

## **Government Response to the Challenges of Covid-19 pandemic on the Tourism Industry: Towards an Effective Policy Framework for Inclusive Growth in the Future**

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### **Abstract**

*The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated tourism economies globally including that of Zimbabwe. Based on the trend analysis, international tourist arrivals will decline by between 70% and 87% for Zimbabwe leading to a loss of \$1.3 trillion in tourism receipts for the full year 2020 and part of 2021. The aim of this study is to examine the interventions that the government of Zimbabwe has undertaken to cushion the tourism enterprises with a view of ensuring inclusive future growth of the sector. The study used a qualitative research paradigm with key informants being drawn from the private sector stakeholders in the tourism industry. The internet was used to access a wide range of secondary data from international organizations, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector globally, in the African continent and in Zimbabwe. The study revealed that government's interventions were inadequate to ensure future inclusive growth of the sector. It further showed that some enterprises in the sector will be unable to restart business after the pandemic. The study concluded that the current policy frameworks in place are inadequate to ensure future inclusive growth of the sector. It is recommended that the government puts in place a set of robust policy frameworks and programmes that will facilitate the restart and recovery of the tourism enterprises and hence ensure future inclusive growth of the sector.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, COVID-19 pandemic, Enterprises, Inclusive Growth, Tourism.

### **1. Introduction**

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in China in December 2019 and its global spread brought the world to a standstill. Governments around the world implemented a range of policies and regulations which restricted the movements of people. Tourism enterprises closed down which resulted in massive job losses. Zimbabwe was not spared these challenges. Governments in different parts of the world implemented several strategies which were aimed at cushioning the tourism businesses from the fall out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Zimbabwean government announced specific policy frameworks which were geared at ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth of the tourism sector. The paper therefore aims at interrogating the effectiveness of these measures with a view of providing recommendations for improved policy frameworks which will ensure future inclusive growth of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe.

### **2. Background**

The year 2020 witnessed a drastic fall in tourism demand – arrivals, travel, and the use of facilities and services by an estimated 74%. Losses to the industry amount to over US\$1.3 trillion globally a development that has compromised millions of jobs worldwide (The Conversations, 2020). For the Africa Region estimates of around US\$83 billion losses in GDP contribution and up to 7.2 million industry jobs compared to 2019 levels are being projected. Africa tourism that relies heavily on international tourism is anticipated to take much longer to recover. According to UNWTO tourism will return to 2019 levels by 2024 and this poses a challenge for the sector.

Globally governments have introduced a number of policies and strategies to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 on their economies. They can use expansionary monetary policies as a short-term measure to boost those economies dogged by moderate inflationary environments; or employ diversified positive economic growth strategies besides regional industrialization programmes intended to boost industry and cushion economies against the adverse economic growth. African countries have among other things focused on introducing new export destinations such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Zimbabwe tourism sector's Covid-19 induced losses could surpass US\$1,1 billion mainly as a consequence of Covid-19 travel restrictions that have crippled the travel industry (Environment, Climate, Tourism, and Hospitality Industry Minister, 2020) The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority projected a 70% drop in international arrivals, loss of jobs and closures of hotels and restaurants. Government has established a \$500 million facility to help hedge against the debilitating effects of Covid-19 and provide companies with working capital loans in the immediate future.

The National Tourism Recovery and Growth Strategy were launched on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2020 by President of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Victoria Falls. One of the main objectives of the recovery plan is to boost domestic tourism whilst the regional and international markets would continue to be nurtured as they recover. A domestic campaign ZIMBHO was launched in 2020 but its impact on the sector is yet to be felt. Lock downs and travel restrictions are having a negative effect of local business operations. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group intervened by launching an initiative to boost tourism in and around Victoria Falls (ZTA, 2021). Government also embarked on a vaccination campaign. Victoria Falls is the only destination so far that has herd immunity and is expected to recover ahead of other destinations in the country.

Nevertheless, the impact of the various policies on the recovery of tourism sector is yet to be felt. The Government of Zimbabwe is currently engaged with stakeholders in order to make necessary reviews as the world continue to be affected by COVID 19. The third variant of the pandemic poses a further strain on the sector.

### **3.The problem**

In developing countries, tourism is very important providing employment, generating income and foreign exchange earnings. Tourism in Zimbabwe has contributed over \$500 million into the national economy supporting in excess of 200 000 jobs. The tourism economy has however been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is highly infectious and has since spread globally and Zimbabwe has not been spared. The pandemic led to the closing of the tourism and hospitality enterprises in March

2020 lockdown, followed by lockdowns in January and June 2021. This has caused loss of tourism business and in many instances subsequent loss of jobs by thousands of locals, triggering an unprecedented crisis in the industry and the nation at large. Losses in the Tourism sector are expected to exceed US \$1.1 billion. The pandemic has resulted in cancellations of the country's premier trade showcases including the Zimbabwe International Trade fair (ZITF) and Zimbabwe Travel Expo. These challenges call for immediate socio economic response in Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. This has prompted the researchers to carry out a study to establish government response to the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry with a view of providing recommendations that will ensure the future inclusive growth of the sector.

#### **4.Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study is to interrogate the measures that have been put in place by the government of Zimbabwe to cushion the tourism enterprises from the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sub-objectives of the study are:

- To outline the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry;
- To examine the policy frameworks implemented by different governments to ensure future sustainability of tourism enterprises;
- To assess the measures that have been implemented by the government of Zimbabwe to cushion tourism businesses from negative impact of the pandemic; and
- To offer recommendations that will ensure future inclusive growth of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe.

#### **5. Literature review**

##### **5.1 Global situation**

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which broke out in China in 2019 triggered an precedent crisis in the tourism industry world-wide (Gossling and Hall 2020). Human life is under threat worldwide, but unlike natural disasters, whose toll on physical capital vastly exceeds its impact on human capital, the pandemic has left buildings, factories and infrastructures intact thus significantly affecting the health of millions of people in so doing disrupting the education of hundreds of millions of children.

Some destinations are experiencing some limited recovery whilst a large number of countries have no tourism to talk about so far. Globally, governments had to put in place a range of strategies to contain the spread of the pandemic. These included national lockdowns, closure of international boundaries and enforcement of strict adherence to COVID-19 protocol like social distancing and wearing of masks. Corbisiero and La Rocca (2020, p.95) detail how within a limited space of time, "the framing of the worldwide tourism system transformed from "over tourism" to 'non-tourism.'" Gossling et al. postulate that (2020) the universal spread of the pandemic has not only caused a global crisis for hospitality and tourism but has also altered customer wants and market demands for the tourism products. The overall result of the policies and strategies implemented by different governments to curb the spread of the pandemic was a dramatic decline in international and domestic travel, closure of tourism businesses and subsequent loss of jobs. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) indicates that global tourist arrivals declined by 73% with international receipts experiencing a decline of 64% in 2020 compared to 2019.

The developments resulted in a loss of 62 million jobs within the tourism industry (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021).

Assaf and Scuderi (2020, p. 731) observed that for tourism, COVID-19 “has been one of the most impactful and detrimental pandemics of recent times”. Similar observations have been made by Hall et al (2020) who points out that COVID-19 is unlike many other catastrophes and emergencies that formerly impacted the tourism sector as a whole.

Governments of different countries have put in place a range of fiscal and monetary measures which are aimed at assisting tourism and travel enterprises to weather the COVID-19 pandemic and restart their activities. The measures include: (UNWTO Dashboard, 2021) provision of massive economic stimulus packages to business and society, provision of grants and soft loans, holiday on repayments of loans for stipulated periods, government guarantees for loans to restart activities and financing of staff training programmes.

## **5.2 African situation**

The recording of the first Covid-19 case in Egypt on 14 February 2020 was followed by subsequent cases in Nigeria on 27 February 2020 thereafter in Algeria, Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Togo and Tunisia. Governments’ responses to these reports cantered mainly on instituting economic growth measures which were constantly adjusted according to local country conditions as the pandemic progressed. The African region shed an estimated US\$83 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and up to 7.2 million jobs in 2020. According to the African Growth and Initiative (2020) the number of international tourists to Africa fell by 98% for the period April to June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. The report further indicates that whilst some countries have partially opened up to international travellers the demand is not expected to reach the pre-pandemic levels until 2023.

Globally, arrivals dropped by more than a billion in 2020 due to the Covid-19 whilst Africa recorded a 74% fall in international tourist arrivals and a decline of 64% in tourism related exports (UNWTO, 2021). The Africa tourism sector recovery that is heavily reliant on international travel expects very slow turnaround under the prevailing COVID19 distressed operating environment. It is therefore pertinent that governments play a critical role in supporting the tourism sector in these challenging times.

The Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Africa (2021) remarked that, the challenges faced by the tourism industry in the face of Covid-19 present new ways of dealing with future pandemics providing new models to sustainable development and socio-economic growth. The Africa Free Trade Area could stimulate increased cross-border travel reducing cost and improving on connectivity and visa regimes. It is also envisaged that vaccines will bring hope to Africa tourism beginning with domestic tourism paving way for international tourism. The recovery of the tourism in Africa must be underpinned by pro tourism policies/measures in order to stimulate growth of the industry.

## **5.3 SADC situation**

The SADC countries were severely hit by the pandemic most amongst them including Botswana, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe (World Bank, 2020)

The responses to the pandemic within the SADC region has involved: national lockdowns that prohibited intercity/interprovincial travel, confinements to residential areas, closure of international borders, banning of domestic and international flights, closure of businesses including those in the tourism industry, national testing for the pandemic, vaccination programmes and implementation of quarantine strategies. The countries have further responded by putting in place a range fiscal and monetary policies a number of which specifically targeted the tourism sector. The table 1 below shows a sample of policies implemented by selected SADC member states since the onset of the pandemic in the region in 2020.

Table 1: Sample of measures implemented by SADC member states

COUNTRY	Fiscal Measures	Monetary Measures
Botswana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government established a 2 billion pula Covid Relief Fund to be accessed by the private sector including the tourism enterprises;</li> <li>• Provision of a wage subsidy of 50% for a three-month period; and</li> <li>• Provision of a government loan guarantee of 1 billion pula for a 24 months' period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax payment deferment of 75% of any quarter payment during the period May 2020 to March 2021;</li> <li>• Waiver of training levy for a six months period.</li> </ul>
Namibia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 8 billion Namibia dollars provided by government to the whole private sector as an Economic Stimulus and Relief Package;</li> <li>• Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism set up a Conservation, Relief, Recovery and Resiliency Facility in partnership with the private sector and non-governmental organizations which targeted enterprises in the Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programmes.</li> </ul>	<p>The funds from the CRRR Facilities has been disbursed to cover salary subsidies, finance anti-poaching activities, finance human/wildlife conflict activities and for purchasing of equipment needed in identified activities in different conservancies in the country. A total of 129 entities which included conservancies, JVs, SMEs, community enterprises and craft centre had received a total of 36.8 million Namibian dollars from the facility by April 2021.</p>
Mauritius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension of the Environment Protection fee charged on the accommodation sector on a monthly basis;</li> <li>• Wage Assistance Scheme and Self Employment Assistance Scheme operationalized for the tourism industry with a total disbursement of US\$265 million in 2020; and</li> <li>• Established of a one-year Premier Travel Visa for individuals wishing to work remotely from Mauritius.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A5 billion Mauritian rupees Special Covid -19 Relief Fund set up by the Bank of Mauritius through commercial banks which companies including those in tourism, can access at a concessionary interest rate of 2.5% with a six months' repayment moratorium on both capital and interest. The loans are for a two-year period;</li> <li>• Companies that operated from government owned properties or leased land from local authorities and</li> </ul>

		<p>government departments were given a sabbatical on rent payments; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different sets of tax rebates and training levy rebates offered to companies including those in the tourism industry.</li> </ul>
Seychelles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70US million dollars put in place for salary and wages subsidies including which accessible by all enterprises including those in tourism;</li> <li>• Deferment of a range of tax payments across the private sector;</li> <li>• Establishment of the Small Business Support Fund-offering interest free loans to SMEs</li> </ul>	Bank of Seychelles set a six months repayment moratorium on loans to business.

Sources: Deloitte (2020) UNDP (2021) UNWTO (2021)

The impact of the mitigatory measures put in place by the different SADC member states is yet to be fully evaluated. However, in countries like Mauritius and South Africa the measures have helped a large number of tourism enterprises from total collapse.

#### **5.4 Zimbabwean situation**

COVID-19 outbreak has presented unprecedented circumstances to the fragile tourism and hospitality industry. Lodging and food service sectors are known to have higher fixed costs and are sensitive to the shocks and instabilities in the market (Dimitropoulos 2018). Zimbabwe has not been spared of this worldwide crisis with its effects on the hospitality industry potentially heavier than those of the financial crisis in 2008. Many organisations in Zimbabwe's tourism industry face the challenge of managing fixed expenses, payroll, morale of the employees and specially cash flow.

In Zimbabwe public policies and measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus came into effect following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. There was a Declaration of state of disaster on (March 2020), prohibition of gatherings and national lockdown and curfews and closure of non-essential services and business operations (Nchanji *et al.*, 2021). Multiple hand-washing was stipulated and weddings prohibited as some of the measures to curb the spreading of the disease around the country (Dzobo *et al.*, 2020). Government ensured that the essential services like transport, the food industry, healthcare, and security forces be screened first to minimize local spread of the pandemic (Makurumidze, 2020). These public policies impacted on tourism industry as restrictions on unnecessary travel enforced through mounting roadblocks on major highways meant reduction on tourism activities in the destination. To prevent intercity spread of infection, it became necessary to have travellers apply for a travellers' pass from the responsible government unit or department. (Dzobo *et al.*, 2020). Zimbabwe launched its tourism recovery strategy in August 2020 intending to promote domestic tourism as a strategic option and means of building destination resilience (Woyo, 2021). However as pointed out by Woyo (*ibid*) tourism in Zimbabwe is perceived as expensive and the majority of the domestic tourists are unable to travel for leisure in the country. Implementation of the strategy has not therefore yielded the hoped for results to date.

#### **6. Methodology**

The study employed the qualitative method to gather data from the tourism industry respondents. The qualitative approach was buttressed by extensive desk research. Key informants were drawn from the hospitality and travel and tourism subsectors of the industry. Purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents. The choice of the sampling method was driven by the need to ensure a broad representation of the views of different subsectors of the industry. A total of eleven interviews were conducted with senior managers in the tourism industry. These were made up of six hotel managers' three managers from the tourism and travel subsector, the president of the TBCZ as well as the CEO of TBCZ. Interviews with the Chief Executive of the Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe as well as with the president of the same organization helped the researchers to get an appreciation of an overall view of the issues that the industry has been grappling with since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The researchers use online telephone interviews to interrogate the views of the respondents due to the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews were carried out during the period July 24<sup>th</sup> to August 11<sup>th</sup> 2021. For purposes of presenting and discussing of the results of the study the hotel managers were tagged



A, B, C,D,E,F with the travel and tourism managers being tagged G,H,I. The president of the TBCZ and its CEO were tagged J and K respectively.

The researchers accessed published information on government response to the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry through the internet. The data included that which is available in scholarly journals on impact of COVID-19 on tourism and that which is published by international organizations like the United Nations World Tourism Organizations World Travel and Tourism Council, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.

## **7. Research Findings**

Interviews with participants from the tourism industry covered seven key areas from which the researchers were able to get a clear view of the challenges that the tourism sector has experienced and its aspirations for the future inclusive growth. The questions to the participants covered the following:

- Overall impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the business;
- Strategies adopted by companies to survive the pandemic environment;
- Experiences in accessing the government 500-million-dollar tourism facility;
- Government measures that have helped the industry to continue operating;
- The role that the private sector should play in the tourism recovery plan;
- Benefits realized from the domestic tourism promotion program; and
- Policies and measures that the government should put in place to facilitate the survival of the tourism industry post Covid-19 period.

All the participants indicated that COVID-19 had been disastrous for their enterprises. This was aptly summed up by respondent K who said:

*“This is a terrible situation that the industry has found itself in”.*

It was indicated that the industry was hit when it was beginning to experience some recovery in view of the political and economic stability that the country was exhibiting. Both respondents H and I expressed the view that international tour operators were showing strong signs of confidence on Zimbabwe as a destination as a number of them in the country’s key source markets were expanding their programmes to the country and new ones were including Zimbabwe in their programmes. Hotel managers pointed out that 80% of the enterprises experienced massive booking cancellations with room occupancy dropping to 15% levels and with the majority of properties having had to close down due to lack of customers. The overall result of the Covid-19 pandemic in the tourism industry has been a massive closure of enterprises, furloughing of employees, cutting down on the number of employees through dismissals, early retirement and part-time employment.

Companies in the tourism industry employed a variety of strategies in a bid to survive. The measures included business closures; staff pay reductions/rationalizations with some companies paying their workers 50% or less of their normal wages. In a number of cases staff members were sent on unpaid leave, with a large number of non-front line staff being requested to work from home. Partial and total closures of operations were also implemented by some companies so as to limit the level of their financial challenges. Companies had no option but to dismiss large numbers of their workforce. One of the major hotel companies in the country had to lay off a total of 300

workers and a tour operator in Victoria Falls had to dismiss a total of 200 workers (Personal communication with company CEOs). The socio-economic and psychological impact on the dismissed employees is yet to be fully interrogated. Given the current harsh economic environment in the country and the general lack effective social safety nets the dismissal from employment has been devastating on those affected.

The companies that are still operational indicated that they had to put in place new business models realigned to meet the new normal in the current environment. For example, several companies have had to retrain their workers to enable them to be multi-skilled in order for them to carry out multiple tasks in the organizations. It was also indicated that some companies that had borrowed heavily had to engage their banks to renegotiate new terms of payment for their loans.

There was a general consensus that the government 500-million-dollar loan guarantee facility was a white elephant. It was pointed out that companies had spent a substantial amount of time and resources in trying to access the facility through their banks only to be advised that there were no funds available. The Tourism Business Council indicated that it had engaged the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and came to a clear conclusion that the said facility was of no help to the industry in the current environment. Sentiments of most industry players were summed up by the views of participant H who said:

*“This facility was a hoax. Who needs a loan from the bank in this kind of business environment? I was annoyed to find out that I had to spend a lot of my time trying to understand this hoax when my business was folding in my eyes. I think the authorities need to do better than this.”*

Participants argued that whilst it was understood that the government had other pressing issues which it needed to allocate its meagre resources there where never the less interventions that the government could put in place to help the enterprises to remain afloat without it having to dole out money to the industry.

The participants indicated a number of policy measures and programmes that the government has implemented which have positively affected the industry as a whole including the tourism sector. These include:

- Health protocols and lock down measures which helped reduce spread of COVID but at the same time the lock downs further negatively impacted on the already distressed tourism operations;
- Vaccination program in VFA and across country which is focussed on achieving herd immunity;
- VAT exemption on domestic tourists;
- Opening of VFA border post;
- Regular consultations between the public and private sector stakeholders;
- Launch and implementation of the Tourism Recovery Plan;
- The continued opening up of the country’ skies which has resulted in a number of new airlines flying into the Zimbabwe with Qatar Airlines being the latest arrival.

With regard to the role that the private sector should play in the tourism recovery plan it was indicated that substantial collaboration with government had been made through provision of

clean, safe accommodation and meeting facilities with high levels of adherence to COVID Protocols. Industry was also promoting adherence to COVID19 protocols among all their employees. Tour operators and hotels had put in place a range of tour packages for both the domestic and international tourists a number of which are being promoted in partnership with the Zimbabwe Tourist Authority (ZTA). It was pointed out that whilst the ZIMBHO promotional programme had brought some initial relief to the industry especially the accommodation sector through domestic business meetings, the strategy has been spiked by constant lockdowns that have inhibited intercity travel. Participants K expressed the issue as follows:

*“Domestic tourism revival under ZIMBHO was killed by regulations. Lockdowns and roadblocks meant that everyone was stuck in their town”*

It was further indicated that despite the intensity of promotion undertaken by ZTA through the ZIMBHO programme leisure domestic travel has hardly responded due a variety of factors. These include the constant shrinking of the household incomes for the middle and upper income members of the society, increase in cost of fuel and its availability only in US\$ denominated prices and overall perceived high cost of travel products and services in the country.

Discussions with the participants also brought out the fact that a large number of the country’s Community Based Natural Resources Management Programmes (CBNRM) had come to a standstill and their future is questionable. It was indicated that situation has led to an increase in wildlife poaching in some areas as well as intensification of human/wildlife conflicts in areas that are within the vicinities of protected areas like national parks estates.

Participants offered a number of suggestions with regard to policies and measures that they would wish the government to put in place to facilitate the continued operations of the businesses enterprises in the tourism industry. The key request was for the government to allow the industry to operate without constant disruptions as this made planning difficult as well as create a confused image in both the domestic and international markets. Participant J summarized the view as follows:

*“We need commitment from government to allow the industry to operate uninterrupted so that it can begin to recover through tapping into those markets that are ready to travel to Zimbabwe”*

The other areas that participants hoped government would consider included:

- Allowing restaurants and conference facilities to open with the conditionality of strictly adhering to the national and WHO Covid-19 protocols
- Roll over of licences and permits for at least one year to allow the industry to minimize costs;
- Putting in place a moratorium on a number of utility costs, for example municipal rates
- Offering limited grants to the industry to assist them with issues like wages, staff retraining and repayment of interests on loans.
- Operationalize the often discussed Tourism Revolving Fund.

Participants indicated that a large number of Small and Medium Sized (SMEs) enterprises in the industry which includes bed and breakfast, car hire companies, travel agencies, tour operators and

community based tourism entities are unlikely to recover in the future. The majority of the respondents pointed out that the government needs to review the policies that have been put in place by other countries in Africa in general and those implemented by some SADC member state in particular and come up with the best practices which will help the industry to restart. Participants emphasised the need for government to be aware of the competitiveness of the tourism industry globally and noted that the current government position in terms of assisting the industry to weather the challenges of the Covid-19 will mean that Zimbabwean companies will be uncompetitive in the future leading business failure and the attended social and economic challenges to the work force.

## **8. Conclusion**

The study demonstrated that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on tourism enterprises in the country. It showed that government response to the needs of the industry has been inadequate. It further showed that there are a number of best practice responses that have been implemented by other SADC countries which the Zimbabwean government can emulate. It finally indicated that for the tourism to restart sustainably and ensure future inclusive growth the government needs to put in place more pro-tourism measures than has been the case to date.

## **9. Recommendations**

Taking into considerations the current state of the tourism industry in the country, the views of industry participants to the study and a review of the literature on global and regional response to the challenges faced by the tourism sector the study makes the following recommendations:

- The government should roll over licences and permits that are paid for annually by the enterprises in the sector for a two-year period. This will give the businesses a breathing space in their financial challenges and will enable them to plan their activities without being choked by these costs.
- The government should allow the majority of tourism business to operate including restaurants and conferences facilities making sure that they all adhere to the national and WHO Covid. This will help in positioning Zimbabwe in the source markets as a tourism ready destination. This is important as tourists are currently searching for destinations with open spaces and the opportunities for outdoor activities which Zimbabwe has in abundance.
- The government should be offering a one-year moratorium on a multiplicity of taxes that tourism businesses are asked to pay every year by different government departments. This will again go a long way in reducing the financial burden that both small and large companies in the industry are carrying;
- Ministry of Finance should task the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to negotiate with banks for a waiver of payment of interests on loans for an agreed period;
- The government should provide grants to the industry to cover at least 50% of the wage and salary expenses for the employees of the tourism enterprises for a six months' period
- The government should consider providing a grant for training of the industry staff that have been laid off so as to give them a better opportunity of finding alternative employment or establish their own businesses in other sectors of the country's economy;
- The Ministry of Environment, Climate Tourism and Hospitality Industry should be enabled to establish and operationalize the Tourism Revolving Fund which has been under discussion for a number of years. This will give players in the tourism industry access to investment funds at affordable interest rates and tenure.

- The tourism industry needs to search for international and regional partners who will provide innovative and creative marketing strategies for their products. The enterprises have to put in place new business models if they are to survive in the future
- Enterprises in the industry need to relook at their costing models and come up with those that will ensure that the domestic market is able to afford the products and services on offer. The return of the international tourists to the country will take a long time and businesses will therefore have to survive on the domestic market for the next two to three years.

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