

## **Inclusive domestic tourism: Keeping tourism in Zimbabwe afloat**

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### ***Abstract***

*The study aims to promote inclusive domestic tourism development in Zimbabwe during and after the COVID-19 pandemic since Zimbabwe's tourism was heavily dependent on international tourism. As a result of lockdown measures and international travel restrictions across the globe, inclusion will become even more of a priority in the Zimbabwean tourism context. A qualitative research design was used for the study. Data was collected through WhatsApp focus groups with service providers and tourists in Masvingo region. Results were analyzed using thematic analysis and revealed that inclusive tourism is one of the best options to promote domestic tourism given the constraints of the pandemic, economic and political instabilities experienced by Zimbabwe. Distance of the tourist products from tourists, demographic factors, culture, and price were factors to consider in promoting inclusive domestic tourism. Destination expensiveness, the poor state of infrastructure, little interest from government and service providers, inadequate marketing were the challenges identified. Strategies such as pricing revision, aggressive marketing, modification of standard operating procedures, training and retraining of front line employees, infrastructure development, education, promotion of festivals, vacation allowances to be offered, tax reductions, free entry during public holidays, and repackaging of the products and services to suit the current market were identified. The study recommends new approaches to inclusive tourism to drive Zimbabwe's tourism long-term sustainability.*

***Keywords:*** COVID-19, domestic tourism, inclusive tourism, sustainable development, Zimbabwe.

### **1. Introduction**

On a global scale, the tourism industry is a significant contributor to employment creation, economic development, and socio-cultural development (McCabe & Qiao, 2020). Most nations or cities have identified tourism as a key pillar of the country's Gross Domestic Product [GDP] (Abbas, Mubeen, Lorembur, Raza & Mamirkulova, 2021). Zimbabwe is not an exception and she also identified the contribution of tourism in its Medium-Term plan (2011-2015) (Government of Zimbabwe, 2010) as well as one of the pillars contributing to National Development Strategy (NDS) 1 [January 2021-December 2025] (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020) alongside agriculture and mining. Tourism is considered to be a vehicle for a sustainable economy (Baltaci, 2010) as it creates opportunities for many businesses and provides employment. Spending from either domestic/international or both types contributes to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). On a global scale, when people discuss the subject of tourism, naturally, they tend to focus more on international tourism and less attention is given to domestic tourism. Domestic tourism is a key driving force in

the tourism sector under certain circumstances that are beyond people's control. In fact, when one mentions the term 'tourism' most people are likely to think of far-away destinations that are beyond national borders but most of the world's tourism happens close to home, in a traveller's destination (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2016). According to an analysis by the WTTC (2016), more than 7 out of every 10 dollars spent on tourism are spent domestically. This shows that money spent by national citizens is an important source of travel and tourism GDP than receipts of tourists who come from abroad.

Domestic tourism can be used as a precursor to international tourism development. This happens when a destination is working towards building a positive image for the outsiders. For instance, Rwanda's tourism industry started to work on its domestic tourism for the benefit of the whole tourism industry (WTTC, 2016). This is because when domestic tourism starts to grow, most people develop a greater belief in it and gain a sense of pride. The pride within the locals will also encourage them to provide services that are beyond their clients' expectations, which helps to advertise the local attractions. Furthermore, this domestic tourism has the potential to expand the industry by encouraging local entrepreneurs to invest in small and medium enterprises as well as protecting local cultural and historical assets so that they become or remain tourist-generating regions. In addition, domestic tourism can inflate tourism numbers and persuade big companies to invest in tourism and create more jobs because the flow of domestic tourists is constant. Domestic tourists will also ensure the sustainability of culture and heritage assets for future use.

Although most developing countries have paid little attention to domestic tourism (Taine, 2014) when compared to developed economies, the economic, political instabilities, and negative effects of COVID-19 have brought opportunities for such countries, including Zimbabwe to work on building their domestic tourism. Rogerson (2015) and Taine (2014) opined that domestic tourism is one of the types of tourism that offers self-reliance as it has the potential to protect or safeguard the sector from international instabilities (including pandemics, terrorism, and recession) and protecting the employment and receipts of tourism service providers during the off-season. Scheyvens (2007) adds that domestic tourism has the added potential to promote local economic development as domestic business or leisure tourists can purchase locally produced art and crafts (curios) as part of their souvenirs. This implies that small-scale business operators as well as those in the informal sector are going to benefit from the proceeds.

In connection to the merits reaped from domestic tourism, there is a need for Zimbabwe and similar countries to keep its tourism afloat through inclusive domestic tourism. Inclusive tourism is defined as 'transformative tourism in which marginalized groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits' (Biddulph & Scheyvens, 2018: 584). Within the context of this research, inclusive domestic tourism is going to be discussed from the consumption of tourism products and services' perspective (demand side) in order to contribute to the country's economic growth. How can Zimbabwe's tourism be accessible to everyone in the country? No-one should not be left behind as the country begins to open up again and look to the future. The tourists among other stakeholders should not be left behind in promoting inclusive growth.

Inclusive domestic tourism is preferable due to its reliability at all times (Chandralal, 2010). Domestic tourists have the opportunity to travel around their country at all times for various reasons such as sports, conferences, medical, business, visiting friends and relatives, and holidays. This means domestic tourism can promote the inclusion of service providers because those with more disposable income would look for high-quality service providers while those with less income would go for lower standards depending on the affordability. This means domestic tourism accommodates both service providers with different standards to get their share of the market, unlike international tourism. For instance, international travellers would prefer to stay in 4 to 5 star hotels while domestic tourists utilize all available accommodation units (such as guest houses, bed, and breakfast apartments) that are affordable to them.

## **2. Domestic tourism versus international tourism**

According to Cohen and Cohen (2015a), domestic tourism was recognized only in the modern world with formally constituted borders to distinguish 'foreign' from 'local' travellers. Rogerson (2015) asserts that domestic tourism involves discretionary travel that lacked formal borders while international tourism involves the crossing of borders (Elliott, 1997) for a period not exceeding twelve months. Domestic travellers do not need any documentation such as visas before they travel within their own country (Makhaola, 2015) unlike international ones. Therefore, in this regard, domestic tourism is much preferable because of its reliability and cost effectiveness. Both domestic and international tourists are motivated to visit for various reasons such as leisure, business, health, visiting friends and relatives, education, big events, and pilgrimage (Cohen & Cohen, 2015a; Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013 & Rogerson & Letsie, 2013). These activities undertaken by the travellers should not be remunerated (Marshall, 2006) but should have a socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impact on the place visited (Elliott, 1997). In return, the tourist destinations should offer activities that are inclusive of tourism products and services. The activities engage in could include culture and heritage, nature, nightlife, shopping, education, wildlife experiences, conferences, or exhibitions.

According to WTTC (2016), domestic tourism acts as a shock absorber. This is especially in times when foreign travellers are staying in their home countries. Therefore, domestic tourism can keep the destination going and cushion the effects of the crisis or the pandemic. For instance, tourism products like accommodation can be maintained with limited deterioration from disuse, and at least some of those employed in tourism and hospitality services could also continue to earn a livelihood by providing services to domestic tourists. In line with this, Zimbabwe as a tourist destination has a competitive advantage or strength already since it has products and services that were servicing international tourists. A cue for this comes from the case of Sri Lanka, domestic tourism had provided 64 percent of spending at the time of the end of the civil war in 2009 (WTTC, 2006). This means that domestic tourism assisted the economy of Sri Lanka to keep afloat during the conflict down turn years.

International tourism in most destinations could be seasonal, characterized by peak periods and low periods when most of the superstructure can be empty and employees would be laid off because of insufficient work. However, domestic tourism provides an important stabilizing role, as it manages to spread evenly throughout 12 months. For instance, in New Zealand, domestic tourism was found to make a substantial contribution to the tourism industry's overall financial resilience, sustainability, and

functionality-in fact many tourism enterprises would not survive if it were not for the year-round patronage of domestic visitors (WTTC, 2016).

Within the context of Zimbabwe, domestic tourism is the way to go considering that the country is endowed with a range of natural wonders, culture and heritage assets, state of art conference centres, and accommodation units in major cities. This implies that different classes of domestic travellers can be catered for within their provinces. Tourism products and services are accessible in different provinces depending on the consumers' disposable incomes.

In connection to this, research on domestic tourism in Zimbabwe has received more attention but the changes in the external environment call for further investigation. For instance, Kabote *et al* (2019) researched the local trends of domestic tourists, Woyo (2021) focused on the sustainability of using domestic tourism as a post-COVID-19 recovery strategy in a distressed economy while Mutana and Zinyemba (2013) focused on the sustainability of domestic tourism in the country. In light of these, this research is trying to reduce the gap by focusing on inclusive domestic tourism as the best option to keep Zimbabwe's tourism afloat after a huge decline in international visitors to the country.

### **3. Problem statement**

Zimbabwe as a developing country, has faced political instabilities, negative publicity, and economic instabilities (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2017, 2018 & 2019) as well as pandemics like the COVID-19 which has hit the whole globe from the early of 2020. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown measures, and international travel restrictions across the world, the inclusion of domestic travel will become even more of a priority in the Zimbabwean tourism context. More so, Zimbabwe's tourism receipts that were heavily dependent on international travellers have declined, there is not much choice but to welcome domestic tourism as international tourists are now forced to consume their tourism products and services in their home countries. Therefore, this study intends to explore various strategies that can be employed to keep Zimbabwe's tourism afloat amidst COVID-19 through inclusive domestic tourism.

### **4. Research objectives**

In a bid to keep Zimbabwe's tourism afloat, this research sought to

- (i) To highlight the factors to consider in promoting inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe.
- (ii) To analyze challenges facing the growth of inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe.
- (iii) To proffer strategies of promoting inclusive domestic tourism to keep tourism afloat in Zimbabwe.

### **5. Methodology**

This research was guided by a qualitative research design. To respond to the research objectives, there was a need to get responses from hospitality service providers in Zimbabwe as well as local tourists. Both service providers and local tourists were sampled using convenience sampling. Data was collected using a WhatsApp focus group since the study was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. WhatsApp method is now becoming a standard method of data collection due to COVID-19 restrictions. The method was safe for both interviewers and interviewees. The method

allowed the research participants to share their responses instantly. From the supply side, a Masvingo regional Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (HAZ) WhatsApp group was used for the focus group discussion to share their sentiments on inclusive domestic tourism as a way of keeping Zimbabwe's tourism afloat. Fifty-two participants responded, thus contributing to a 53.1% response rate. The researchers' also got an opportunity to solicit the responses of the local tourists representing the demand side who were attending a conference (19-20 August 2021) at one of the resort hotels in Masvingo. A WhatsApp group was also created for the local delegates who volunteered to air out their views on inclusive domestic tourism. The demand side was represented by sixty-eight respondents (45.3% response rate) who had volunteered. The method was also convenient to the respondents who were busy the time the questions were posted and later, responded in their free time. WhatsApp focus groups were cheaper for the interviewers since there were no transport costs associated with online qualitative research. The researchers conducted a thematic analysis based on the responses from the respondents. However, before data analysis, the researchers organized the data and reviewed it to obtain a sense of what it contained. The codes were also created to help the researchers to make many connections and identify the recurring themes. The themes were presented in an integrated manner supported with sentiments from the respondents either the demand or supply side. As the researchers were also aware of the possible responses from the respondents, after reviewing the literature, a deductive approach was used (Bunard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwich, 2008). The next section presents the results.

## **6. Results and discussion**

The results from the focus group conducted with tourism and hospitality service providers' representatives in Masvingo Region and the local tourists highlighted the following themes: factors to consider for inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe, challenges facing inclusive domestic tourism promotion in Zimbabwe, and the strategies.

### **6.1. Factors to consider for inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe**

#### **Theme 1: Distance of the tourism products**

The respondents were asked to highlight some of the factors hindering inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe. Of the respondents, 93.3% pointed out that the location of the attraction centre could affect the participation of the local travellers to engage in tourism activities. This was supported by one of the respondents who said; 'considering the economic hardships in Zimbabwe, one is very particular about the cost of the journey considering that most of the people are not employed and for those who are still working ...' (Respondent, 2). The longer the distance from major tourist attractions, the fewer chances domestic tourists participate in domestic tourism. The findings concur with Kabote, Mamimine and Muranda (2019)'s findings that revealed that most local people prefer to visit local attraction places that are nearer to their homesteads because of limited resources. Destinations that are closer to homes were found to be visited often than far away destinations (McKercher, 2008), as travel logistics becomes complex with an increase in distance from their usual places of residence. The tourists would be forced to budget for transport costs, accommodation, food, and other activities for a decent trip. This implies that the cost of travel is pushing away local tourists from engaging in leisure trips. This was supported by Woyo (2021) who revealed that the cost of travel inhibits domestic travel in Zimbabwe. This shows that the location or distance is an important component to be considered in promoting inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe.

## **Theme 2: Demographic factors**

Another factor that was highlighted by the respondents was the age of tourism consumers. The results revealed that the age of the tourists determines the mobility of people to various tourist attraction centres. Younger people prefer destinations that have full of activities that require energy, unlike the older groups. The findings are consistent with Spence (2002) who found that the probability of people participating in wildlife activities varies with age. This implies that the probability of activity participation increases when people are young and decreases as the person gets old. This shows that younger populations are a better population to target than the older population for inclusive domestic tourism. The results also revealed that the marital status of individuals also influences leisure participation in domestic tourism. Of the respondents, 55% highlighted that married people tend to travel less when compared to singles. The findings were cemented by Lee and Bhargava (2004) who assert that singles spent much more time enjoying leisure than married couples. This is because married couples have family and other social obligations that might limit their time to engage in domestic tourism (Downward & Rasciute, 2010; Henderson, 1990). The singles also tend to have more free time to engage in different activities compared to married couples.

Another factor that was found in encouraging inclusive domestic tourism was gender. The research revealed that men tended to travel more than women in domestic tourism. The finding is consistent with Moriarty and Honnery (2005) who established that men engage in business-related tourism activities while women travel mainly for visiting friends and relatives as well as shopping. Another limitation to women's travel was time, cost as well as family commitments.

## **Theme 3: Pricing of the tourism products and services**

The pricing of the tourism products and services in Zimbabwe was pointed out by 82.5% respondents as a critical factor. These felt that for the destination to have inclusive domestic tourism, attention was to be given to the pricing strategies. The pricing of high-quality products such as accommodation (3 stars to 5-star hotels) was meant for the elite group of tourists to enjoy the facilities while on holiday leaving the poor dying without experiencing the comfort of hotels. This was echoed by one of the respondents who opined that;

‘The idea of keeping Zimbabwe's tourism afloat through inclusive domestic tourism is a good one but most of us are finding it difficult to book for a double room rated at US\$116.00 that is equivalent to ZW\$9 956 while I am earning a monthly salary of almost ZW\$ 40 000 that is equivalent to US\$466 (Interbank rate 24 Aug. 2021-[US\$1 equivalent to ZWL\$85.83]). From my salary I have to cater for my four children-two who are at a boarding school which I have to pay ZW\$36 000 each, and two kids who are in the primary who have to pay ZW\$8000 each, food, transport costs as well as rentals. The prices that the hotels are charging are far much above my monthly remuneration. It means I would be wasting my meagre financial resources on something that is not benefiting my family. I have to invest in my children. Only the elite group as well as foreigners are going to either book those quality hotels or enjoy those tourism activities’ (Participant, 10).

This finding also concurs with what was found by Kabote et al (2019) and Woyo (2021) who highlighted that tourism service providers were pricing themselves out of

the business considering that most of the Zimbabweans were unemployed and earning too little to engage in tourism activities. The method of pricing is a key issue that service providers are encouraged to revise to accommodate domestic clientele if Zimbabwe's tourism is to be kept afloat or sustainable.

#### **Theme 4: Culture**

Culture was also highlighted as a factor that was to be considered to encourage inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe. Of the respondents, 35% pointed out that there was a lack of traveling culture in most of the Zimbabweans. Most of the people living in rural areas lack exposure to travel for scenery in their environs. This is because traveling is not a necessity to most Zimbabweans who are living in rural areas. They are struggling to get financial resources for their upkeep.

#### **6.2. Challenges affecting the growth of inclusive tourism development in Zimbabwe**

The respondents were asked to state the challenges affecting the growth of inclusive tourism development in Zimbabwe. Of the respondents, 63.3% pointed out that domestic tourism in the country seemed to suffer a lot because there is little interest from tourism business segments either owned by private or government institutions. The tourism and hospitality service providers seem to pay more attention to international tourists while turning a blind eye on domestic tourists. For instance, the standard operating procedures in most tourism facilities are tailor-made to suit the international clientele. The way guests are greeted and served supports the Western style of conducting tourism and hospitality business.

Another challenge that was found was inadequate marketing of domestic tourism in the country. Although Zimbabwe Tourism Authority did market domestic tourism for the past two years, there is a lack of adequate domestic tourism marketing and promotional packages to cater to the local people. This was illustrated by one of the respondents who echoed;

‘Madam, I am surprised, the tourism advertising that I heard in my country is biased towards Victoria Falls ignoring other provinces with beautiful natural attractions, man-made attractions as well as culture and heritage resources. Whom are we cheating? From my understanding, every tourist attraction in the country should be given equal opportunity to be marketed to the people because people have got different needs. If we are talking of inclusion....it means every attraction has to be known by every Zimbabwean’ (Participant, 11).

The above sentiment shows that there is exclusion of other wonders of the country during the marketing of the destination. Zimbabwe is a blessed destination each province is endowed with a unique set of attractions that our destination can lean on for domestic tourism to prosper.

In addition, it has also been revealed that the infrastructure in the country could be an inhibiting factor to the development of inclusive domestic tourism. Most of the roads in the country need attention and the gravel roads leading to major tourists' attraction centres need to be rehabilitated. This might chase away the clientele with small cars who wish to partake in domestic tourism. The poor state of the roads is a major obstacle to tourism development in every destination. This was supported by one of the representatives of the demand side who said, ‘I like traveling to different places

of interest, but before I embark on a trip I do a little bit of research about the road I am going to use. So far, I have cancelled almost three trips because of the poor state of the roads.’ (Respondent, 16). This implies that destination accessibility is one of the key enablers of tourism in every country. Domestic tourists prefer destinations that are easy to reach to minimize fuel and service charges.

Another challenge that was found from respondents was the absence of data and policies to support domestic tourism in Zimbabwe. This made it difficult to promote domestic tourism in the country.

### **6.3. inclusive domestic tourism strategies: How to keep Zimbabwe’s tourism afloat**

#### **Theme 1: Marketing of all tourist attraction centers in Zimbabwe**

The respondents were asked to suggest various strategies they thought would assist Zimbabwe as a tourist destination to be on the map while serving its domestic market. Of the respondents, 43.3% highlighted that there was a need to promote all tourist attraction centres in the country. One of the respondents suggested that; ‘For the destination to have a sustainable inclusive domestic tourism there is need to advertise all tourists’ attractions in the country rather than focusing on Victoria Falls alone. The country is rich in both natural and man-made attractions.’ Each of the provinces is blessed with different attractions as illustrated in Table 1.



Table 1. Zimbabwe’s Provinces and Tourist Attraction Centres

<b>Province and Tourist attractions</b>			
<p><b>Manicaland Province</b>                      Bridal veil Falls                      Nyanga National Park                      Osborne dam, Utopia House                      Ziwa, Mutare Museum                      Mt Inyangani                      Casino-Montclair Hotel&amp; Casino,                      Leopard Rock Hotel &amp; Casino                      Golf Course-Claremont                      World’s view</p>	<p><b>Midlands Province</b>                      Antelope park                      Zimbabwe Military museum                      Mutorashanga quarry                      Danamombe ruins                      Nalatale ruins                      White waters dam                      Boggie clock tower                      Njelele ruins                      Zinjanja and Bila ruins</p>	<p><b>Masvingo Province</b>                      Great Zimbabwe monuments and museums, Gonarezhou National Park                      Kyle Recreational Park, Lake Mutirikwi,                      Manyuchi dam                      Tokwe Mukosi Dam, Chivhumbani ruins                      Muzhwi dam, Mushandike sanctuary                      Chamavara cave, EAG art museum                      18-hole golf course in town                      Sikato lion park</p>	<p><b>Matebeleland North</b>                      Victoria Falls                      Chizarira National park                      Hwange National park                      Kazuma Pan</p>
<p><b>Matebeleland south</b>                      Matobo National park                      Matobo hills                      Thuli Parks and wildlife land                      Tshabalala game sanctuary</p>	<p><b>Mashonaland East</b>                      Gosho Park                      Imire Game park</p>	<p><b>Mashonaland West Province</b>                      Mana Pools national park                      Matusadona national park                      Mazvikadei dam                      Bumi Hills                      Chinhoyi caves                      Kariba dam</p>	<p><b>Harare Metropolitan</b>                      Lion and cheetah park, Lake Chivero recreational park                      Epworth balancing rocks, Mukuvisi woodlands                      National Gallery of Zimbabwe                      Kuimba shiri bird sanctuary, Thetford game reserve,                      Ngoma kurira mountains, Twala trust animal sanctuary, Kingfisher park, National botanical gardens, Haka game park, Umfurudzi park, Harare Gardens, Cleveland dam recreational park                      Ewanrigg botanical gardens, Ngomakurira mountain</p>
<p><b>Bulawayo Metropolitan</b>                      Natural history museum, The Nesbitt castle                      National art gallery, Chipangali                      Wildlife Orphanage and research                      Khami ruins, Bulawayo National Gallery of Zimbabwe</p>			

The table above shows that almost every province has the potential to cater to its local tourists who are staying in that province who possess little disposable income and are willing to travel. Those with high disposable income might now travel to other destinations for leisure and other activities. In addition to business travellers, each province has conference facilities to cater to local business travellers.

### **Theme 2: Promotion of festivals**

The research further revealed that the local tourists should be offered a mixed range of attractions and events to entertain them as they visit a destination. Festivals such as Harare International Festival of Arts (HIFA), Harare Jazz festival, Bulawayo Music Festival, Zimbabwe International film festival, Harare International Food Festival, Jikinya traditional dance festival, Victoria Falls carnival, Dzimbahwe Arts and Culture Festival, Great Limpopo cultural fair among others should be promoted in every province to promote art, heritage, and culture.

### **Theme 3: Developing domestic tourism infrastructure strategy**

Of the respondents, 94.2% highlighted that infrastructure such as road networks, airport networks, telecommunication facilities, resting facilities, and water supplies in cities and tourist sites need to be developed to create a conducive environment to promote the travel of tourists. Most Zimbabweans travel around using a road transport system. There is a need for the government and the private sector to join hands and work together to improve the infrastructure of various destinations in the country to improve accessibility.

### **Theme 4: Government's negotiations with tourism and hospitality stakeholders**

Of the respondents, 48.3% opined that there is a need for the government to negotiate with tourism and hospitality stakeholders to subsidize their rates for the local guests throughout the year in line with the citizens' local earnings as well as organizing regular press briefings. Alternatively, the government could offer incentives or reduce the tax to tourism and hospitality service providers who offer discounted rates for their services.

## **7. Conclusions and recommendations**

This study explores various strategies to keep Zimbabwe's tourism afloat through inclusive domestic tourism. The major decline in international tourism as a result of political instability, economic instability as well as the pandemic (COVID-19) in the country made the destination focus on domestic tourism since tourism is one of the key pillars of economic growth. Domestic tourism acts as a shock absorber during the crisis or pandemics and solves the problem of seasonality. Considering the challenges Zimbabwe as a tourist destination is facing, the inclusion of domestic tourism is a better option to keep Zimbabwe's tourism afloat. There are factors to consider in promoting inclusive domestic tourism. These factors include the distance of the tourism products, culture, demographic factors, and the pricing of tourism products and services. These dynamics affect the traveling of residents in Zimbabwe. The inclusion of domestic tourism in Zimbabwe seemed to be affected by the poor state of infrastructure in the country, lack of exposure, little attention from the government as well as tourism and hospitality service providers, inadequate marketing of tourist attractions in the country, and lack of policies to support domestic tourism in Zimbabwe. However, various strategies were put forward as a way of trying to keep Zimbabwe's tourism afloat –inclusive domestic tourism. These strategies include the marketing of all tourist attraction centres, promotion of festivals, development of infrastructure, embarking on

government negotiations with the tourism and hospitality service providers, and revising the pricing of services to suit the local market.

The study further recommends that for Zimbabwe to promote inclusive domestic tourism, the following has to be taken into consideration:

- i) There is a need to revise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of most operators through training and retraining of frontline employees. These employees need to be multilingual in different languages that are spoken in Zimbabwe. The staff should be able to speak at least half of the sixteen official languages such as English, Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Nambya, Venda, Shangani, Ndau, Sign language, Sotho, Chewa, Chibarwe, Kalanga, Tswana, Khoisan, and Xhosa. This is important because lack of communication skills might be a barrier in service delivery that might end up spoiling the guest's experience. Communication is an important aspect to be considered in tourism and hospitality because of its inseparable characteristic. This means training institutions such as universities and polytechnics also have to revisit their curricula to provide a human resource that is relevant to the market.
- ii) Those who are employed in the hospitality section should also learn about different cultures that are in Zimbabwe. For instance, the training of waiters, chefs, and other staff members has been done from the British and American hotels to serve the market. The standard operating procedures should be reviewed to accommodate the service of local people if inclusion is to be witnessed. The way people are greeted, how food and beverages are prepared and served in different Zimbabwean cultures should be practiced to involve everyone in tourism. Every culture should not be left out in trying to promote inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe. People should be proud of their own culture as well as heritage.
- iii) As a way of encouraging all locals to take part in domestic tourism activities, civil servants and other employees should be considered vacation allowances. These vacation allowances should be monitored and accounted for to avoid the misappropriation of the benefits. This might motivate residents to engage in domestic tourism.
- iv) In addition, there is need to cultivate a culture of saving among the local residents so that they will be able to engage in travel during their spare time. This might boost the travel of residents in Zimbabwe.
- v) There is a need to break social barriers through tourism education. Local people should appreciate the essence of going out as families, couples, friends, or workmates.
- vi) To promote inclusive domestic tourism in Zimbabwe, there is a need to advocate for local tourism through aggressive marketing in various social media platforms (such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok), having advertising slots in every radio station (national and provincial broadcasting) and television shows as a way of encouraging local people to travel and travelling to affordable places.
- vii) Free entry during public holidays. This might motivate the general public to visit tourist attraction centres.
- viii) To solve the problem of destination expensiveness, there is need for regulatory authorities to subsidize the licensing, registration fees, levies or insurances needed for the operation of tourism and hospitality businesses in the country. This might assist hospitality service providers to reduce the rates charged to tourists. More so, this option might also try to manage stress among domestic travelers because high costs might affect their travelling budgets.

This study also contributes to practice in the form of different strategies that can be regarded as important in inclusive domestic tourism in other destinations facing the same challenges. Strategies such as aggressive marketing, infrastructure development, modification of SOPs, promotion of festivals, government negotiations with the service providers should be taken as important contributions to promote inclusive domestic tourism especially in developing destinations. However, this research is not without limitations. The research was guided by a qualitative approach using a sample that was conveniently selected through WhatsApp focus groups which cannot generalize the highlighted results. There is a need to undertake a thorough empirical investigation regarding the promotion of inclusive domestic tourism as a strategy of keeping Zimbabwe's tourism afloat using a mixed research method. Future researchers can also focus on inclusive domestic tourism in other destinations because the findings of this research are country-specific and the factors, challenges, and strategies argued in this study may not apply in other countries.

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