on foreign aid not only for investment projects but also to finance most of its current expenditures.

However, with the discovery of diamonds in the early 1970s, the country has recorded a remarkable social and economic transformation. Government revenues come from minerals; the Southern African Customs Union (SACU); income from investment of foreign exchange reserves and non-mineral income tax; and the recently introduced Value Added Tax (VAT). The economy has grown at an average rate of about nine percent during the

PROFILE	
Population:	1.7 million***
GDP (Current US\$):	7.5 billion***
Per Capita Income: (Current US\$)	3,530 (Atlas method)*** 8,170 (at PPP)**
Surface Area:	581.7 thousand sq. km
Life Expectancy:	41.4 years**
Literacy (%):	78.9 (of ages 15 and above)**
HDI Rank:	128***
Sources: - World Development Indicators Database, World Bank, 2004 - Human Development Report Statistics, UNDP, 2004 (**) For the year 2002 (***) For the year 2003	

past two decades. During 2004/5, the economy grew by 5.7 percent in real terms, a slower performance compared to the 2002/3-growth rate of 7.8 percent.

Competition Evolution and Environment

Botswana does not have a competition law. However, a competition policy and law has long been recognised. The policy is, therefore, at the final phase of development as the Cabinet is now considering it for approval. This, will then, be followed by the development of the competition law.

The Economic Mapping Study, which informed the development of Botswana's competition policy, identified some laws that regulate entry into general business or entry into particular business sectors in Botswana. Obviously, these laws have a direct impact on the limits to competition in the market.

The Companies Act

The Companies Act² is the first key statute regulating market entry or the establishment of a business in

* Original paper submitted in September 2005. Revised in January 2006

1 <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/am.html>

2 Cap. 42:02,

Botswana. The Companies Act provides rules and regulations on the formation, registration, management and administration, and dissolution of various types of companies.

A review of the Act was commissioned, with a brief that underlined the need for a legal and regulatory framework that would encourage a competitive or less restrictive commercial environment, and would facilitate domestic commercial activity and the flow of foreign investment. In addition, required was a regulatory framework.

The review of the Act has been completed. A new law is in the making, proposing drastic changes of the rules, regulations and procedures on incorporation and registration, management and administration of some companies, and shareholding and dealings in shares.

The Industrial Development Act

This Act regulates entry into manufacturing businesses that are not otherwise regulated by specific pieces of legislation. The Act establishes an Industrial Licensing Authority responsible for, amongst others, the supervision of industrial development, and for the issue of licences for the manufacture of products offered for sale in Botswana.

Amongst the grounds listed in Section 5, on which the Authority can refuse to grant a manufacturing licence, are the following:

- a. That the capital, technical skills or raw materials available are, in the opinion of the Authority, inadequate to secure the successful establishment and operation of the enterprise; and failure of the applicant's enterprise might prejudice the successful development of the industry concerned;
- b. That a licence for the manufacture of the proposed product 'has already been granted to some other person in respect of the same part of Botswana and such licence is an exclusive licence';
- c. That the granting of the licence, in the opinion of the Authority, would not be 'in the best interests of the economy or public will of Botswana or of the particular industry concerned'; and
- d. That the applicant has already been issued with or applied for licences in respect of four or more manufacturing enterprises under this Act, and could only be considered for a further licence with the written approval of the Minister.

These grounds reflect an attempt to affect an industrial development policy that has, since, undergone important

revisions and reorientation.³ Botswana's industrial development policy still is broadly concerned with diversification of the economy. The revised policy takes into account changes to domestic and international trading environments brought about by globalisation and regional and multilateral trading arrangements. It advocates reorientation of industrial development towards the opportunities and challenges presented by these developments.

Exclusive manufacturing licences are not compatible with the new, highly competitive international trading environment and, particularly, with Botswana's commitments under the WTO. The revised policy recommends amendments to the Act to remove provisions relating to the grant of such licences.⁴

The Trade and Liquor Act

This Act has been under review for some time.⁵ The Act regulates entry into businesses for the supply of goods and services, mostly to end-users. It establishes a national authority and local licensing authorities for the issue of licences in respect of trades or businesses, such as import and export agencies, auctioneers, pharmacies, general dealers, wholesalers and retailers, supermarkets, motor dealers, garages and workshops, petrol stations, dry cleaners and laundromats, hairdressers and restaurants.⁶ A distinct part of the Act also regulates the sale or supply of intoxicating liquor in specified places.⁷

The grounds for rejecting an application for a trade licence include: (1) that the applicant is a minor; or (2) that the issue of a licence would conflict with town planning or zoning schemes or health or other regulations;⁸ (3) that licences have to be renewed within twelve months; and (4) certain types of licences or businesses are reserved for citizens of Botswana.

Another issue of concern relates to the sweeping powers of the Minister to suspend, cancel, or withdraw a licence at any time if, in his/her opinion, this is in the interests of the inhabitants of a particular area or of Botswana generally. It is asserted that the Minister "shall not be obliged to furnish reasons for any decision taken by him in terms of this section, and such decision shall be final and shall not be questioned in any court". In order to promote a vibrant, competitive trading environment, this provision could be replaced by one suggesting that a tribunal, or a competition regulator, would consider appeals against decisions of the Minister, or any other licensing authority.

3 Republic of Botswana, *Industrial Development Policy for Botswana*, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government Paper No. 1 of 1998, Government Printer, Gaborone.

4 Republic of Botswana, *Industrial Development Policy*, para. 3.18. p. 12.

5 The Act was passed as No. 29 of 1986. It was substantially amended by Act No. 15 of 1993 and it is currently awaiting its second major revision.

6 Sections 3, 4, 5 and 7.

7 Part IV, sections 28 to 46.

8 Section 14 as replaced by section 11 of the Trade and Liquor (Amendment) Act, No. 11 of 1993.

Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act

This Act is mainly concerned with the procurement of works, supplies and services for Government and disposal of public assets. It provides for a board, whose functions and powers include ensuring that some of the following principles are observed by procuring entities.

- An open, competitive economy and changing external obligations, in relation generally to trade and specifically to procurement, which dynamically impact on a continual basis on domestic procurement policy and practice;
- Competition amongst contractors by using the most efficient and competitive methods of procurement or disposal to achieve the best value for money; and
- Fair and equitable treatment of all contractors in the interests of efficiency and maintenance of a level playing field.

However, Section 66(1) of the Act, which states that “pursuant to its economic and social objectives, the Government may from time to time introduce reserved and preferential procurement and asset disposal schemes, which shall be consistent with its external obligations and its stable, market oriented, macroeconomic framework”. A disturbing observation is that, whilst such schemes are expected to be time bound and non-discriminatory within targeted groups, they will exclude participation of some players. This may be construed by some as uncompetitive, and may be deemed to contradict the envisaged competition policy and law, as well as the principles of competition outlined above.

Competition Policy and Law

The decision by Government to formulate the Competition Policy came about as a result of, *inter alia*, the Government’s concerns about the likelihood of private anticompetitive practices emerging, which would perhaps undermine the Government’s reform objectives.

The Competition Policy aims to provide a coherent framework that integrates privatisation, deregulation, and liberalisation of trade and investment, into a strategy for promoting a dynamic market led economy. In addition, the new SACU Agreement (2002) states that the SACU Council established under the agreement ‘shall develop policies and instruments to address unfair trade practices between Member States’. In this vein, the Agreement indicates that ‘Member States agree that there shall be competition policies in each Member State’ and that ‘Member States shall cooperate with each other with respect to the enforcement of competition laws and regulations’. It is, therefore, imperative that Botswana enacts a competition law.

The Draft Competition Policy, thus, provides a framework for preventing anticompetitive practices and conducts by firms, and creates a business friendly environment that encourages competition and efficient resource allocation. This, in turn, promotes investment and innovation;

broadens choices for consumers; reduces monopoly rents and consumer prices; and raises the quality of goods and services produced. It follows, therefore, that healthy competition drives firms to be more efficient, and to pass on the benefits of efficiency to consumers. An adequate legislative and policy framework is required to protect consumers and firms from anticompetitive practices that raise prices and reduce output.

The main objectives of the Competition Policy are to:

- enhance economic efficiency, promote consumer welfare and support economic growth and diversification objectives;
- prevent and redress anticompetitive practices in Botswana’s economy and remove unnecessary constraints on the free play of competition in the market;
- prevent and redress unfair practices adopted by firms against consumers and small businesses in Botswana;
- complement other Government policies and laws;
- create certainty and support development objectives, such as citizen’s economic empowerment and access to essential services, without prejudice to the overall efficiency and competitiveness objectives pursued by the Government; and
- ensure deregulation where regulation is no longer needed.

In essence, the main objectives of competition policy are to maintain and promote competition, in order to achieve efficient use of resources, protect the freedom of economic action of firms and, as the ultimate goal, to promote consumer welfare.

Policy Framework for Competition

On the basis of best practices in countries that have put in place an effective competition policy and law, the elements on which to build a policy framework for competition policy in Botswana include, *inter alia*, the:

- (i) adoption of liberal international trade and investment policies;
- (ii) repeal or amendment of Government laws and regulations that unjustifiably limit competition, e.g., legislated entry barriers, professional licences, minimum price laws, land policies, and exclusive licensing in certain sectors;
- (iii) access to essential services, e.g. telecommunications and broadcasting, electricity and water;
- (iv) reform of existing public monopoly structures through, amongst other means, privatisation;
- (v) a level playing field for all participants, including competitive neutrality for Government businesses and removal of state subsidies that distort competition;
- (vi) separation of industry regulations from industry operations, e.g., dominant firms should not set technical standards for new entrants;

- (vii) prohibition of anticompetitive conduct through a comprehensive competition law; and
- (viii) adoption of a comprehensive approach that applies to all government policies affecting competition in all sectors of the economy, taking into account the possible exemption of certain sectors that are of public interest to the economy.

The Scope of Competition Policy

In most jurisdictions, competition policy applies to all market transactions and to all entities engaged in commercial transactions. All exceptions to the application of the Policy will be explicitly identified in the competition policy and incorporated in the competition law, so that there are no ambiguities.

There are essentially two broad principles, which underline competition policy. These are:

- (i) that any behaviour which has the purpose or effect of lessening competition in a market is prohibited by a competition law; and
- (ii) some anticompetitive behaviour can be authorised on the basis of 'public interest', i.e., when total welfare gains to society outweigh the costs.

The following strategic policy considerations will be critical for the success of the competition policy.

- ensuring coherence between competition policy and other Government development policies;
- developing public awareness and stakeholder support for competition;
- establishing clear jurisdictional responsibilities between the competition authority and sector regulators;
- opening up competition in public monopolies and in privatised public enterprises;
- including M&As as well as small-scale firms within the ambit of the proposed competition law;
- determining whether internet selling and telemarketing (E-Commerce) as well as pyramid selling should be included within the ambit of the law;
- providing consumer protection from unfair business practices; and
- exceptions and exemptions from the proposed competition law and identification thereof.

Institutional Framework

The effective implementation of the competition policy will require the establishment of a sound regulatory and institutional infrastructure. In this regard, the first priority is to prepare the proper regulatory framework for competition policy. The second aim is for the Government to carry out an information and advocacy campaign amongst all stakeholders about the objectives and requirements of the proposed competition policy. The third requirement is to set up the machinery that will formulate

and enforce a competition law and establish the credibility of its enforcement powers. The primary responsibility for the implementation of the competition policy will rest with a competition authority to be established within the parameters of a competition law.

The proposed competition authority is envisaged to have the following features:

- independence and insulation from external interference;
- transparency and well designed administrative mechanisms and regulations;
- clear separation of investigations of anticompetitive behaviour from the application of the competition law, prosecutions and adjudicative functions;
- checks and balances with rights of appeal, reviews of decisions, and access to information on legal and economic interpretations;
- expeditious and transparent proceedings that safeguard sensitive business information;
- provisions for imposing significant penalties; and
- proactive advocacy functions.

The competition law will empower the competition authority to investigate and determine whether there has been an infringement of the law. Effective powers of investigation are a key requirement for deterring anticompetitive behaviour. These powers will enable the authority to obtain the information it needs in the process of applying the competition law.

The administration of competition law will require resources. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that Government funding does not compromise the independence of the competition authority. The competition authority will have the power to charge fees for the services it renders.

A competition tribunal will be set up, if sufficient anticompetitive behaviour cases arise. Alternatively, the existing court system will handle anticompetitive behaviour cases. The competition tribunal or the court system will have matters referred to it by the competition authority and may:

- adjudicate on any prohibited conduct related to prohibited practices;
- decide on remedies in cases of prohibited conduct;
- make decisions on any other matters brought before it;
- hear appeals from and review decisions of the competition authority; and
- make any decisions necessary for the performance of its functions in terms of the Act.

Parties may appeal any final tribunal or court decision to the competition appeal court, which has the status of a High Court. The competition appeal court will be the final body to which cases from the competition tribunal or the

court system can be referred. Its function will be to review and then confirm, amend or set aside, any decision resulting from appeal other than to consent to orders, which allow appeals to the Supreme Court or the Constitutional Court.

Anticompetitive Business Practices

Botswana is a Common Law country; hence, a private right of action is available under the Constitution. Consequently, a person/firm that suffers damages as a result of the conduct of another that violates the law may recover the amount of loss or damage, by action, against the violator. Such an action must commence within a specified period from the date on which the offending conduct occurred. Competition law will provide for a right of private action for firms or persons who consider the conduct of their competitors unfair, illegal or detrimental to them.

Some countries impose criminal sanctions and imprisonment for certain anticompetitive practices such as the formation of cartels as remedies against anticompetitive conduct. The Government will consider such sanctions as possible deterrents for non-compliance with the competition law.

The main types of anticompetitive conduct to be prohibited in the Botswana competition policy and law include:

- anticompetitive agreements and exclusionary provisions, including primary and secondary boycotts, with a *per se* ban on price fixing and boycotts;
- misuse of market power for the purpose of eliminating or damaging a competitor, preventing entry or deterring or preventing competition;
- exclusive dealing, which substantially lessens competition;
- resale price maintenance for goods; and
- M&As that substantially lessen competition in the relevant market.

Box 39.1: Monopoly in the Beef Market

According to the Botswana Meat Commission Act of 1996, the exportation of live animals or their edible products is solely reserved for the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) unless the Minister of Agriculture permits otherwise in writing.

This has resulted in some farmers raising concern on the BMC monopoly of the beef export market and have appealed to government to liberalise the sale of live animals and their products outside the country.

Source: Preliminary Country Paper for the CUTS 7Up3 project, 2005

Box 39.2: Call for Reforms

In the mining sector, *De Beers* (through Debswana) continues to dominate mining in the country. It has been observed that the Government of Botswana needs to consider working with other players in the diamond industry to reduce dependence on De Beers.

This, it is believed, will help achieve balance in information gathering and enhance rapid learning in the industry. It has also been recommended that the Government should consider transferring some of its shareholding in mining and processing companies to citizens.

Source: Preliminary Country Paper for the CUTS 7Up3 project, 2005

The effectiveness of the competition policy in addressing anticompetitive practices depends on the enactment of a meaningful law and its enforcement by a competition authority and by the courts. Experiences in other countries reveal that enforcement issues are one of the main challenges when introducing a competition law. Existing enforcement capabilities should dictate the approach to the new law. It would be counterproductive to adopt a complex policy approach that would be difficult or impossible for the relevant authorities to understand and/or implement. A simple enforcement system can compensate for the inadequacies of the legal system by minimising involvement of the judiciary.

Anticompetitive practices have been identified in sectors, such as construction, property, beef export and mining.

Sectoral Regulation

Without a thorough study to determine the nature of competition in the market, it is difficult to provide an updated market situation for Botswana, especially now that it has a fast growing economy, and market conditions change fast as well. As a measure of the nature of competition in the market, the Economic Mapping Study undertaken estimated the economy's nature of competition by calculating concentration levels; and the results indicated high levels of concentration in the transport sector (CR3⁹ of 65.7 percent in 2000), followed by hotel and restaurants (CR3 of 64.8 percent), and Agriculture (CR3 of 63.6 percent). The manufacturing and finance sectors had concentration ratios of between 50 and 55 percent. The least concentrated industries, and probably the most competitive industries, were wholesale and retail trade (26.8 percent) and construction (40 percent).

Financial Services

The financial sector in Botswana consists of the Central Bank (Bank of Botswana), four commercial banks, two

9 Meaning the combined market share of the largest three firms in the market.

investment banks, one stock exchange, two stock broking firms, three insurance companies, pension funds, a few asset management companies and fund administrators, one building society, and two financial parastatals. For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the banking sector.

Commercial banks are regulated and supervised by the central bank, the Bank of Botswana, under the 1995 Banking Act. The Act provides a legal framework for the ownership and supervision of banks.

The banking sector is fairly liberal and competitive. Entry into this sector by foreigners is largely unrestricted. There are no limitations on the number of foreign banks into the financial sector. In addition, there is no discrimination between local and foreign banks. In fact, entry into this market is encouraged through a 15 percent tax incentive, 10 percent lower than the prevailing 25 percent corporate tax, up to the year 2020, aimed at attracting foreign financial services companies to establish themselves at the country's Financial Services Centre. However, banks have to satisfy prudential requirements, such as the capital requirement of Pula five million (approximately US\$1.1mn).

Power Sector

A Government-owned monopoly, Botswana Power Corporation (BPC), dominates the power sector in Botswana. This means that BPC is the sole generator of electricity in Botswana. However, legally, any operator can generate electricity and sell at a price lower than that of BPC. The Energy Affairs Department (EAD) in the Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources is the regulator, and is responsible for licensing new entrants and, thus, determining the degree of competition within the sector.

Such licensing should take place following close consultation with the existing operators (in this case, BPC). In so doing, the Minister shall take into consideration: the existing or future plans of BPC, with regard to the generation and supply of electricity for Botswana, giving precedence to the interests of BPC. This may be seen to inhibit the development of competition in the industry.

Telecommunications Sector

The Telecommunications Act regulates the provision of telecommunications services. Unlike the *Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act*, the Telecommunications Act has no profound nationality preference. The Act is also more explicit on the promotion of competition in the sector. Section 17(2) (c) states that the regulator, the Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) shall:

‘promote and maintain competition among persons engaged in commercial activities for, or in connection with the provision of telecommunications services, and promote efficiency and economy on the part of persons so engaged’.

Section 20(1) states that the Authority ‘shall be responsible for monitoring competition in the telecommunications sector’. Section 20(2) gives the Authority the power to report any contravention to the Attorney General, who shall then deal with any such contravention, as (s)he considers appropriate.

In addition, Section 48(1) states that telecommunications services shall, as far as practicable, and within the framework of the licensing system established by the Act, be provided on a competitive and non-discriminatory basis.

Whilst this Act is pro-competition, it has serious overlaps with a model competition law. For example, like a competition law, in addition to the above, the Act prohibits, amongst others, forming cartels; abuse of dominant position in a market for the purpose of preventing entry into the market; collusion between operators, etc. This means that the passing of the competition law and the establishment of a competition authority will necessitate the revision of this Act. The Act may require surgery to transfer the competition functions of the BTA to the competition authority.

The Construction Sector

The Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board regulates the construction sector. The Board keeps a register of eligible contracts. Contracts are only awarded to registered companies. The majority of small contractors are citizen-owned, whilst the bigger companies are foreign-owned.

In terms of registration, the construction sector is quite liberal. However, in terms of award of contracts, domestic contractors are given better incentives as compared to their foreign counterparts. Small to medium tenders are largely reserved for citizen contractors under the local preference scheme. Whilst this is understandably meant to encourage the development of citizen contractors, it is anticompetitive and has led to inherent inefficiencies. On a number of occasions, such preference of local contractors has resulted in many abandoned and unfinished projects by them.

Consumer Protection

Botswana's *Consumer Protection Act* is fairly new (1998). The Act establishes a Consumer Protection Office, under Ministry of Trade and Industry. The main functions of the office include, amongst others, investigating ‘unfair business practices’, and would preside over the settlement of disputes relating to ‘unfair business practices’. A business practice is described as:

- any business agreement, accord, or undertaking of a business nature;
- any scheme, practice or method of trading, including any method of marketing or distribution; or
- any advertising, type of advertising, or any other manner for soliciting business.

It follows, therefore, that undertaking any of the above in an ‘unfair’ manner, constitutes a violation of the Consumer Protection Act. It is anticipated that the same would be in violation of the competition law once in place. This Act may, therefore, require substantial amendment in light of the provisions of the competition law, once in place. Like in the case of the Telecommunications Policy, the Act may require amendments to transfer the competition functions of the Consumer Protection Office to the competition authority.

The competition policy will also deal with the interests of the consumers. It will be a means of protecting consumer’s rights, especially the right to full and accurate product information. It will provide consumer protection through regulation in markets, where vigorous competition creates an incentive for businesses to seek competitive advantages, through misleading claims about product value; quality; place of origin; or impact on the environment.

To this end, the provisions in the Consumer Protection Act, dealing with UTPs and restrictive business conduct affecting consumers, will be brought under the jurisdiction of the competition authority. The consumer protection measures dealing with anticompetitive practices will include:

- a general prohibition of misleading or deceptive conduct;
- specific prohibitions for false or misleading representations;
- product safety provisions;

- prohibiting unfair practices, including suspect conduct in the supply of goods and services to consumers; and
- conditions and warranties in consumer transactions and actions against manufacturers and retailers.

Concluding Observations and Future Scenario

The Competition Policy in Botswana is in its final phase of development. The Draft Competition Policy was presented before the Parliament in August 2005. It is expected that this will be followed by the development of a competition law. The competition law is expected to, among others, guard against:

- anticompetitive agreements and exclusionary provisions, including primary and secondary boycotts, with a *per se* ban on price fixing and boycotts;
- misuse of market power for the purpose of eliminating or damaging a competitor, preventing entry or deterring or preventing competition;
- exclusive dealing, which substantially lessens competition;
- resale price maintenance for goods; and
- M&As that substantially lessen competition in the relevant market.

The relevance of the Policy cannot be questioned because while further research is still required, preliminary findings are that there are anticompetitive practices within the Botswana market, particularly within sectors, such as mining and beef export.

Suggested Readings

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