

Kaitano Dube
Olga L. Kupika
David Chikodzi *Editors*

COVID-19, Tourist Destinations and Prospects for Recovery

Volume Three: A South African and
Zimbabwean Perspective

 Springer

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Preface

Tourism in South Africa and Zimbabwe grew exponentially before the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020. Among other things, the sector has been battling disease outbreaks, political instability and, in recent years, the threat of extreme weather events attributed to climate change. Despite these challenges, the sector has made modest contributions to the lives and livelihoods of many rural and urban populations, offering hope to millions of people suffering from poverty and inequality. The sector's growth rate has always surpassed national economic growth rates. Tourism also provides revenue for threatened natural resources and heritage. Regardless of these successes and achievements, the sector was ill-prepared for the catastrophic outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, which forced border closures disrupting the sector's supply and demand for destinations. This book emerges from the desire to examine and document the impact, recovery and resilience of the tourism industry from COVID-19. The book takes learnings from close to 45 leading academics across the length and breadth of South Africa and Zimbabwe's Higher Education system. These leading and top-ranked authors provide a comprehensive picture of the sector during and post the height of COVID-19 infections. Diverse as the number of authors, the book covers a diversity of topics from tourism sectors and sub-sectors, and it is a must-have for tourism practitioners and role players as it provides a comprehensive picture of the tourism sector from a COVID-19 perspective. This is the first comprehensive compilation on a region to date.

Vanderbijlpark, South Africa
Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe
Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa

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Part I
Background and Introduction

Chapter 1

COVID-19 Tourism Impact, Recovery and Resilience: South African and Zimbabwean Experience



David Chikodzi and Kaitano Dube 

Abstract The tourism industry has been the main contributor to the rapid spread of the coronavirus and has also been a high-profile victim of this spread. The COVID-19 pandemic has been the biggest ever shock impacting the global tourism industry. The effects of the pandemic have been felt deeply by countries that rely on tourism as one of their most significant sources of revenue and employment. Different destinations respond differently to shocks. Hence, the pace of recovery and resilience differs with goals. The tourism industry is a significant employer and source of livelihood security for many people in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The continued underperformance of this industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a significant economic crisis in both countries. Rapid post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience building to future shocks for this sector is, therefore, a priority for the two countries. This book aims to document case studies on tourism destinations' impacts, recovery and resilience from the COVID-19-induced downturn in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Such research will inform policy interventions for the industry. A mixture of qualitative, quantitative and participatory methods of enquiry was used in the book, and the case study approach was adopted. This first chapter of the book orients the reader to the concepts and critical issues that inform the book's writing. It also gives a synthesis of the book outline.

Keywords COVID-19 · Tourism recovery · Tourism resilience · South Africa · Zimbabwe

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1.1 Introduction and Background

The tourism industry has been observed in the short term to be very sensitive to shocks such as wars, economic recessions, terror attacks, pandemics and other disasters (Woyo, 2021; Adongo et al., 2021). However, in the long term, the industry has remarkably recovered from such setbacks (Avraham, 2016). Historically, most tourism industry crises were confined to specific countries, regions or subregions (Dayour et al., 2020). These impacted countries or regions would then craft a destination-specific response and recovery measures. The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a different dimension to shocks affecting the tourism industry. The entire world was affected, leading to travel restrictions in destination and source countries (Gossling et al., 2020). Countries resorted to mostly non-pharmaceutical measures to control the spread of the virus due to the absence of vaccines or drugs to treat the infected persons. These measures included physical distancing, wearing personal protective equipment, border closures, business shutdowns, closure of schools and banning of large gatherings (Nhamo et al., 2020).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2020) has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has had severe negative impacts on mostly micro, small, and medium enterprises, with many facing collapses, especially on the African continent. Herbane (2013) argues that small enterprises have limited formal crisis management plans and insurance to cover them in the event of operational challenges arising from a larger crisis. Larger businesses, on the other hand, are more likely to recover and build resilience to problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic faster due to better crisis management skills (Adongo et al., 2021).

The tourism industry has also been shown to be the main contributor to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and a high-profile victim of the spread (Lew et al., 2020). This is because the industry is accelerating the rate of spread of the disease across the world as people travel to destinations worldwide (Gossling et al., 2020). The burden of the disease, such as job losses, a sharp decline in visitors and business and hospitalisation of travellers, has struck the industry (Dayour et al., 2020). UNWTO (2020) observed unemployment figures for the tourism industry to have increased sharply due to the COVID-19-induced travel restrictions putting between 100–120 million direct tourism jobs in danger. The pandemic also saw international tourism arrivals drop by 93% compared with 2019 (Tourism International, 2021).

Building resilience to shocks is essential for the tourism industry and destination managers. This helps affected destinations enhance their capacity to adapt and deal with changes (Woyo, 2021). Adaptive resilience for the tourism industry refers to the ability of the sector to experience the effects of a shock without losing the ability to manage its resources. In tourism, resilience is a function of how fast a destination can rebound to normal conditions after a shock (Gaki & Koufodontis, 2022). Briguglio et al. (2009) see resilience as the ability to recover swiftly from a crisis, survive the impacts of a crisis, and altogether avoid a crisis.

The reaction and recovery of a destination after a crisis are influenced to a large extent by the characteristics of the destination. Hence, different destinations respond differently to shocks (UNWTO, 2022). If there are strong connections between destination attributes and factors influencing resilience, the chances of recovery are likely to be high and fast. In cases where stability is accompanied by a high capacity for adaptation and innovation, successful recovery not only re-establishes the previous rates of growth but results in the destination having a higher pace of growth, ridding of its resiliency while taking advantage of the new circumstances and turning the crises into an opportunity (Gaki & Koufodontis, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cirer-Costa (2020) studied Ibiza Island as a tourism destination and showed that the accumulated physical, human and social capital and the capacity of the local tourism players to reinvent their packages to adjust to the new normal led to improved resilience, allowing for recovery (Dube, 2021).

1.2 COVID-19 Impact, Recovery and Resilience in South Africa

Evidence shows that the pandemic altered the travel and tourism industry in South Africa in a significant manner and transformed the face of the tourism industry in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a plunge in tourist arrivals. Figure 1.1 shows that the pandemic resulted in a significant decline in international tourist arrivals to South Africa. This had adverse implications for the country’s tourism economy. Most of the impact was felt from 16 March 2020, barely a week after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic and asked states to take



Fig. 1.1 South Africa tourism trends 2019–2021. (Source: SA Tourism, 2022: 4)

aggressive steps to address the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is despite South Africa only having instituted the first hard lockdown measures on 26 March 2022.

There was a break in international tourism in South Africa from March 2020, and recovery ensued in October 2020. The recovery well continued into 2021 and continued taking place in 2021. A deep in arrivals in July 2021 amid the increased rollout of vaccines can be attributed to several factors. Amongst other factors has been the increased COVID-19 caseload during that period and partly due to the July 2021 unrest in the country.

Figure 1.2 demonstrates the impact and recovery of South Africa's key tourism markets and progress towards recovery. Critical international and regional tourism markets' recovery rates show varying recovery levels. The global market reveals that the USA, Russia and the UK have witnessed a much more significant recovery than any other market. Recovery has been sluggish in other key markets in Asia, such as China and Japan. This could be attributed to some of the measures adopted by these markets. The COVID-19 infections for long restricted the movement of Chinese tourists. This resulted in reconfiguring the tourism market share for the country's key tourism markets. As of mid-2021, the USA had market dominance and grew from 15.4% to 40%, which is a significant movement, while the UK shrank from 23.2% to 17.4%. The German market equally had its share diminishing from 18.4% to 7.6%. The shift in the market segment might require a revisit of the tourism product offering to better appeal to the current market segment.

The regional tourism market also witnessed some shifts in the market share, with declines in Zimbabwe's tourism market share from 31.1% to 29.2%. This decline that can be attributed to heightened xenophobic sentiments against Zimbabwean nationals, which seems to have increased during the COVID-19 recovery period and also travel restrictions instituted in the country. Lesotho's market share remains unchanged, while Mozambique's market share increased from 17.9% to 22.1%. The Namibian tourism market seems to have recovered stronger than any other regional market, followed by Zambia and Mozambique (Fig. 1.2). Recovery from Nigeria and Botswana tourism remains a challenge. There is a need to look at what has prompted recovery of other markets and what has restricted recovery in some markets. This will help the marketers develop an informed market rescue plan. The recovery of the African tourism market is critical as it is an essential financial contributor, as can be seen in Fig. 1.3, which shows the financial performance of various market segments as of the second quarter of 2022 as compared to the 2019 same period.

The COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa also transformed the domestic tourism market. Evidence shows that in as much as domestic tourism was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in the second quarter of 2022, the market had made significant recovery strides which reveals that in the domestic market, there were nine million overnight trips which is a jump of 139.6% compared to 2019 racking in revenue of R24.4 billion representing a jump of +294.8% as of the second quarter of 2022 (SA Tourism, 2022). This could be attributed to the unintended consequences of international travel, which was characterised by administrative burdens

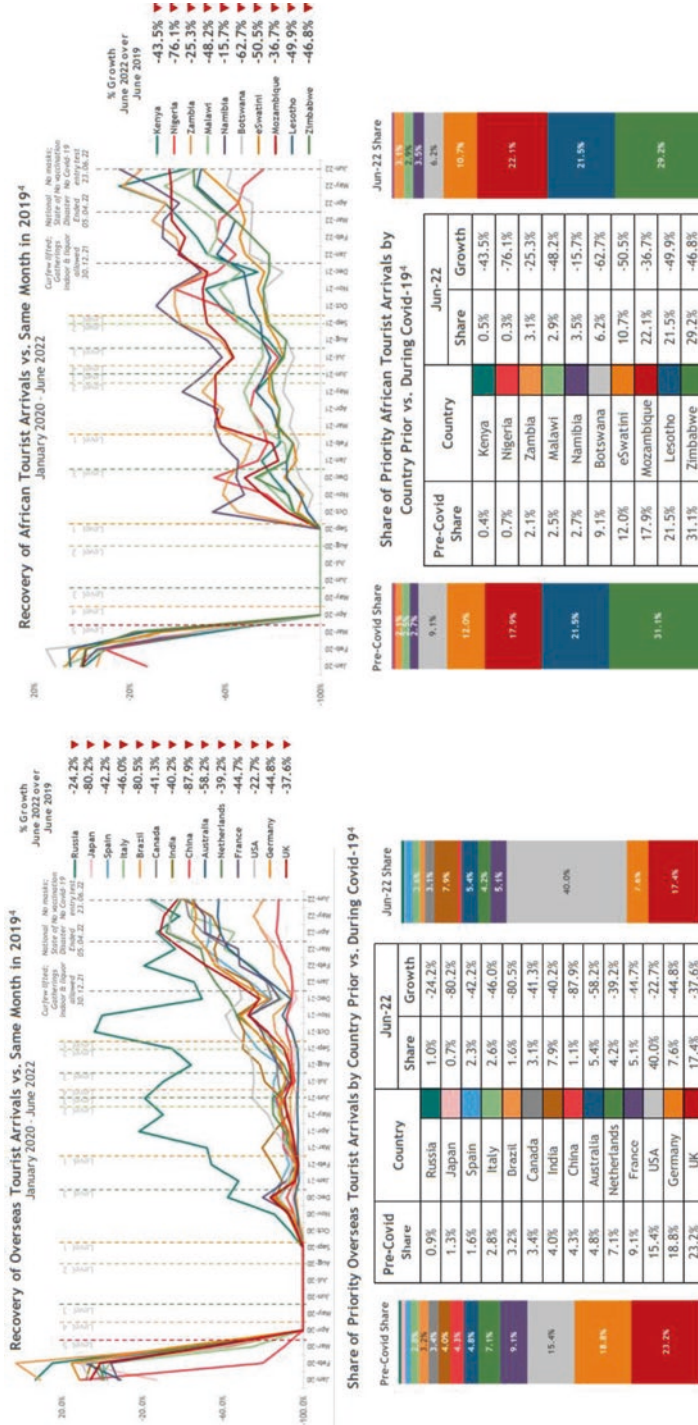


Fig. 1.2 Impact and recovery of the tourism market under various stages of lockdown measures in South Africa 2019 to 2nd half of 2022

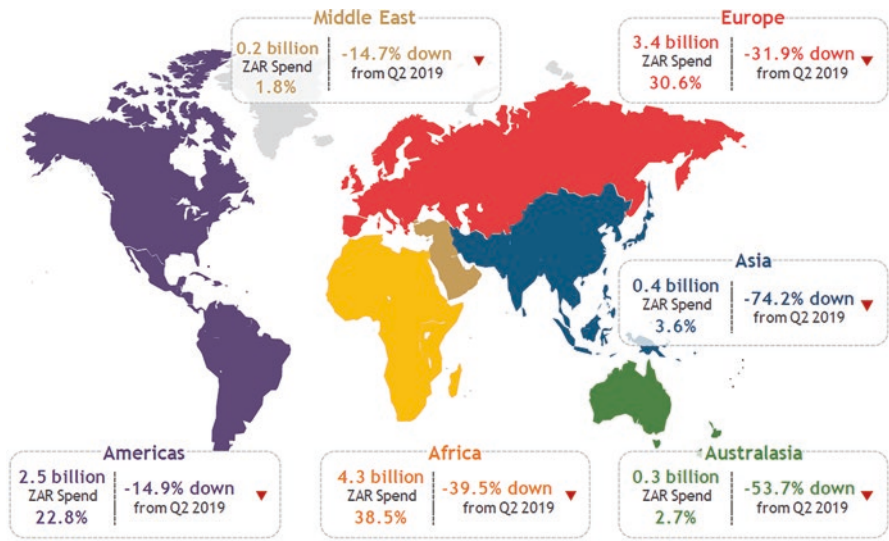


Fig. 1.3 Financial performance and recovery for South Africa’s tourism market. (Source: SA Tourism, 2022: 28)

forcing many to look inwards for tourism experience (Dube, 2022). The amount spent on tourism also has signals of inflation that were associated with the recovery period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic also altered the travel motivations for tourists in the South African tourism market. Various tourist typologies show varying degrees of recovery and resilience. Figure 1.4 shows that there has been significant growth in the number of business travellers to South Africa compared to 2019. The share of business travellers grew from 3.2% in 2019 to 10.6% in the second quarter of 2022, almost doubling the figure in 2019, which is quite optimistic given the value of such travellers to the economy. The other travel segment that grew includes medical tourism. Business shopping has also significantly increased, almost doubling the figures in 2019. Personal shopping seems to be struggling, indicating the financial squeeze associated with the recovery.

1.3 Zimbabwe Travel Trends and COVID-19 Recovery

The tourism industry in Zimbabwe is susceptible to multiple shocks. Among these is political instability often associated with pre-and post-election periods (Fig. 1.5). The land Reform Program, aimed at redistributing land to the landless blacks, was characterised by generally low tourist numbers due to the negative media publicity that characterised that period. The election periods in Zimbabwe are often characterised by violence and political mudslinging, which affect the destination image

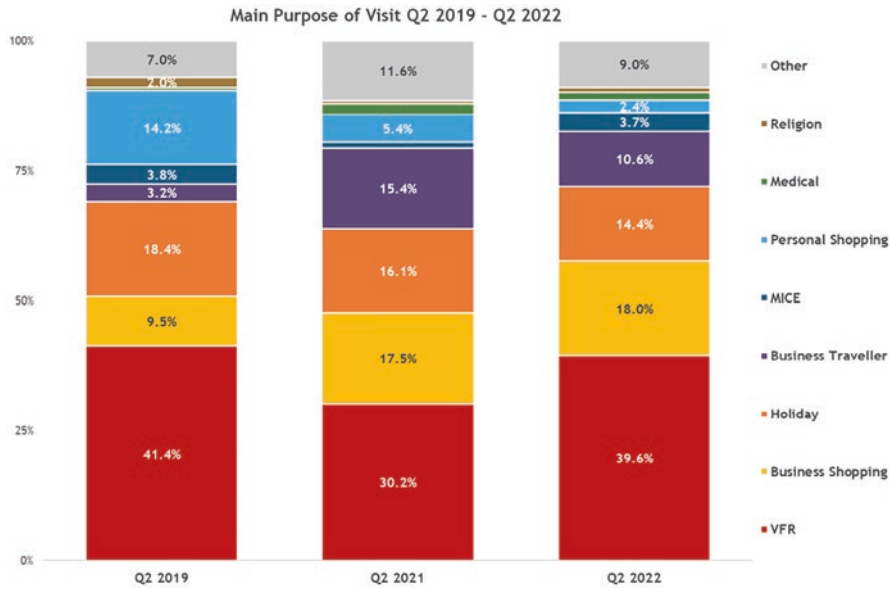


Fig. 1.4 Impact of COVID-19 on travel motivations in South Africa 2019–2022

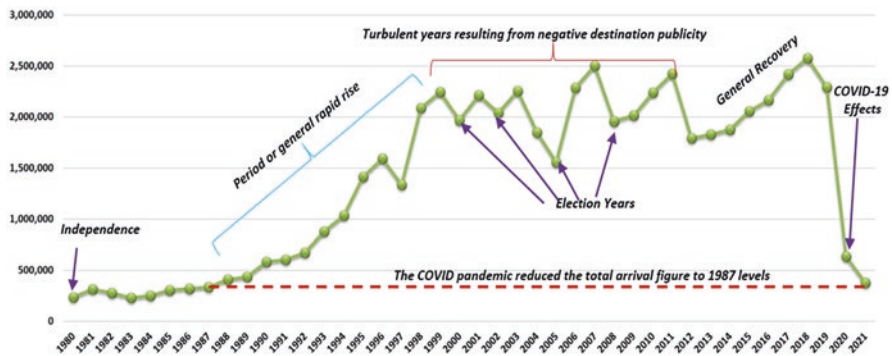


Fig. 1.5 Zimbabwe tourism trends from 1980 to 2021 showing the impacts of COVID-19 and other factors

adversely. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in diminished tourist arrivals, which saw the numbers dropping to levels seen in 1987 at the height of the decline in 2021 as arrivals dropped to below 500,000. This hurt the tourism economy and the country’s GDP. Before the pandemic, Zimbabwe’s tourism industry contributed about US \$1.3 billion in 2019 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2021). This figure dropped to US 360 million before rising to a measly US 397 million in 2021 as the country battled recovery.

The tourism recovery in the country has been largely sluggish and subdued in many supply markets, as shown in Fig. 1.6. The only market that has seen

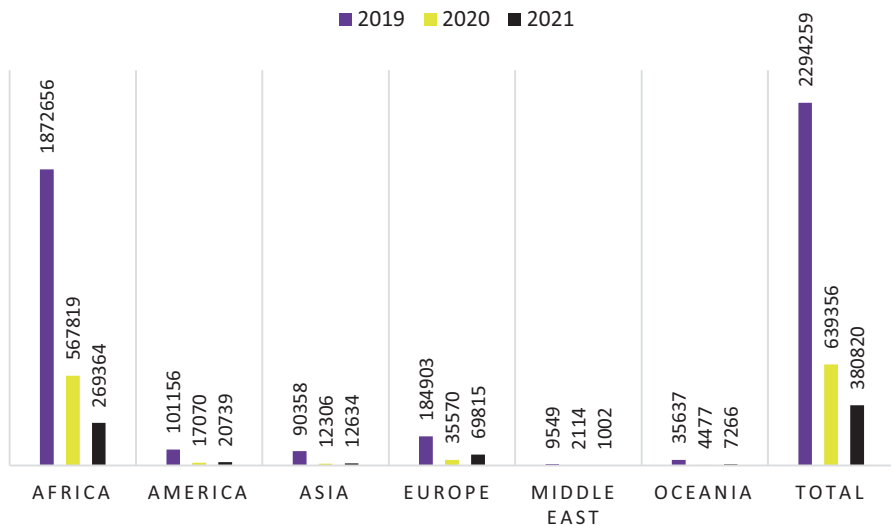


Fig. 1.6 COVID-19 impact and recovery of Zimbabwe’s supply market. (Source: Authors)

significant recovery rates is the African supply market. This could be attributed to Zimbabwe’s perceived incapacity to provide adequate medical and health facilities, which could make many tourists, especially in the international supply market, scared to visit. Zimbabwe’s tourism sector is intricately linked to the South African tourism market. It is unclear how the airline challenges plied the Zimbabwean route (Dube, 2021) affected travel and the recovery of Zimbabwe’s tourism industry.

Figure 1.7 shows that in as much as various tourism typologies were affected by the pandemic, only business travel has registered significant growth, especially during the recovery period, mainly in 2021. Business travellers to Zimbabwe surpassed figures in 2020, while the number of VFR slid further down in 2021, where recovery was expected to take root. This goes the same for the other travel typologies. Therefore, the country seems stuck in the downward trajectory that the sector took in 2020 following the pandemic outbreak.

1.3.1 COVID-19 Impact, Recovery and Resilience of Zimbabwe’s Tourism Destinations

Regarding key tourist destinations in Zimbabwe, there is an interesting emerging pattern of recovery where some destinations are struggling to recover while others are flourishing and performing way better than before the COVID-19 pandemic (Fig. 1.8). Destinations struggling to recover include the country’s leading destination, Victoria Falls. This could be attributed to several factors, such as the distance between it and the top tourism market in Zimbabwe. The resort depends mainly on

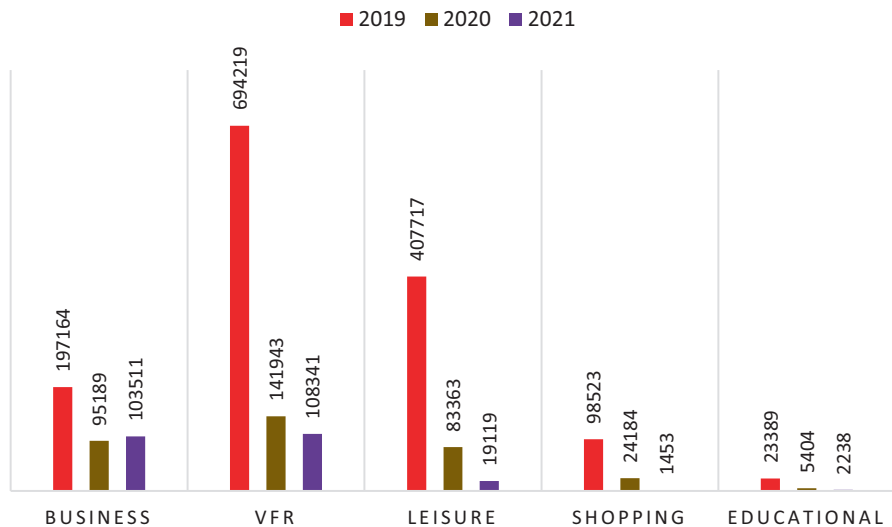


Fig. 1.7 COVID-19 Impact and recovery on travel intentions to Zimbabwe. (Source: Authors)

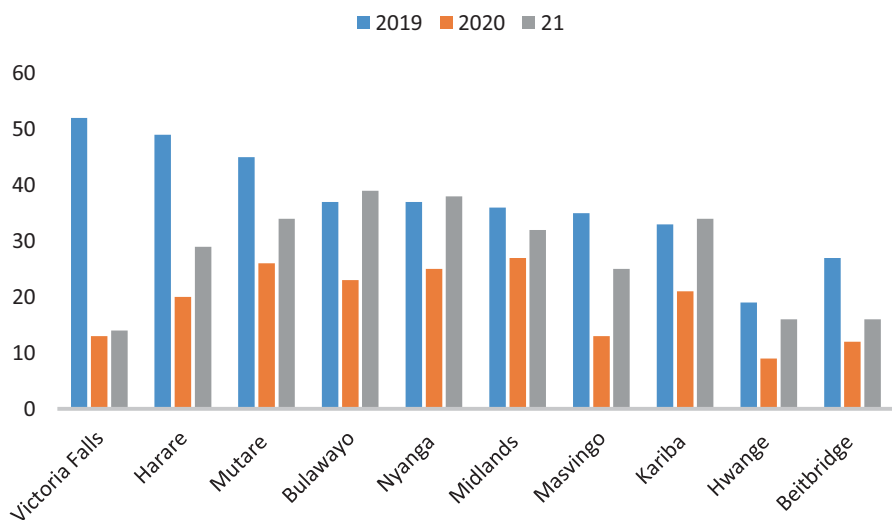


Fig. 1.8 COVID-19 impact and recovery in Zimbabwe's key destinations. (Source: Authors)

the international and regional tourism market. This is despite the fact that the number of rooms in Victoria Falls has declined from 1199 in 2020 to 1148 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2020, 2021), possibly because of the permanent closure of some establishments. The number of establishments closed could be higher, given that some new establishments opened during the pandemic. A rethink of product offering and packaging is critical in ensuring market sustainability.

Figures in Bulawayo, Nyanga and Kariba surpassed the pre-COVID-19 pandemic, indicating the sector’s robust growth in domestic tourism demands as those destinations are predominantly domestic. Lessons can be learnt from these destinations for Victoria Falls. Evidence shows that several tourism nodes in Victoria Falls, such as the Rainforest and Zambezi, are battling to recover, as shown in Figs. 1.9 and 1.10 inasmuch as there is some evidence of growth in domestic tourism for products in national parks and other recreational facilities in the country. Few recreational destinations such as Vumba, Mana Pools and Gonarezhou have witnessed numbers outpace figures before the COVID-19 pandemic. This factor can be attributed to more inward-looking by tourists. Most tourists seek escapes to ensure mental well-being after the trauma suffered during the pandemic.

In the main, international arrivals to national parks remain depressed (Fig. 1.10). This is quite concerning as the country and national parks have primarily depended on premium gate takings from international tourists to cover operational costs. Therefore, alternative funding is needed to sustain the ability of parks and their protection from poaching, for example.

Destinations in South Africa and Zimbabwe were some of the most impacted by the COVID-19-induced travel restrictions (Dube, 2021). These countries launched their tourism recovery strategies soon after the first wave of the pandemic. The default response by destinations in these countries was to promote domestic tourism as a vehicle through which the industry’s recovery can be anchored (Woyo, 2021). This was a paradigm shift for the industry as it has always relied on foreign visitors for its growth and survival in the past. Similar measures were implemented in the past by other destinations, such as Kenya after the 2008 post-election violence and Malaysia during the 1998 Asian financial crisis (de Sausmarez, 2013).

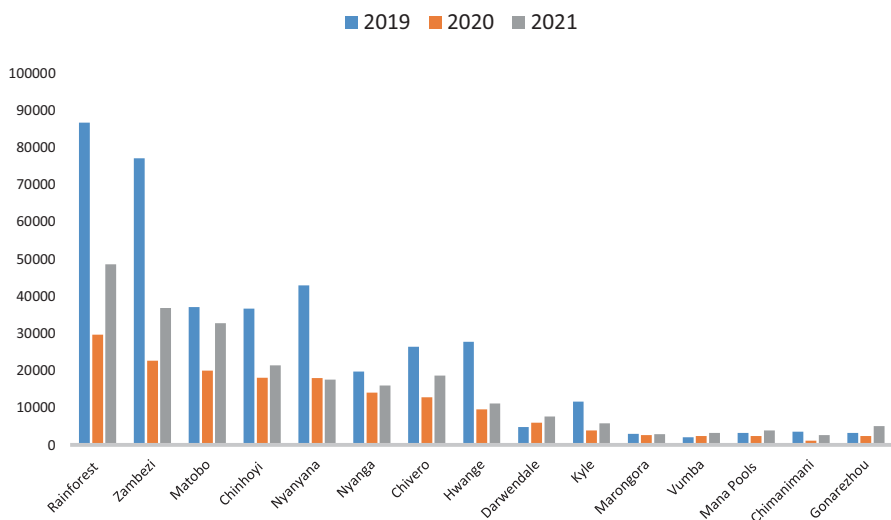


Fig. 1.9 Recovery of tourism destinations in Zimbabwe

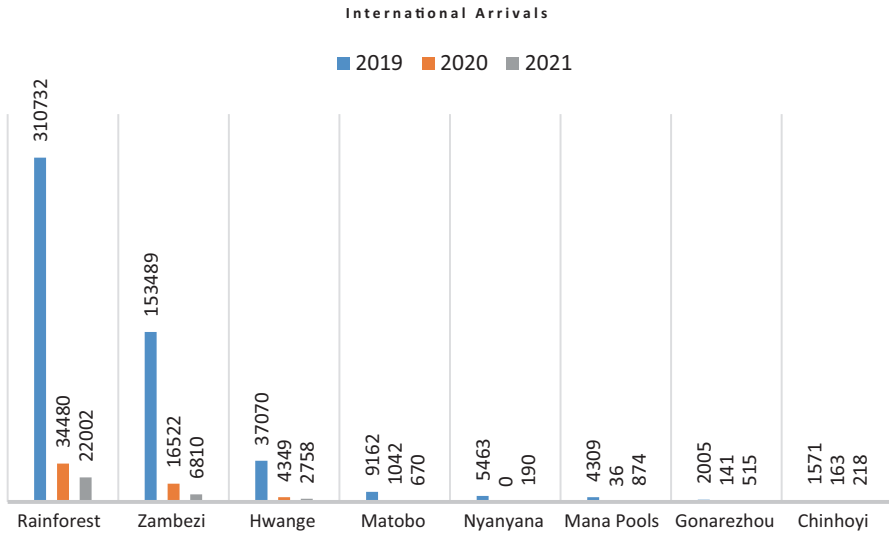


Fig. 1.10 Arrivals in National Parks

The tourism industry is a significant employer, source of livelihood and revenue for both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The continued underperformance of this industry constitutes a significant economic crisis in both countries. Therefore, the rapid post-COVID-19 recovery of this sector is a priority for the two countries, and so is building resilience to future shocks. This book, therefore, aims to document case studies on the impacts, recovery and resilience of tourism destinations from the COVID-19 induced downturn in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

1.4 Book Conceptualisation and Structure

1.4.1 Study Area

The book uses case studies from South Africa and Zimbabwe (Fig. 1.11) to unravel the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism industry as well as track the recovery and resilience of the sector.

1.4.2 Key Methodological Approaches

The book chapters utilise various methods to gather and analyse the obtained datasets. The main methods of enquiry used in the book are qualitative, quantitative and participatory. Qualitative methods were, however, the most utilised method in the



Fig. 1.11 Study area covered in the book. (Source: Authors)

book, with the other methods coming in to validate and cross-triangulate data from this method. Qualitative research refers to the study of phenomena to unravel answers as to why it is occurring and measuring complex multi-component interventions. Qualitative research aims to unpack what best works for whom, when and why in understanding a new problem (Busetto et al., 2020). It involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data through case studies, personal experiences, storytelling, documents and texts to deeply understand concepts, opinions and experiences (Johnson et al., 2020). Qualitative methodology is most appropriate in

situations where the problem needing attention is new and less understood, as in the case of the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism industry and the effectiveness of measures put in place to build resilience to similar shocks should they occur in future (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The primary objective of using qualitative methods in studying COVID-19 and how the tourism industry was building resilience is to better understand the subject matter at hand (Johnson et al., 2020).

Destination case studies were predominantly used to gather data for the book chapters. A case study refers to an in-depth study of a situation of interest. Case studies narrow down a broad field of interest into one that is easy to research. Case study research designs can be used as a proof of concept to show the impact of implemented policies or interventions and when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest. The case study approach is an established research design used extensively in various disciplines but mainly in the social sciences (Crowe et al., 2011). It is a robust research method in situations requiring a holistic, in-depth investigation.

The main data-gathering instruments used in the book chapters were questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, field observations, secondary data and document analysis. These instruments were mostly used as a combination of tools in most chapters rather than as a single instrument. The most common analysis approaches to data were content and thematic analysis for qualitative data, while descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies were utilised for quantitative data. Results were presented in graphs, direct quotations and summarised texts. Figure 1.12 depicts the main data collection techniques used in the book chapters.

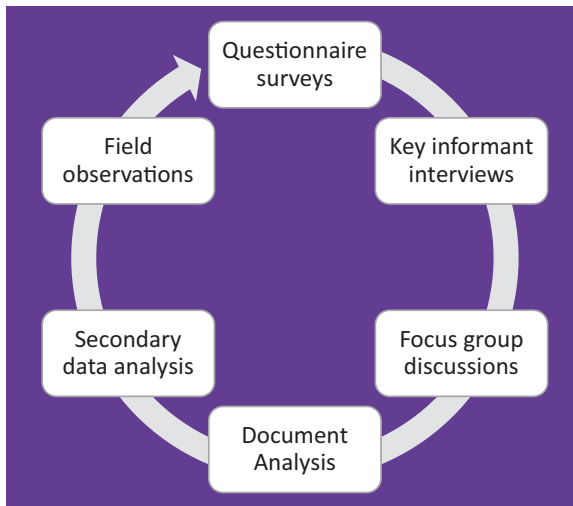


Fig. 1.12 Data collection and analysis techniques used in the book. (Source: Authors)

1.5 Book Outline

This chapter is entitled “COVID-19 Tourism Impact, Recovery and Resilience: South African and Zimbabwean Experience.” The book’s objective is to seek deeper understanding of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Secondly, it sought to unravel the management of tourist destinations in these countries during the pandemic. Thirdly, the book explores the recovery of tourism from the COVID-19 induced downturn and the resilience that this sector has built in the face of this unprecedented shock. The book is split into five main sections, which are the background and introduction, impacts of COVID-19 on tourist destinations in Zimbabwe and South Africa, management of COVID-19 in tourist destinations in Zimbabwe and South Africa, tourism recovery and resilience in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and the final section concludes the book and makes recommendations in the light of the findings from the book.

The book’s first section introduces the reader to the concepts and key issues that inform the book’s writing. The study area and key methodological approaches used in the book are also highlighted in this section. This section has a single introductory chapter entitled “Tourism and COVID-19 in Zimbabwe and South Africa: Contextual Perspectives.”

The book’s second section looks at the impacts of COVID-19 on tourist destinations in Zimbabwe and South Africa. It starts with Chap. 2, which deciphers the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on trophy hunting as a tourism enterprise in selected hunting concessions of Zimbabwe. This is a key chapter in the book, given the importance of hunting as a source of revenue financing conservation in southern Africa. Chapter 3 assesses the impacts of COVID-19 on hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Province of Zimbabwe. Chapter 4 dissects the impacts of COVID-19 on the traditional African food and beverage expo in the Matobo area of Zimbabwe. This is an international cultural event key to the area’s livelihood but was heavily affected by the travel restrictions instituted to curb the rapid spread of the coronavirus. The impacts of COVID-19 on tourism destinations in both Harare and Victoria Falls are explored in Chap. 5, with Chap. 6 looking at the impacts of COVID-19 on nature-based tourism electric energy emissions in South African national parks. The section is concluded with a chapter which examines the impacts of COVID-19 on rural tourism enterprises in Zimbabwe and also analyses prospects for the future in the post-COVID-19 era.

The book’s third section focuses on managing COVID-19 in tourist destinations of the study countries. It starts with Chap. 8, which looks at women’s participation in community-based tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter focuses on a case study from the Sengwe communal lands in south-eastern Zimbabwe. The next chapter analyses the management interventions implemented to help the Mahenye ecotourism biophysical resources to cope and rebound from COVID-19-induced shocks. Chapter 10 zeros in on wildlife destinations and highlights lessons learnt from the pandemic to build resilience to similar future shocks should they reoccur. Chapter 11 focuses on training as an adaptive strategy to revive tourism in

South Africa in the post-COVID-19 era. It focuses on the THENSA-ATU case study. The next chapter examines domestic leisure tourism and lessons from township business operators during the COVID-19 pandemic. The final chapter of this section redefines the idea of equal distribution of tourism's benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The book's fourth section gives a sharp articulation of tourism recovery and resilience from the pandemic-induced downturn in South Africa. Chapter 14 looks at tourism recovery strategies from within national parks in the Western Cape province of South Africa. The next chapter examines the recovery and resilience of Cape Town as a tourist destination in the post-COVID-19 period. Chapter 16 concludes this section by unpacking the inclusive, participatory approaches to tourism rebuilding and recovery in coastal tourism destinations. The chapter focuses on the iSimangaliso Wetland Park in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

The book's final part presents the policy space with conclusions and recommendations from the chapter's findings. Chapter 17 in this section is entitled "A Resilient Tourism Future for Zimbabwe, South Africa and the SADC Region." It summarises the key findings from the book and highlights the future of tourism in the Southern African region post-COVID-19 era. Further, this concluding chapter makes policy recommendations on tourism recovery and building resilience to future pandemics.

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Part II
Impacts of COVID-19 on
Tourist Destinations in Zimbabwe
and South Africa

Chapter 2

Impacts of COVID-19 on Hotels and Lodges in Tourism Destination Areas in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe



Chidochashe Mandizvo, Angella Chichinye, Phanos Matura, Tendai Kativhu, Margaret Macherera, and Idah Moyo

Abstract The study focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on hotels and lodges in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The impacts of COVID-19 were studied using qualitative methods to establish impacts, strategies, lessons learnt and recommendations that could be used in managing the prevailing situation and future crises. Six hotels and seven lodge tourism managers were purposively sampled and interviewed physically and electronically. The study found that the COVID-19 impacts were adverse for both the lodges and hotels. While the impacts were indiscriminate, the study found that small players were extensively affected more than larger entities with safety nets. In order to combat the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, managers reported using various strategies and measures to varying effectiveness. It also showed that the lack of severe government interventions and sector-wide coordinated responses could be detrimental to the accommodation tourism sectors in times of crisis. While this study focused on Bulawayo province, future research can be replicated in other cities and provinces in the nation. The use of mixed methods to

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investigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism sector can also bring out insights this study may have missed.

Keywords COVID-19 · Impacts · Hotels and lodges · Tourism

2.1 Introduction

Over the years, the tourism industry has suffered several shocks, such as climate change (Fitchett et al., 2016; Grimm et al., 2018) and hyperinflation (Moore, 2022). However, COVID-19 has been unprecedented, and its impacts have differed from previous crises, both spatially and temporally, with the whole globe being affected over a sustained period. The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest health disaster of the past 100 years (Chirisa et al., 2021). COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, was first reported in China in December 2019 (Zhu et al., 2020). Following the rapid spread and increase of infections and deaths worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the outbreak a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020; Domenico & Maurizio, 2020). To curtail the spread of COVID-19, most countries quickly adopted public health measures in line with WHO guidelines. These were inhibitory strategies that nations had to implement to minimise the virus's spread and reduce the number of deaths and infection cases. These measures included restrictions on movements, lockdowns, wearing of masks, social distancing, and border closures (WHO, 2020; Domenico & Maurizio, 2020). The actions taken to control the COVID-19 pandemic at an international level have had immediate (Gondwe, 2020) consequences, such as destabilising the entire global economy and continuing to impact the global economy in many ways. Among the many sweeping consequences of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is its impact on the global tourism industry (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020).

The tourism industry recorded an 87% fall in international tourist arrivals in January 2021 compared to the same month in 2020 (UNWTO, 2020). Mandatory testing, quarantines, and in some cases, the complete closure of borders have hindered the resumption of international travel (Vo & Tran, 2020). The tourism industry was recognised as the largest growing industry by UNWTO. It accounted for 10% of the global GDP and 330 million jobs worldwide in 2019 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). This emphasises the sector's important role in socio-economic growth, enhancement of business opportunities, foreign exchange earnings, and job creation.

The Zimbabwe Medium Term Plan (MTP 2011–2015) and the Government of Zimbabwe recognised tourism as a critical driver for growth and a principal pillar of the National Development Strategy (NDS 12020). The tourism industry in Zimbabwe has been one of the significant revenue and foreign currency earners. The year 2018 saw a total of 2579 97 million tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe (www.zimbabwetourism.net). In 2019, the tourism sector generated at least US\$1 billion in revenue, which is expected to exceed US\$2 billion by 2020 (www.zimbabwetourism.net). However, despite its potential, Zimbabwe has a volatile

macroeconomic environment with liquidity challenges, inflationary pressures and an uncertain political landscape with political sanctions whose impact is rarely quantified (Pasara & Garidzirai, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak aggravates these structural issues, negatively affecting the tourism industry.

Furthermore, the domestic tourism market is depressed due to a general lack of disposable income (Zimbabwe National Budget Brief, 2020), amongst other factors. This means tourism is anchored mainly on the international market for revenue. In Bulawayo, hotels and lodges have traditionally experienced seasonal fluctuations where demand increases with seasonality, for example, during the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF). The halt of many programmes, coupled with the ban on international travel brought about by the pandemic, has disrupted the demand and supply chain of the tourism industry in this sector. Therefore, the impact of COVID-19 on hotels and lodges in Bulawayo cannot be understated. While the global crisis (COVID-19 pandemic) has attracted research on environmental, economic and political macro-level issues, micro-level impacts and coping strategies, particularly on hotels and lodges, are understudied (Smart et al., 2021). Although large-scale research can quickly give stakeholders a broad view of what is happening, the pandemic translates into peculiar challenges and problems in specific localities, where hard decisions must be made daily. Therefore, it is meaningful and paramount to analyse the micro-level impacts and challenges brought about by COVID-19, as well as coping measures and their effects on individual hotels and lodges (Smart et al., 2021).

In this chapter, we investigate the impact of COVID-19 on hotels and lodges in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Hotel and lodge managers were interviewed to gather information on COVID-19 impacts on tourist arrivals (both local and international), revenue generation, and job losses. After unravelling the COVID-19 impacts on accommodation destination areas, we identify the strategies adopted to cope with the impacts of COVID-19 by the tourism sector under study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses sustainable recovery plans and solutions to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic during and after the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. We also made recommendations regarding policy, planning and marketing that will enhance the recovery of the tourism destination areas. Documenting these will allow managers to make informed decisions regarding recovery and survival strategies for the tourism industry. The government, the private sector and the communities require empirical research-based results to fully appreciate the damage the pandemic has caused in business operations within the tourism industry.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Study Area

We studied some hotels and lodges in Bulawayo, the second-largest city in Zimbabwe. The city lies within -20.03° latitude and 28.42° longitude; and -20.22° latitude and 28.68° longitude, which is to the south-west of Zimbabwe. The city

covers an area of about 700 km². Bulawayo has an altitude of about 1341 m above sea level and sits on a plain that marks the Lowveld of Zimbabwe (Mlambo et al., 2004; Gumbi et al., 2013). It is close to the watershed between the Zambezi and Limpopo basins. Its climate is classified as humid subtropical under the Koppen Climate Classification and falls in the Agro-ecological Region IV of Zimbabwe, which receives a mean annual rainfall of 590 mm (Katerere et al., 1993). The natural vegetation of Bulawayo is the typical dry Savanna woodland.

World heritage sites and wildlife reserves surround Bulawayo: Matobo Hills National Park, Bulawayo's Khami Ruins (Makuvaza, 2014), Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage, Mguza Nature Reserve, Tshabalala Sanctuary, Museum of Natural History, and National Arts Gallery, to name a few. This primacy, therefore, makes the hospitality industry in Bulawayo a lucrative business.

2.2.2 Sampling

Bulawayo Urban was divided into two categories, hotels and lodges. Under hotels, at least one hotel from each rating (one to three stars) was chosen. Under lodges, at least one lodge from these categories: luxury, comfort, and standard was chosen. A total of six hotels and seven lodges were studied. This was done to get different players' views under different operating environments. The approach was used to get a comprehensive picture of the impacts of COVID-19 on the hotels and lodges of Bulawayo Urban with their different operational levels.

2.2.3 Data Collection

Primary data was collected using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). KIIs were used for station managers of the studied tourist destinations. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information on the impacts of the pandemic on the number of tourists visiting the attraction areas (both international and local tourists), revenue generation, strategies and changes which were implemented by the operators during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify best practices and lessons learned from the pandemic. All the interviews were recorded. Recording the interviews allowed the researchers to focus on the interview content (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). However, handwritten notes were taken down throughout the interviews, guiding follow-up questions. The recorded interviews were listened to on the same day the interviews were conducted.

During data collection, all WHO COVID-19 protocols were observed. Where physical data collection was not feasible, virtual interviews of participants were done. All reports which were reviewed were requested and sent to the researchers online.

2.2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report themes within qualitative data. In thematic analysis, a theme is a pattern found in the information that, at a minimum, describes and organises the possible observations and interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). The thematic approach entailed sifting data from key informant interviews according to predefined and emerging themes. The themes in this chapter were from the field data (an inductive approach) and the researchers' prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (deductive approach). The use of the deductive approach was enabled by an extensive literature review that was done before data collection.

During familiarisation, audio was listened to, and data was transcribed into a written format and translated into English verbatim. Reading through the field notes enabled the researcher to code the data. Coding is when data sets are labelled into categories based on the research objectives (Moral et al., 2015). After coding, data were then grouped into themes.

2.3 Results and Discussion

2.3.1 Findings on Impacts of COVID-19 on Hotels/Lodges in Bulawayo Urban

The study's main objective was to ascertain the impacts of COVID-19 on the hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Urban. The study had to selectively choose representatives of the accommodation sector in Bulawayo, with the selection criteria ensuring that different organisations were selected. As Napierała et al. (2020) stated, each hotel may experience the negative consequences of COVID-19 differently. As such, the chosen respondents had to be a representative sample of the various levels of accommodation in Bulawayo Urban. Alonso-Almeida and Bremser (2013) also reiterated that hotels focused on providing high-quality service and maintaining a brand image can handle the crisis much easier.

In light of this assertion, one would expect a three star to be better able to deal with a crisis than a one star. This study showed that this assertion was indeed true. One manager of a popular three-star hotel said, "While there were lockdown measures, we could still accommodate essential workers who preferred high rated hotels over lowly rated ones; with us being a well-known hotel, things were not too bad compared to the rest of our counterparts." The manager added that their lowest occupancy rate was 10%, and they were never without guests despite the strict governmental lockdown measures. Contrary to this, one manager of a one-star hotel in the city revealed that they had 0% occupancy: "We had to close the hotel from the initial lockdown announcement, but even after that, we went for about six months

with no single customer, without income coming in, it was difficult for the hotel to continue being viable.”

All the 13 managers reported significant revenue losses, with some reporting a total loss of revenue. It was established that the standard lodges and one-star hotels reported close to total loss of revenue whilst the higher rated facilities reported significant drops with occupancy rates well under 30% against an average of 60–80% at peak levels. It was also established that the revenue losses were higher with stricter lockdown measures and improved with the relaxation of regulation. The facilities did not report a similar improvement, with lower-rated facilities reliant on the low-end customer still reporting depressing numbers. The higher rated facilities had an increase in business-related occupants as the lockdown measures were reviewed. An increase in business seemingly benefitted bigger businesses.

The preparedness of facilities for a crisis also differed. While all 13 respondents admitted to being unprepared, the larger facilities reported being able to develop strategies quickly. Generally, the institutional capacity to deal with the crisis is more developed in bigger organisations than in smaller ones, as elucidated by Makgetla (2021), who stated that small, family-run enterprises characterised by a lack of professional knowledge are likely to be caught off guard by a crisis and its impact on business. A few of the standard lodges were family run, with one having 0% occupancy over an increased period, with the manager saying, “We are having challenges. We have to pay electricity and water bills. We also rent this place where the owner still wants their rentals every month.” The manager was lamenting what he considered an untenable situation. While the picture painted was grim, it should be noted that having close to 0% occupancy was not unique to hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Urban. More developed European tourism markets also reported a staggering 99% decrease in bookings, as stated in a Deloitte (2021) report.

Significant disturbances to operations in the hotels and lodges caused problems with employment issues arising as many either lost their jobs or were forced to take unpaid leave. In this regard, there was also a demonstrable difference between lowly rated and highly rated facilities. The bigger institutions preferred placing workers on unpaid leave or half pay or 2 weeks in 2 weeks’ shifts. This was likely due to the potential cost of retrenchments and paying employee benefits. This finding is similar to Sucheran (2021) analysis of studies on COVID-19, where many researchers showed that most businesses preferred to reduce wages rather than furlough their workers; in some instances where these measures were unfavourable, voluntary retirements were preferred. One of the three-star hotels allowed its workers to leave with the promise of full benefits. One standard lodge that operated on short-term contracts for its employees reported letting go of some workers. The manager reported, “we have no option. We cannot afford the salaries,” they added. While workers were impacted, some solutions were found, with some hotels offering accommodation for their workers to ease the loss of income. The general impact of COVID-19 on employment, however, was mostly negative.

The other impact of COVID-19 was the change of operations. All 13 respondents reported having to follow WHO health and safety protocols. This caused a difference in guests’ experience, with all initial reporting resistance to some measures.

The most significant impact, however, was spending the limited revenues on these protocols, which were never budgeted for. “The obvious impact is the PPE and sanitisers we have to purchase, and it is an expense we never hoped for.”

The COVID-19 impacts on the demand side were unparalleled. Twelve of the 13 respondents reported being heavily dependent on international arrivals for the bulk of their revenue. With borders closed, this cut an important revenue stream. As stated by Ozili (2020), in most instances, the success of hospitality companies depends on the availability of expendable income in the target market segments. Hence, the loss of income has frustrated most hotels' sustainability by eroding prospective clients' purchasing power. With lockdown measures being employed in USA and Europe, the main market for tourist arrivals, the lack of income and reduced earning capacity meant potential tourists were focused on lower order needs rather than going on holiday. Even if there were able to, they could not due to the various governmental orders.

Due to the fact that the accommodation sector relies on synergies and partnership with suppliers of goods and services, most respondents reported owing suppliers for goods and services rendered. With a drop in income, they could not service their debts. This was true for all the hotel managers interviewed, while the lodges reported struggling in paying utilities. The two-star and three-star hotels reported having to do refunds for group travel with tourists unable to fly in due to the closed international border.

Table 2.1 shows the impacts of COVID-19 selected verbatim, which shows the sentiment of most chosen respondents. All impacts stated, despite their significance, are shown in Table 2.1.

2.3.2 Findings on Strategies Employed by Hotels and Lodges in Bulawayo Urban to Combat COVID-19 Impacts

The hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Urban employed various strategies to combat COVID-19 impacts. Due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was largely unforeseen, hotels and lodges in Bulawayo employed a more ad hoc approach rather than preset contingency plans. This meant that most strategies were used on a trial-and-error basis, and lessons were learnt as the pandemic progressed. This concurred with findings by Bonn and Rundle-Thiele (2007), who noted that strategic decision-making after a crisis event tends to be more intuitive and simplified than analytical and consultative. The strategies were divided into those that improved operational performance and those that improved the product offering of the hotels and lodges. Initially, the efficacy of the strategies employed was compromised by external factors beyond the entities control, such as government lockdown measures.

The major strategy employed by all accommodation facilities in Bulawayo ensured the safety and health of clients and staff protection against contracting the COVID-19 pandemic. For three of the hotels rated two star and three star, they installed automated temperature and sanitising points and shields at their front desk reception areas. One three-star hotel manager also highlighted that they had an

Table 2.1 Impacts of COVID-19 on hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Urban

Impacts	Theme	Negative	Frequency	Verbatim/comments
Short term	Employment	Workers laid off	2	“We had no option but to let go 60% of our workers.”
		Furloughed	4	
		Quitters	13	
	Occupancy rate	Less than 30% to zero occupancy	13	“For 6 months straight, we had no customer, not even 1!”
	Revenue (RevPar)	Revenue loss	13	
	Bookings	Cancellation and request for refunds	13	“In 2019, all our clients cancelled their bookings after ZITF was cancelled. It was tough.”
	Human resource	Short-staffed	9	“We are half of the total compliment now.”
	Salaries	Salary cuts Salary delays No bonus	13 9 10	“The owner had to use his savings to pay us at one point.”
	Working hour	Long shift hours Reduced per average month	13 12	“We are working from 6 to 6 for 2 weeks before exchanging with the other shift”
	Inventory management	Difficult in access	13	“Our purchasing department is trying the malaicha avenue to try and get our regular supply.”
	M.I.C.E	Reduced to zero	13	“With no conferences and trade fair, we are doomed. Business is low.”
Long term	Capital expenditure	PEP acquisition	13	“Already we are struggling to pay salaries and, now we need to buy sanitisers and masks every week, our expenses have definitely increased.”
		Salary payments	13	
		Utilities	13	
Pricing	Readjustments	12	“Locals can’t afford our usual rates. Imagine who would pay for \$270 just for one night in this COVID?!”	
	Debt/ loan	Utility, bills default	13	“We had to negotiate with BCC not to cut our water, ZESA is also outstanding, we can’t even talk about the suppliers we owe many creditors, and we can’t afford to pay them right now.”

Source: Authors

emergency wing set aside for quarantining any member suspected of exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. They also revealed that they were working in collaboration with the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) rapid response team in instances of suspected COVID-19 cases. This corresponds with the sentiments of most researchers, such as Rodríguez-Antón and Alonso-Almeida (2020), on strategies to alleviate COVID-19 impacts, who agree that the first strategy should focus on ensuring the safety and health of clients at tourist facilities.

The other strategy employed by hotels and lodges in Bulawayo was a discount on rates for accommodation. As stated previously, the accommodation sector was highly dependent on international arrivals. The forced shift to domestic tourism meant they had to adjust their rates because, due to the local macroeconomics, locals could not spend as much as foreign arrivals. One luxury lodge normally charged US\$298-00 per room, discounted to US\$99-00 with other discounts that went as low as US\$67-00 to attract the local market. One prominent three-star hotel slashed its prices by 30%. Two other managers reported having to do two for one deal. In this instance, charges applicable to one individual were accepted for the services of two individuals. Four respondents reported having to add extra day stays for guests. The hotels also ran promotions for group stays. One player offered the whole lodge a set fee instead of charging per room. Other promotions include giving guest upgrades and complimentary meals to entice customers.

There was also product diversification. Initially, and for most of their existence, hotels and lodges have relied on just room and board. They have made their revenues on guests spending their nights and meals. In COVID-19 times, such a strategy is limited. One three-star hotel reported having to do meal deliveries to households to still make sales in their in-house restaurant. One lodge reported having to do photo shoots and birthday lunches, and picnics. The manager said: “We just had to try new things, and we are glad it worked, especially during the weekend. We are having at least 2 birthday lunch bookings, and it has been our main source of revenue of late.”

The hotels and lodges also adopted flexible packages. One manager reported that locals preferred paying for specific things due to a lack of disposable income. For example, they said that instead of paying for bed and breakfast, some wanted to opt out of it. While previous policies would not allow that, managers started itemising their price lists. One lodge manager reported that they had to split their services into a full day and half day to access the local market better.

Due to border closures and the ban on intercity travel, some hotels faced abrupt cuts in their supply chains regarding inventory and raw materials. Also, based on the low revenue income, some facilities could not keep up with the high prices of their suppliers and had to re-strategize. Some hotels and lodges substituted suppliers with cheaper suppliers. One manager stated they had to change their meat supplier from premium meats supplier to a more affordable supplier. This cut costs while providing locals with affordable meals. The manager said, “Although we had to compromise on the quality of meat we served, our customers had food on their plates at the price they could afford.”

All managers reported having to focus on online marketing heavily. This was seen as a cheap strategy due to the potency of social media to reach many people. The managers shared the sentiments that social media uptake went up during the lockdown restrictions setting a lucrative platform for broad advertisement and increasing the visibility of their facilities to potential clients. However, contrary to findings by Lai and Wong (2020) that hotel managers preferred to save, budget and cut expenses after the end of the pandemic other than marketing tactics which they regarded would be ineffective in boosting sales. A one-star hotel manager revealed

that the hotel staff went around the country pitching billboards and marketing the hotel's way of dealing with the hygienic concerns of their clients. The manager said: "We have been relying on Facebook and Twitter. We have gone around the cities in Zimbabwe advertising the hotel, putting up billboards and showing the steps we are implementing in terms of wearing masks, our staff wearing protective clothing and how rooms are sanitised and cleaned after every customer." The manager said the strategy had helped the hotel somehow in terms of visibility.

Zhang et al. (2020) recommended that hotels devise management strategies around staff safety, motivation and control. Likewise, most of the managers in this research divulged that regardless of the challenges faced, the hotels and lodges tried to focus on capacity building activities such as on-site and online training and effective dialogue with employees. These techniques were targeted at maintaining sustainability during the crisis period. One manager said that through communication and transparency, their workers quickly adjusted to the new normal regarding health protocols, work shifts, and remunerations.

Facilities that had experienced short-staffing due to non-renewed contracts, laid-off workers or those who voluntarily quit their jobs had to develop stern strategies to run their business smoothly. Some managers remarked that they resorted to long shifts, where a group would start work from 6 am to 6 pm, and another would take over from 6 pm to 6 am instead of their usual 7–8 h shifts. A manager from a standard lodge said the top management had to also chip in and take part in maintenance work at times of crisis: "At one point, I had to personally cut the lawn and trim the hedge and flower bushes because we are understaffed."

While this strategy seemed to work temporarily, it has shortcomings regarding workers' well-being. A study by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) showed that long working hours led to 745,000 deaths from stroke and ischemic heart disease in 2016. Thus while the lodges and hotels in Bulawayo still need to keep their businesses running under the circumstance, they still need to strike a balance between the social well-being of workers and the viability of their operations. Table 2.2 below shows some of the strategies employed.

2.3.3 Lessons Learnt by Hotels and Lodges in Bulawayo Urban

COVID-19 has presented important learning curves for the accommodation sector, which will likely lead to improved service going forward. Numerous lessons have been learnt, and the sector is in a prime position to make an adjustment that will be relevant in the post-COVID-19 tourism market.

Table 2.2 Strategies employed to cope with COVID-19 impacts

Management	Impact	Strategies and measures employed	Effectiveness of strategies and measures in verbatim
Operational	Employment	Shifts Retrenchment Salary cuts	“The shifts are better than going home for good”(translation from vernacular) “The company should have retained everyone on a shift basis than retrench others at the peak of their need.”
	Occupancy rate	Promotions Discounts Advertisement	“Our billboard and advertisement somehow helped improve visibility.”
	Revenue RevPar	Product diversification Partnership with travelling agents Pricing	“Our complimentary breakfast helped a lot. Even the photo shot and picnic.” “Travel agents usually bear the cancellation fee, which helps reduce our losses”
	Operational costs	Cost-cutting Cheaper alternatives	“..at the end of the day, our customers had their meal on their plate.”
	Inventory management	Subcontracting	“Malaichas has helped us acquire some of our supplies during border closures.”
	Capacity development	Online and onsite training	“It helps us get closer with our employees, and we see each other as a family now.”
	Safety and health measures	PEP, social distance health, awareness education Reduce physical contact services	“Although it is to a person’s discretion, we have never recorded any COVID case from our staff or visitors.”
Strategic	Closed international market segment	Target local markets	“We have reduced our rates so that locals can also afford, and so far, it is promising.”
	Debt/loans	Negotiations and payment plans	“We have successfully negotiated new flexible payment plans with most of our suppliers.” “Anytime we might lose our contract with a supplier.”
Other	Day to day	Communication and transparency	“This has kept us going, our workers have been so understanding, and we are lucky.”
	Futuristic	Systems upgrade/ renovations	“They are constructing a pool in the gardens; this project has been on hold for so long, now we have time.”

Source: Authors

Financially, the biggest lesson learned by most of the managers was the importance for hotels to watch the payroll, utilise all staff, and eliminate redundant positions. They also learnt to be prepared and budget for drastic changes that may be unforeseen. Some managers reflected that they faced challenges with local markets that could not comply with the cancellation policies that required them to pay a certain cancellation fee. As such, the facilities lost much revenue, which could have been helpful in such times of crisis. This lesson enabled them to realise the need to develop contingency plans and flexible policies that are well spelt out and understood by all clients, especially during crises. One manager mentioned: “We need to adjust our policies for local markets. Us locals are not mindful of the booking and cancellation policies; someone reserves a room without paying a deposit and eventually does not show up. This results in income loss as the room could probably have been sold ten times over.”

The managers also learnt not to underestimate the importance of good relationships between managers and their staff members as well as their clientele. Above all, they also learnt the need to comply with health protocols and practise good hygiene for their clients as well as their safety:

The thing that worked to our advantage was that we consider our staff complemented as family. As such, it was easier to reason with them on the new adjustments needed to keep the company running. At times we had to cut their salaries and send some on unpaid leave on a shift basis.

Another participant mentioned that:

We also had clients booked for the 2020 ZITF and other functions. We had to negotiate to move their bookings until the event was done instead of giving them a refund.

The managers also learnt the need to diversify their target markets from international markets and cooperate to include the domestic market. They all agreed that their marketing and advertisement efforts needed to also target the locals who remain in their low-hanging fruits in times of unprecedented events like COVID-19. One manager mentioned that it was imperative to focus on the local markets even after the pandemic as it would increase their revenue base and create a form of a safety net if ever inter-border alienating events recurred. Yacoub and El Hajjar (2020) said that managers in Lebanon thought the tourism sector would take time to recover as the market will move from international to local. If this case is true, the hotels and lodges in Bulawayo should take their perceived lesson seriously for the success of their business post-COVID-19.

Three categories were chosen with top executive management level at 15%, 54% being middle-level managers and 31% being low-level managers. The spread of the different level managers ensured that opinions were gathered from multiple levels of management, giving a more comprehensive picture. The average range experience of the respondents in the tourism sector was between 2–5 years. This showed that the respondents were relatively experienced and could provide the best picture of the impacts of COVID-19 on hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Urban.

2.3.4 Recommendations by Respondents

Pursuant to the study's objectives and the findings, respondents made recommendations that could aid or improve the operations of hotels and lodges in Bulawayo Urban. The researchers also noted areas that needed improvement for a more resilient accommodation sector in Bulawayo. These recommendations form the basis of this section.

- Government intervention.
- Israeli and Reichel (2003) suggested that some managers approached their government to seek assistance during a crisis, which often responded positively through various bodies. Likewise, the management in Bulawayo's hotel and lodge sector suggested that the government, through bodies such as ZTA and the relevant ministries, should intervene in times of crisis such as COVID-19. They argued that the government could implement tax waivers or tax holidays, especially during low business seasons, to allow the facilities to reboot their operations and manage their other expenses without accumulating exorbitant debts. Some of the management felt that although the government had already taken steps to assist the tourism sector, it needed to clarify on the implementation process of the measures. The government, through the treasury and other public partners, can also help fund key operations in the accommodation sector at times of crisis, they said:

To the Government, I strongly recommend that they consider hotels and the tourism sector in general when formulating their lockdown measures. In fact, the Government should provide a cushion for the whole sector in order for it to continue functioning amid this crisis.

Yes, we heard the government set up a waiver for us to pay tax, but it was not clear what would happen after the period lapsed, yet we were still at the peak of lockdown.

2.3.5 Sector-Wide Response Strategies

Given that the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented, the hotel and lodge managers in Bulawayo recommended collaborations among the industry's key players. As Smart et al. (2021) noted in his study, the managers wished for hotels to collaborate with the private and public sectors to come up with innovative methods, marketing plans and new market segments to revive the hospitality sector.

Let's work with tertiary institutions, travel agencies, ministries and event organisers to brainstorm techniques to help promote our businesses.

Private players are a key avenue for funding through their investments. Let us create the opportunity to rope in the private players in our lodges and adopt a more professional way of running our business.

2.3.6 Technology Advancement and Maintenance of Health Protocols

The managers recommended that hotels and lodges in Bulawayo adopt technology that has both existed and is evolving to keep its competitive relevance. All interviewed managers recommended that the best hygienic practices adopted and learnt during the COVID-19 health protocols should be permanently adopted for the safety and health of their clientele:

Hotels should invest in the best technology to target both online and offline customers; digital marketing is now very important.

Technology such as contactless check-in equipment adopted in other nations and self-disinfecting equipment used to disinfect rooms, as well as self-temperature checks, should be permanently adopted even after COVID-19 as we have seen that health is a priority for everyone.

No doubt, clients will be more comfortable to book in lodges with the best hygienic practices going forth. Therefore the use of sanitisers and temperature screening should continue even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3.7 Diversify Incomes

The hotel sector managers all concurred that Bulawayo's accommodation sector needs to move away from business as usual – which focuses on overnight accommodation and bouts of meals. They all agreed that there is a need for product diversification in order to allow a continuous flow of income even during unprecedented events like COVID-19 channel. One interviewee revealed that their lodge ventured into birthday lunch bookings and photo shoot sessions, which managed to keep them afloat financially. The interviewee thought that this new product remained even after COVID-19.

Another respondent mentioned that:

There is a severe need for us to adopt channels of making money other than the usual avenues. For example, if we had copied what our counterpart hotel did (name protected), we could have suffered less of the impacts of Covid-19. 'The hotel' had a gate away stream, delivering groceries and foodstuffs to households for a substantial fee.

2.3.8 Staff Development and Training

Most managers recommended that instead of workers being idle during the crisis, hotels and lodges could take advantage of the free time and engage workers in in-house or online training programs. This also aids in improving communication

between management and workers, creating a rapport that is good for the business in crises, and promoting organisational transparency. One participant opined that:

We have noted rather late that instead of waiting for no-shows, we could also utilise the time to train our staff, especially on hygienic practices and other relevant skills. We also thought it wise to shift our focus to our staff again as we noted that good relationships make it easier to negotiate and compromise our way in times of crises, especially on salary issues.

2.3.9 *Educate the Guests*

Most managers expressed concern over the incompletion with health protocols that most customers exhibited. They all agreed that the best solution was to engage in visitor education on their action's implications. They suggested the continued use of posters and verbal awareness, especially during check-ins.

2.3.10 *Changes in Marketing Strategies*

All the managers showed that they previously had a bias towards international markets and business communities, with less attention to local customers. Having felt the void imposed by lockdowns and bans in intercity travel, the managers had realised the need to shift their focus to the local market. They also realised the need to develop pricing and service delivery packages that fit the local markets. The managers interviewed recommended hotels and lodges to restructure their marketing strategies and incorporate local clients. Strategies include price adjustments for local clients, targeted promotions, and general improvement in the experience offered to local clients. They also recommended working hand in hand with other tourism sectors to promote domestic tourism, thus promoting Bulawayo as a destination to be explored by locals and new international markets. They also suggested rigorous advertisement, especially digital marketing, to keep their clients updated on developments. Some managers made the following statements:

Tourist operators should not forget the hand that fed them during a crisis. Operators should not shun local clients after covid-19. They should channel their marketing strategies towards that market and expand their clientele base.

The ZimBho campaign spearheaded by the Zimbabwe tourism authority is a good initiative, but we need to do more as the custodians of Bulawayo to promote our city as a destination of choice. If we come together and market our diversity, the accommodation sector will enjoy the benefits through increased occupancy and revenue influx.

We realised most clients were surprised that the hotel was opened during COVID-19, showing there is a need for hotels to partake in e-advertisement to ensure clients know what is on offer and the developments at the hotels.

2.3.11 Insurance Policy and Risk Management Plan

The management in the Bulawayo hotel and lodges sector admitted that they were all caught off guard by the pandemic. As such, they did not have appropriate contingency plans to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. They, therefore, recommended that there is a need for hotels and lodges to invest in risk management plans that predict all possible scenarios from less to adverse risk. Some also suggested that hotels and lodge owners should invest in company insurance policies that cater for the employees, the customers, and the properties to which they can fall back on during times of crisis. An insurance policy is a financial service providing the policyholder protection against financial loss due to unforeseen events (Outreville, 1998). In a Failte Ireland report of 2019, insurance was regarded as a prerequisite for the hotel business in Ireland, which saw the successful recovery of most hotels in Ireland. Hotels and lodges in Bulawayo can, therefore, also adapt the same to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

- Never compromise client safety and protection in times of crisis.
- Some managers suggested the introduction of virtual tourism can be a viable option considering that we do not know when COVID-19 will end.
- Promote domestic tourism as the residents feel they are left out due to high prices being charged without considering the ailing economy.
- Offer promotional packages to keep the premises running. The minimum profit would be able to cover the overheads of the businesses.
- Continue marketing and advertising the tourism products so that when the tourism industry fully resumes, the companies will have made a mark in the industry.

2.4 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter focused on the study's findings and the concurrent discussion. The findings reflected that COVID-19 significantly impacts the hotels and lodges in Bulawayo. Consequently, the respective managers had to develop comprehensive measures to curb the impacts. While their actions were intuitive, they also had lessons to draw from the COVID-19 experience and recommendations for future adaptation if the crisis continues or similar crises recur. We conclude that COVID-19 has adversely impacted the accommodation tourism sector. The impacts have been unprecedented and multi-faceted, affecting small and bigger players indiscriminately and causing huge financial losses. What has worsened these impacts has been the lack of contingency plans by the industry to deal with the shocks of the pandemic.

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Chapter 3

The Impacts of Covid-19 on the Traditional African Food and Beverage Expo at the Amagugu International Heritage Centre, Zimbabwe



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Abstract Tourism is considered one of the sectors hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter unravels the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Traditional Foods Festival held annually at the Matobo Hills of Zimbabwe. The Expo normally attracts tourists locally, regionally and internationally. The study area was Dema Ward, in Matobo District in Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. The research employed a qualitative methodology. Data were collected using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 23 key informants were purposively selected and interviewed. In addition, four focus group discussions were conducted with men, women, and youths in the villages participating in cultural tourism by providing accommodation or other cultural commodities for sale. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected through interviewing study participants and focus group discussions. The findings showed that the impact was mainly loss of revenue for the villagers and the Amagugu Heritage Centre, poor infrastructure maintenance, loss of employment and restrictions of movement prevented interaction. The Expo was a source of income for the villagers through selling traditional food and beverages and accommodating tourists. Due to the

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COVID-19 pandemic, tourism stopped for 2 years. Recovery plans include diversification by adding cultural dances and strengthening school educational tours. We recommend aggressive advertisements to revive tourism post-COVID-19 and contributions by exhibitors for contingency.

Keywords COVID-19 · Cultural tourism · Traditional Food Expo · Matobo

3.1 Introduction

Tourism has become a significant livelihood strategy for people from developing countries and regions to break out from poverty (Ashley and Roe, 2022; Mbaiwa, 2011; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011; Sarmiento, 2016). The tourism industry in Zimbabwe is one of the four wealth-earning sectors. According to the World Tourism and Travel Council, the contribution of tourism in Zimbabwe between 2019 and 2022 showed a general decline with 6.5% in 2019, 4.2% in 2020 and 5.2% in 2021 (WTTC, 2022). Tourism is affected and is sensitive to political, economic, natural disasters, public health, and social security, among other crisis events (Cró & Martins, 2017).

Following the first reports of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei, China, in December 2019 and its spread around the globe, the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic (Funk et al., 2020). In response to the pandemic, many countries initiated travel bans to curb the spread of the disease. This prohibited foreigners from entering countries and closed external borders (Uğur & Akbiyik, 2020). A review by Ayouni et al. (2021) showed that travel and entry restrictions, border measures and quarantine of travellers arriving from affected countries effectively controlled the spread of infection caused by SARS-CoV-2. However, the travel bans had severe negative impacts on tourism.

Tourism is among the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has gone further to affect livelihoods, public services, economies and opportunities around the globe (UNWTO, 2020a). Most airlines reduced or cancelled flights due to lower demand and international border closures (Darlak et al., 2020). Hotels and tourist accommodations were temporarily or permanently closed due to decreased occupancy rates or government restrictions (Anzolin et al., 2020). This affected the receiving destinations. The number of international tourist arrivals globally declined by 74 per cent at the beginning of the year 2020 compared with the previous year (UNWTO Tourism Dashboard, 2020b). However, in some developing countries, tourist arrivals were down by 80–90 per cent (Rajapaksha, 2021). The same author states that the beginning of the year 2021 was worse for most destinations, with an average global decline of 88 per cent compared to the level before the pandemic.

Another major impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry was the cancellation of events, festivals, and conferences, negatively affecting the host destinations' local economy (Skift, 2020). This also affected cultural tourism destinations that depend on festivals. Cultural tourism means activities motivated by the visitor's

desire to learn and experience and consume the cultural products found in a tourist destination (UNWTO, 2020a). This usually benefits the local people in the destinations directly and has become a source of income for some communities. Like most sub-Saharan African countries, Zimbabwe has relied almost completely on abundant wildlife as its main tourist attraction (Manwa, 2007). According to Siwadi and Chaderopa (2012), tourism in Zimbabwe can be boosted by value addition through cultural tourism.

Zimbabwe is rich in cultural tourism as it houses five World Heritage Sites. These sites are the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, Victoria Falls, Mana Pools National Park, Matopo Hills and the Khami Ruins. In addition to these World Heritage Sites, the city of Bulawayo is the custodian of two major historical features: the Old Bulawayo site, which King Lobengula built as the first capital of the Ndebele Kingdom, and the Matobo Hills, which are of spiritual significance to the Ndebele and Shona people. Important traditional ceremonies are conducted at shrines in these hills; for example, during severe drought, rainmaking ceremonies are often performed at the Njelele shrine that is in the Matobo Hills (Woyo & Woyo, 2019).

The Matobo Hills also house the Amagugu International Heritage Centre (AIHC), which hosts traditional African food and beverage expos. This annual event typically benefits the villagers in the area (Nyathi, 2022). The lockdowns due to COVID-19 resulted in the cancellation of this event for two consecutive years. Communities had come to rely on festivals and traditional food exhibitions as alternative sources of income apart from subsistence farming. The impact of the pandemic on tourism, in general, has been shown (Abbas et al., 2021; Skare et al., 2020; Kumudumali, 2020), however, the impact of COVID-19 on events at the village level and the local communities that depend on such events have not been thoroughly examined.

In this chapter, we examine the impacts of COVID-19 on the Food and Beverage Expo in Matobo Hills. We show how COVID-19 has impacted the beneficiaries of this event at the village and household levels. The impact of COVID-19 on the organising institution is also assessed. Communities that live in tourist attraction areas are often neglected regarding tourism studies in their areas. This chapter addresses that gap.

3.2 Overview of the Food and Beverage Expo as a Cultural Tourism Destination

3.2.1 History of the Expo

The Traditional African Food and Beverage Expo is a cultural tourist destination in the Matobo Hills. It is hosted at the AIHC in the Matobo Hills (Nyathi, 2017). The event was established in 2016 by Pathisa Nyathi – a cultural practitioner and community historian – realising that there were no events aimed at promoting

indigenous foods and that this indigenous knowledge and culture needed to be preserved (Nyathi, 2017, 2022). The Expo started as domestic tourism, targeting schools to disseminate food information to schoolchildren to conserve diminishing culinary traditions (Nyathi, 2022).

The food expo started at a time when tourism mainly focused on game parks in the Matobo hills and other national parks. The food expo used the local community, especially the women, to prepare various traditional dishes, including small grains (sorghum and millet), edible gourds, meat products, milk products, insects and indigenous fruits (Nyathi, 2022).

The Expo became an international event with tourists from Germany and France, and other parts of Zimbabwe visiting. The Heritage Centre collaborates with the African Food Revolution to promote cultural events at the destination. It has become one of the biggest traditional food expos in Southern Africa. Tourists are accommodated in rural homes as part of experiencing the Zimbabwean culture in the Matabeleland region (Nyathi, 2022).

The last event before the COVID-19 pandemic attracted 400 guests. The guests were from around Zimbabwe, other African countries, and Europe. The Expo boosted the revenue stream for the local villagers who sold their wares at the Expo. The 2019 edition also led to the documentation of two critical food books, “Beyond Nutrition: Food as a Cultural Expression” and “Our Food, Our Heritage, Our Future” authored by Pathisa Nyathi and Delta Mbonisi Sivalo, respectively (Nyathi, 2022; Sivalo et al., 2020). The books aim to transform the local food industry. During the 2019 edition of the festival, various foods were exhibited, including underground tubers, indigenous fruits and milk dishes, which could have gone extinct if not showcased at this event. The food expo has also led to the development critical documentaries such as *Magriza Made Me Cook*, showcasing indigenous foods’ rich heritage. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism stopped for two years, in 2020 and 2021. For the 2020 edition of the Expo, the organisers expected international guests, including some world-renowned organic chefs, members of the Chamber of Agribusiness in Ghana and a team from the Spanish Research Institute as guests. All the arrangements were cancelled due to the pandemic. The food expo is crucial for the villagers in the Matobo District and is more beneficial to them than the National Park in their district, as highlighted by Muringa et al. (2021).

3.2.2 Growth of the Expo as a Tourist Destination

The food festival experienced gradual growth from its inception in 2012 to 2019. The participants transformed from schoolchildren from local schools to international tourists. The festival attracted students from various schools all over the country (Andrew, 2020). The festival has also grown to run conferences on traditional foods together with exhibitions. The growth in attendance at the festival is shown in Table 3.1. The festival’s growth has resulted in infrastructural development,

Table 3.1 The number of participants at the festival from 2012 to 2019

Year	Number of guests	Nature of guests
2012	123	Schoolchildren and teachers
2013	170	Schoolchildren and teachers
2014	205	Schoolchildren, teachers and local guests
2015	250	Local and international guests
2016	275	Local and international guests
2017	315	Local and international guests
2018	350	Local and international guests, including academics
2019	400+	Local and international guests, including academics

Source: Records at the AIHC 2019

especially the roads. The roads were repaired to allow for safe travel by tourists. This helped in improving the area.

The Amagugu International Heritage Centre manager was not at liberty to disclose financial statistics due to official secrecy. However, he indicated that they had experienced a growth of more than a hundred per cent growth since 2012.

3.3 Methodology

The study was conducted in Ward 17 (Dema Ward), situated in the Matobo Hills in Matobo District, located in Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. According to the Zimbabwe 2022 census, the district has a male to female ratio of 49.2% to 50.8% and 62% of the population work in the agriculture sector (Zimstats, 2022). The Ward's total population is 4385, with 2086 males and 2299 females (Zimstats, 2022). The villages that benefit from the activities at the Heritage Centre include Domboshaba village and Silungudzi villages, which are the closest. Other villages are Dewe, Njelele, Halale and Shumbeshabe.

The district is characterised by tourist interest areas, including Matobo National Park, Matobo Hills, Tshabalala National Park, the Grave of Cecil John Rhodes and Maleme Dam. The already existing tourist attractions also make it easy for the district to host cultural tourism. The research employed a qualitative approach. This enabled the researchers to capture community narratives and experiences about cultural tourism in the area since they were part of it. The primary strength of the qualitative approach to cultural assessment is its ability to probe for underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions (Turner et al., 2003).

Data were collected using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). A total of 23 key informants were interviewed. These included five community leaders, the Amagugu International Heritage Centre manager, four founding members and five critical organisers of the food festivals, five community representatives and three international cultural exchange representatives. In-depth

interviews were conducted with four key informants who were purposively selected. These included one community leader, the manager of the centre, one of the founders of the Amagugu International Heritage Centre and one of the key organisers of the food festivals.

Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with men, women and youths from Domboshaba, Silungudzi, Dewe, and Njelele villages. The villages were purposively selected because they participated in the food festival. The groups comprised people who participated in cultural tourism by providing accommodation or other cultural commodities for sale. The participants ranged from 12 to 15 people per group, with the group of men having 12 members and the rest having 15 members each. The groups were not mixed to allow for the free expression of ideas in the different categories. Normally men dominate conversations when mixed with women and the youth (Litosseliti, 2003). On the other hand, the youths tend to withdraw in the presence of the elders as a sign of respect. Due to many female participants, two of the FGDs were for females.

The participants were deliberately chosen based on qualities they possessed: knowledge of the cultural centre, custodianship of the local culture and being part of the host community. The focus group discussion participants were identified through the local councillor, which records the households participating in the Expo. The inclusion criteria were: being a ward resident before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and participating in the Expo either by providing food or accommodation. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The first step involved transcribing, reading through the text and taking notes. The data was coded using interview extracts. These codes allowed us to gain a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that recurred throughout the data. Themes were generated from the codes. The themes were reviewed by comparing them against the data set. After review, the themes were defined and named.

3.4 Findings

The impacts of COVID-19 were categorised into themes that emerged from the data analysis. These included restrictions, loss of revenue, infrastructure and unemployment.

3.4.1 Restrictions

In March 2020, the Government of Zimbabwe, like other countries, instituted lockdowns to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This affected the food festival negatively.

One of the female FGD participants indicated:

We could not leave our homes. I started exhibiting in 2019 and was looking forward to increasing my wares for the 2020 festival, and then the lockdown due to COVID-19 was instituted.

The lockdown prevented people from gathering and learning from each other. The women also used to teach and demonstrate the cooking of traditional foods to the schoolchildren before the pandemic. This activity had to stop because learning was disrupted, and some schools had to take lessons online. The schoolchildren could not go on educational trips because schools were closed.

The festival manager narrated how the restrictions affected the Expo and how they tried to reduce the impacts by going online. The online exhibitions did not work out because the exhibitors were from villages where they did not have access to the Internet. Some of the villagers were only involved in accommodating the tourists, and due to the restrictions, no tourists visited the area. One of the key informants, a male aged 45, had this to say:

All the gains made since 2012 were reversed in 2020 due to the restrictions during the pandemic. We had no event in 2020, and in 2021 we tried to go virtual, but this was limited because our participants from the villages could not participate, so it did not work well for us. We did not make any money from the festivals for two years. We are hopeful that 2022 will be a better year.

In preparation for the 2020 festival, 20 international guests from Europe and other parts of the world had already booked for the festival. The FGD participants concurred that COVID-19 brought hunger to their villages. The villagers usually accommodated international visitors but could no longer do so because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Some of them could not leave their countries because of the travel restrictions. Accommodation of international guests in the villages and the provision of traditional foods to them was a lucrative business for the villages. However, this was virtually stopped due to the pandemic. Some villagers indicated that some tourists even came after the festival and lived in their villages for as long as 1 week. One 60-year-old male participant shared his experience:

I accommodated a couple from Paris for seven days. They ate traditional food from my home. The husband had a minor ailment, and I treated him with traditional herbs. In 2020 I did not have any guests due to COVID-19 restrictions. I lost a lot of revenue because of this disease. I am back to poverty. I am not sure if I will recover.

3.4.2 Loss of Revenue

The festival was a source of income for the villagers who participated. The income came from selling the food that they exhibited. Some community members sold cooked food, while others sold uncooked food. The community members specialised in different foods. Herbalists and traditional healers also showcased their herbs and medicines.

The festival also allowed people to network and find markets for the villagers overseas. Some sold their craftwork to tourists. The focus group discussions for women revealed that the women raised money through the sale of traditional beer (umkumbi), honey and mopane worms, among other traditional foods. The villagers indicated that, at most, they would make money equivalent to the value of three goats per day during the festival, which generally would run for 5 days.

The men sold traditional medicine, which they said was very popular with those who came to the festival. Some men even came after the festival looking for traditional medicines. The participants also indicated that they also lost revenue due to COVID-19. The villagers had prepared for the 2020 event by stocking food and preparing their homes to accommodate guests. They could not recoup their expenses due to the cancellation of the festival.

In 2019 I accommodated a couple from Germany in my homestead for four days. We shared our way of life with them; they even drank our traditional beer. I made 300 dollars. This year I had prepared to accommodate two guests. All this was disturbed by this disease. I have lost money (Source FGD Participant 1).

The focus group discussion participants were in agreement that they lost revenue due to the pandemic. One of the participants had this to say:

I used to prepare traditional food and beer for sale at the Expo. The money I used to make was enough to pay school fees for my 2 Primary school children and even buy a goat after paying the school fees. I am not even sure how I will pay school fees for them without the money I used to make at the festival.

The key informants concurred with the FGD participants on the loss of revenue even at the Heritage Centre where the Expo is hosted. One of the key informants from the Amagugu International Heritage Centre confirmed this as he said:

I am not in a position to show you our books or disclose our finances to you. All I can say is that we had more than doubled the revenue we used to make in 2012 but lost much money due to COVID-19. We did not make any money in 2021 and 2022.

3.4.3 Infrastructure

The roads to the Centre were in a bad state of repair, as shown in Fig. 3.1a. The International Heritage Centre was also not well maintained. This is shown in Fig. 3.1b, c, showing the plastering on the walls falling off and the paint peeling off. The signpost at the entrance has become rusty and illegible. Observations by the study team showed that the grounds were not well maintained during the visit. The exhibition halls were also poorly maintained and needed sprucing up before the event.

The caretaker did not allow the research team to take pictures of the exhibition halls, but observations showed that the doors had broken and the walls of most buildings required repainting.

One of the key informants also attributed the lack of maintenance of the roads to the closure of the Expo. The key informant had this to say:

The festival has helped to improve our roads over the years. Previously the road repairs would focus on the park's area, but as the festival attracted more guests, we have seen our roads being repaired more often. It is a real benefit to our community. The heritage centre sponsors road maintenance as part of Social Cooperate Responsibility. The road has not been maintained for the past two years and is in a bad state of repair (Source: key informant).



Fig. 3.1 (a) Road to Amagugu, (b) walls at the Centre, (c) front gate of the Amagugu International Heritage Centre. (Source: Authors, taken in March 2022)

3.4.4 Employment

The Expo employed some of the community members. Some were employed to maintain the cultural centre interpreters, and others were tour guides. However, during the pandemic, the Heritage Centre had to reduce the number of employees at the Centre leaving only one caretaker out of the original five permanent employees. The one caretaker who remained was mainly carrying out security duties. One of the key informants explained the situation:

We had to retrench some workers and leave only one caretaker because we could not afford the salaries. During the first lockdown, we maintained the workers because it had been said to be for two weeks, but as the Government kept on extending the lockdown periods, we realised that we could not keep the workers without any income coming in, and we had to retrench.

The youth were mainly engaged as tour guides and interpreters during the Expo. These jobs were mainly part-time and were only available during the event. Even though the government later introduced a COVID-19 allowance for civil servants, there was no compensation for the informal workers. One youth FGD participant had this to say:

The Expo used to give us jobs. I was usually an interpreter facilitating communication between the tourists and some villagers who could not speak English. I have not been employed for the past two years due to COVID-19. There were no tourists, so my services were not required. Government employees got COVID-19 allowance, but we got nothing.

3.4.5 Activities Conducted During Lockdown

The organisers indicated that there was not much done during the pandemic due to the restrictions. When the restrictions were eased in 2021, the government of Zimbabwe allowed a maximum of 50 vaccinated people in gatherings. During this period, a few exhibitors attended the event and adhered to strict WHO COVID-19 regulations. The key informants indicated that this attempt failed because most villages were not keen to attend due to fear of contracting the disease.

3.4.6 Sustainable Recovery Plans

As part of the recovery plans, the key informants indicated they would like to embark on aggressive advertising locally and abroad. They were going to focus more on domestic tourism. The villagers also indicated that they would capitalise on the new education curriculum introduced in Zimbabwean schools that focus on heritage. They would arrange a cultural expo specifically for students. This would be conducted separately from the food festival for the rest of the tourists. Schools from all over the country would be invited, and the students would pay an entrance fee to participate. As a recovery plan, the community members suggested that their wares be standardised pricing at the Expo so that all of the exhibitors could sell their wares. They also indicated that companies from the city would not sell food from the city to allow the local communities to benefit. The exhibitors should give a percentage of their proceeds to the Heritage Centre for its development. It was also suggested that big companies should have business briefs with the local villagers to boost their benefits from cultural tourism. The participants suggested that the Expo also showcase traditional dances and games. These activities may boost the recovery of the Centre as a tourist destination.

3.4.7 Discussion

The study aimed to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on cultural tourism in Matobo hills, explicitly focusing on the food festival hosted at the Amagugu International Heritage Centre. Even though COVID-19 on tourism were felt worldwide (Skare et al., 2020), the impacts were more severe in communities that were already poor and vulnerable and relied on tourism as a major source of income (Magocha, 2021). In the current study, youths living in rural areas that depended on the festivals for part-time employment lost employment for 2 years, and the prospects of employment depended on the recovery of the Heritage Centre. These youths have low qualifications and are self-employed as tour guides and interpreters. Such people are usually not protected by labour laws (Vaishar & Šťastná, 2020). This means there was no compensation for losses due to COVID-19, even though they lost employment.

The villagers who lost revenue due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic were also not compensated. The Government of Zimbabwe did not have the revenue to cushion citizens from a lack of economic activity during the pandemic. This is despite the threat to livelihoods due to strict lockdown restrictions and the country's dependence on the informal sector (Chitungo et al., 2022). The government had promised compensation to vulnerable communities, but the modalities for the disbursement of the financial assistance were unclear, leaving the families threatened with starvation (Magocha, 2021).

The loss of revenue by the villagers and the Heritage Centre could also be attributed to a greater focus on international travellers as revenue sources than domestic tourism. This calls for refocusing and considering domestic tourism. Some study participants suggested this as a way of recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. The same sentiments were raised by Flew and Kirkwood, 2021 who observed that the post COVID-19 cultural and tourism environment points towards the importance of embracing localism in ensuring long-term sustainability. The poor infrastructure maintenance was mainly due to a lack of revenue due to restrictions. This concurs with a study on the impact of COVID-19 in Australia, which also showed that restrictions on travel and movement out of homes and the ban on large gatherings affected cultural tourism (Flew & Kirkwood, 2021).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined how COVID-19 impacted traditional African food and beverage in the Matobo Hills, Zimbabwe. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted cultural tourism in the Matobo Hills in four main ways: there was a loss of income for both the community and the Centre due to travel restrictions and lockdowns, infrastructure deteriorated at the Centre, and the roads in the ward were in a bad state of repair. The growth experienced in the past years has stopped, and it

may take time to regain momentum. There was a loss of employment for the community members the Centre employed. Schoolchildren using the Centre for educational purposes have lost out for the past 2 years. On a positive note, the pandemic helped the organisers start thinking differently in terms of advertising and having contingency plans in the event another disaster strikes. The community members have also realised that the event may be disturbed and have devised recovery plans that include proper pricing of their wares to maximise profits.

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Chapter 4

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Sector in Harare and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe



Millicent Shava and Soul Shava

Abstract The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused countrywide lockdowns across the globe, triggering a global economic crisis. It has particularly posed a significant negative impact on the global travel and tourism sector, with the substantial decline in international and local travel, resulting in shutdowns of airlines, hotels and travel agencies. Zimbabwe is one of the affected countries, with several tourism destinations where the local economies rely on income from tourism impacted. This chapter explores the extent of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the domestic tourism sector in Zimbabwe in Victoria Falls and Harare. An online questionnaire survey was administered to key travel, tourism, and hospitality industry players in Harare and Victoria Falls to explore the pandemic's impacts and the emerging strategies to sustain business and revive it beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the travel and tourism industry. However, the travel and tourism sector has come up with several strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which include minimising labour costs, promoting domestic travel and tourism and improving health and safety practices, among others.

Keywords COVID-19 pandemic · Lockdown restrictions · Socio-economic impacts · Travel and tourism industry · Zimbabwe

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4.1 Introduction

The outbreak of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 rapidly spread into a global pandemic, marked by its declaration as such by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020. The pandemic devastated health and the global economy (African Union, 2020; Nhamo et al., 2020). Stemming the pandemic spread necessitated governments to impose national lockdowns, prohibiting local, regional and international travel. This had crippling effects on the travel and tourism industry, negatively impacting business viability, incomes, jobs, families and health. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic seem to be receding, with the easing of lockdown restrictions, resulting in the resumption of international travel. However, the possibility of a similar pandemic in the future still looms, especially against the increasing global climate change effects, which has led to a rise in the spread of disease epidemics.

One question that remains to be asked against the background of growing phobia to travel among the global populace in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is: “Has the travel and tourism sector been permanently transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic?” In other words, “will things go back to business as usual or are strategies being put in place to mitigate similar global pandemic episodes in future as the ‘new normal’?”

This chapter first provides an overview of the global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging responses by the tourism industry. It then explores the effects of and responses to COVID-19 by the travelling tourism sector in Harare and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The chapter also looked into proposed strategies that players in the travel and tourism sector had developed during the COVID-19 pandemic or intended to implement to enable sustainability should a similar global pandemic emerge.

The Zimbabwean travel and tourism sector relies heavily on international travel. This is particularly so for the business sector in tourism destination cities such as Victoria Falls, where tourism jobs account for 85% of the employment in the town (Bhebhe, 2021). International and local travel restrictions have heavily hit the sector. This chapter explores the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the travel and tourism sector in Victoria Falls and Harare, Zimbabwe. The impacts of COVID-19 affect the viability of the tourism industry in the long term.

4.2 Literature Review

The review below provides an overview of the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from a global and local perspective, as well as the emerging strategies to cope with pandemics.

4.2.1 Global and Local Overview of the Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Industry

Travel and tourism significantly contribute to the global economy, accounting for more than 10% of the global GDP (World Bank, 2017). Globally, the travel and tourism industry employs one in every 11 people (United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2018). It is, therefore, a significant contributor to providing employment and reducing poverty in line with the global Sustainable Development Goals 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 1 (No Poverty), respectively (United Nations, 2015). The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic as a global health crisis has resulted in a global economic meltdown, impacting the business viability of the travel and tourism industry worldwide. The fear of the risk of increased infections due to global travel arising from the coronavirus's highly infectious and lethal nature has influenced tourist behaviour and resulted in the implementation of an international travel ban (UNWTO, 2020a; Abbas et al., 2021). Among global businesses, the travel and tourism industry has been one that has been hardest hit (Li et al., 2022). Being labour-intensive, the travel and tourism sector is a key source of employment and an important economic sector globally (Kumudumali, 2020). The global lockdown restrictions placed at least 121 million jobs in the travel and tourism sector at risk (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2020). The United Nations 2020 Sustainable Development Goals 2020 report stated that an estimated 71 million people would be living in extreme poverty due to COVID-19 by 2020, resulting in the first significant rise in global poverty recorded since 1998 (United Nations, 2020). Besides the adverse economic effects, global health has also been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has dire implications for global efforts towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Of note is the decline in disposable income among potential tourists due to the economic downturn resulting from the global lockdown restrictions (see Shellar, 2021). This, in turn, will impact the revival rate of domestic and international tourism activities.

4.2.2 Emerging Strategies in the Global Tourism Industry to Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic

The travel and tourism industry underwent a global recession during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic (WTTC, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic presents a new emerging socio-economic and ecological complexity to which the travel and tourism industry needs to adapt and respond to. Several strategies are emerging for coping with global pandemics in the travel and tourism sector.

Against a receding COVID-19 pandemic and the recent emergence of monkeypox, several strategies have emerged towards the sustenance of the travel and

tourism industry post the pandemic period. These include direct and indirect measures to stem the effects of the pandemic.

4.2.2.1 Virtual Tourism

Virtual tourism or augmented reality has been touted as a strategy to revive the tourism sector post-COVID-19 (see Mohanty et al., 2020). Virtual tourism provides an interactive virtual reality that can contribute towards reviving safe and sustainable post-pandemic tourism. It presents an innovative approach for exploring unfamiliar tourist attractions, boosting tourist inflows and marketing tourism destinations. Virtual tourism can also substitute tour guides by providing interpretation to tourists unfamiliar with the tourism destination's local languages (Mohanty et al., 2020). However, it is important to note that it cannot surpass the authentic experience of visiting the tourist site in person.

4.2.2.2 Government Support

In the global scenario, to mitigate the impacts of the economic shutdown, many big travel and tourism companies have received economic stimulus packages from their governments to buoy them through the COVID-19 travel restrictions and prevent them from bankruptcy (Nhamo et al., 2020; Allaberganov et al., 2021). Still, most have laid off their staff due to a lack of business. In addition, certain countries such as the United States have also provided income loss support to cushion those that have lost employment and had their livelihoods disrupted. However, this bailout of business entities and the members of the population that have lost employment has not been feasible in most countries in the Global South (the so-called developing or third world countries), including Zimbabwe. This lack of government financial support has increased the vulnerability of the travel and tourism industry in countries like Zimbabwe (Bhebhe, 2021). This vulnerability has been heightened by the indefinite nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had dire implications for the sustainability of the travel and tourism industry.

4.2.2.3 Support from the Financial Sector

The provision of interest-free or low-interest loans can provide the necessary incentive to rebuild the travel and tourism sector (Assaf & Scuderi, 2020). This is critical post the COVID-19 pandemic, during which businesses lost revenue and needed financial support to revive their business activities.

4.2.2.4 Safety and Security

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety will be critical for the travel and tourism industry (UNTWO, 2020b). The travel and tourism sector needs to restore tourists' confidence by providing adequate health and safety measures that guarantee the safety of all. It will be necessary to develop and implement standardized (harmonized) health and safety protocols that are adhered to by all tourist destination countries.

4.3 Theoretical Framework

Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory was chosen as the theory informing this study, drawing from a broader Critical Realist metatheory. Archer (1988) alludes to the enabling and constraining nature of social contexts to individuals in stating that "... it is part and parcel of daily experience to feel both free and enchained, capable of shaping our future and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal, constraints" (p. x). Individuals and the pre-existing social context (culture and structure) are interdependent. Archer argues that individuals are born into a pre-existing social context that constrains and enables their actions. Also, through their actions (as causal agents), individuals create the social context (i.e. without individuals, there is no social reality). However, the resultant social structure (an emergent property), which is more than the individuals, has some autonomy in its own right. Such structures may exert a causal influence over individuals. However, the social structures only condition but do not necessarily determine individuals' activity (agency). In interactions between individual agents (e.g. travel and tourism personnel) and existing structures (e.g. tourism business), emergent outcomes are contingent on the actions of individuals who can either conform to expectations or resist them. The morphogenetic cycle analytically breaks down the structure and agency interactions into three temporal phases: structural conditioning (i.e. the context in which individuals find themselves), sociocultural interaction (i.e. what individuals do), and the resulting structural elaboration (morphogenesis or change) or structural reproduction (morphostasis or continuity). This is summarized below:

Structural/Cultural Conditioning \rightleftarrows Sociocultural Interaction \rightleftarrows Cultural or Structural Reproduction/Elaboration

The structures in this study were the travel and tourism business in the two selected study sites. The agency was the personnel (and tourists) in the tourism business. The sociocultural interaction involved the responses of the personnel to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic environment's effect on the tourism business. At the same time, the resultant morphostasis or morphogenesis (in this case, the latter) was the emergent impact that the sociocultural interaction had on the existing structures (businesses). In this study, the impact of COVID-19 as a prevailing condition in the travel and tourism business is explored in terms of how the agents in the travel

and tourism sector are affected (conditioned) and respond to it (reflected in this case through emergent changes made in the travel and tourism sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions).

4.4 Research Methodology

The study sites were Harare and Victoria Falls. Victoria Falls town was chosen because it is an international tourist destination hosting one of the seven wonders of the world, the Victoria Falls located on the Zambezi River, making it the country's tourist capital. Harare was selected based on being the capital city and the primary arrival destination for international travellers through its Robert Mugabe International Airport.

4.4.1 Data Collection Methods

A survey questionnaire was distributed online (Regmi et al., 2016; Singh & Sagar, 2021) to key hospitality, travel and tourism businesses in Harare and Victoria Falls for gathering qualitative data to gauge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the industry and also solicit their sustainability strategies in the case of future pandemic episodes. This method was considered convenient given the lockdown restrictions and lack of access to participants for face to face or telephonic and video interviews. The questionnaire was qualitative, focusing on the effects of lockdown restrictions on travel and tourism business, adjustments made by the business during the lockdown restrictions, support provided to the sector, and emerging strategies to sustain the business during and after the pandemic era.

Purposive sampling (Burger, 2006; Sharmar, 2017) was used, targeting the management personnel of key players in the travel and tourism industry. Participants identified other possible respondents based on their knowledge of people from different companies in the sector they knew or worked with. The respondents were mainly from the travel sector (4) and the hotel hospitality and catering industry (3).

4.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis was employed in analysing the survey data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Belotto, 2018). This involved identifying emerging themes through careful reading and re-reading the data from the survey questionnaire. Emphasis was on the emerging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the travel and tourism industry in the two selected sites and strategies implemented by these businesses to ensure sustainability during and post the COVID-19 pandemic era.

4.6 Findings and Discussion

The information from the participants revealed mainly the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the travel and tourism sector, which resulted in the sector's transformation during the pandemic period. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the travel and tourism industry, devastated the economy, affected the health of tourists, staff and their families and resulted in increased unemployment. It has exposed the high sensitivity of the industry to external shocks, such as the effects of global lockdown and its indefinite nature. The major issues emerging from the study are discussed below. Some strategies to mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic were also suggested.

4.6.1 *Impacts of COVID-19 Lockdown Restriction on the Zimbabwean Travel and Tourism Industry*

Most of the impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions on Zimbabwe's travel and tourism sector were negative. However, some positive spin-offs also emerged during this period. The impacts are discussed below.

4.6.1.1 **Business Shutdown (Travel Restrictions and Shutdown of Places of Tourism)**

Participants stated the effects of the “red-flagging” of southern Africa due to the discovery of new variants of the coronavirus by South Africa that resulted in travel bans to and from the region, severely impacting the travel and tourism industry. This was particularly the case after South African scientists discovered the COVID-19 Omicron variant (Musavengane, 2022). Western countries, especially Europe, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, imposed a regional ban for travellers to and from southern Africa. This was done against scientific facts to the contrary, ushered by the World Health Organization. Consequently, there have been no international tourists travelling to Zimbabwean tourist destinations. One participant stated:

Some countries imposed travel bans on red-flagged countries such as southern Africa after discovering the Omicron variant in South Africa, thereby restricting travel to and from the region.

The ban on international travel to the region also meant no international flights into Zimbabwe, severely affecting domestic and international airlines. International and domestic flights to and from Zimbabwe were cancelled from 20 March 2020 until the first half of 2022. Warnings were made of the risks of travelling to southern Africa in Europe, America, Australia and other countries, meaning international

tourists could not travel to the country as freely as they did in the past due to rising anti-African sentiments. Regionally, border closures between neighbouring countries on 26 March 2020 also stemmed the flow of tourists into Zimbabwe (Rogan & Skinner, 2020). In addition, local travel restrictions within and between cities due to a national lockdown announced on 30 March 2020 (Nyoka, 2020) also resulted in no local travel to tourist sites for both international and local tourists, as access to these sites was not excluded in the blanket travel ban. Local hotels and restaurants were also shut down due to travel restrictions. No due consideration was made to excluding tourist resorts in remote rural locations in the lockdown restrictions, such as parks, game reserves and lodges that would typically have low human interactions compared to urban contexts and would thus have lesser chances of the rapid spread of the virus even with tourist occupation. The number of tourists declined significantly to the lowest levels nationally, with zero turnout and occupancy levels at tourism facilities being the norm due to curbed mobility. As a result, the travel and tourism sector suffered low business volumes, and revenue dropped to the lowest levels.

4.6.1.2 Job Losses

National and international COVID-19 lockdown restrictions resulted in the indefinite closure of tourist destinations, putting businesses and jobs at risk. Due to low business and revenue, most businesses in the travel and tourism industry had to implement several cost-reduction measures to avoid bankruptcy, including temporarily shutting down and retrenching staff, with those retained being paid based on the availability of business. However, participants further indicated that most of those who retained their jobs either got salary cuts or had to go on forced unpaid leave during the COVID-19 lockdown.

One participant stated:

Most people were forced to work from home, and pay cuts were implemented due to low tourist turnout. Workers were reduced to a minimum number.

Loss of income significantly impacted the livelihood sustenance of the affected employees and their families, some of whom were then forced to seek alternative sources of income against the uncertainty of the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also growing fear of losing some highly qualified staff who were finding alternative employment in other sectors to survive, thereby increasing the vulnerability of the travel and tourism sector. The loss of employment in the travel and tourism industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic was a global phenomenon (Bulin & Tenie, 2020; Nhamo et al., 2020; Škare et al., 2021) which can have dire implications on the recovery of the industry. The looming threat of loss of employment erodes employee confidence and impacts the long-term sustainability of the local travel and tourism industry. There is, therefore, a need to rebuild trust between employers and employees.

4.6.1.3 Government Support to the Travel and Tourism Sector During Lockdown Restrictions

Despite the evidence of tourism, no direct economic stimulus packages were offered to the travel and tourism industry by the government of Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 lockdown period. However, some participants indicated that the government implemented some tax waivers for the travel and tourism sector during this period. This development brought some relief to the cash-strapped sector, as stated by one participant:

There were some tax waivers by the government on the tourism industry.

Other possibilities of financial relief for the travel and tourism industry could have been in the form of low-interest loans (Kumudumali, 2020). There was also a lack of government support in helping travel and tourism businesses to meet the costs of implementing COVID-19 health and safety regulations, such as through the provision or subsidisation of face masks, sanitisers, and temperature scanners, among others. The only assistance obtained in this area was in the form of government-sponsored COVID-19 vaccination programmes for the general public.

4.6.1.4 Health Implications

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the health of both tourists and staff. Most participants indicated staff reduction due to COVID-19 infections among staff and personnel losses due to COVID-19-related deaths. Illnesses were also recorded among some tourists. The COVID-19 health concerns also meant unplanned expenditure on health and safety measures to provide the necessary protective equipment such as temperature scanners and the provision of face masks, sanitisers, and regular sanitisation of the tourist facilities. Travel and tourism businesses also had to facilitate access to vaccines for employees and provide PCR tests and quarantine facilities to staff and tourists (see Bhebhe, 2021).

4.6.2 Emerging Sustainability Strategies During and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

The research participants indicated several sustainability strategies. These are discussed below.

4.6.2.1 Diversifying Travel and Tourism Activities

Emerging strategies to enhance the sustainability of the travel and tourism industry included the suggestion of an inward focus on domestic tourism opportunities targeting the local population as a recovery strategy while waiting for international

tourism to normalize. The feasibility of such an alternative has been explored by Woyo (2021) and Matura (2021), which given the current economic crisis in Zimbabwe, might not be a viable alternative in the short term. Domestic and regional travel and tourism may be prevalent in the short term and can be enhanced through prioritising visiting family and friends (VFR) after a long period of social distancing and isolation due to lockdown restrictions (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). This will later expand into domestic leisure travel and tourism. For domestic tourism to be viable, it is necessary to implement differential (cheaper) pricing for local tourists compared to international tourists to make travel and tourism facilities affordable to locals. However, domestic tourism can only offset a small fraction of the loss in international tourism. On the other hand, international tourism will only pick up in direct relation to the rate of global economic recovery.

Players in the travel and tourism sector have also diversified their business activities to generate more revenue. One participant made the following statement:

Diversification, opening more than one line of business to complement the loss of tourists during the pandemic.

For example, one tourism travel company started providing shuttle services for the government and other companies. Another company rented out its office space left empty during the pandemic due to most staff working from home. However, it is uncertain whether such economic gap-filling measures will remain in effect after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other alternative strategies to sustain the travel and tourism industry in Zimbabwe at the onset of a similar pandemic can include the possibility of virtual tourism or e-tourism. However, how this will sell against the alternative of authentic physical experience is highly questionable. In certain parts of the globe, there has been the implementation of “buy now, stay later” marketing schemes by hotels where tourists can buy hotel accommodations at lower rates in advance of their stay to boost occupancy levels (WTTC, 2020). Such alternative marketing strategies can be explored by the Zimbabwean travel and tourism industry.

Some participants indicated that one strategy emerging among travel and tourism business entities was streamlining business activities to offer some of their services predominantly online. This also served as a cost-cutting measure as staff employed could work predominantly from home.

4.6.2.2 Cost-Cutting Measures

Business sustainability strategies during and post the lockdown period included combining tourism groups into larger groups to reduce transportation costs (such as bus hire). Most staff in the sector were forced to work from home wherever possible to minimize office costs (rental, water and electricity costs). One participant stated that:

Most people were forced to work from home to cut down on office expenses, with shifts *and pay cuts also being implemented.*

Another participant stated the following:

Less travelling, decreased salaries.

Working from home has been implemented across all sectors globally during the worldwide lockdown restrictions (see Cheung et al., 2021). It might be necessary to consider continuing working from home arrangements for staff that do not need to be physically there all the time to minimize costs. In this case, it is important to create appropriate digital or virtual working environments for employees by supporting them with the necessary technological infrastructure, such as Wi-Fi access, for online interactions. Other cost-cutting measures mentioned by participants included minimizing staff numbers.

One cost-cutting possibility to explore is establishing strong links with local communities through buying and encouraging local production of food products to supply the travel and tourism industry. This community-centred tourism approach is against the background of disrupted supply chains due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Such local supply chain initiatives that involve local communities can have a positive ecological (carbon) footprint by reducing food miles, cutting supply costs and promoting local organic agricultural production, thereby contributing towards sustainable development through sustainable tourism (see Shamar et al., 2021). Prioritising local food sources is a sustainable transformation in the travel and tourism industry that could also serve as a food security measure against the background of emerging global food insecurity, such as the current one related to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. This would boost the local economy, enabling economic recovery post the COVID-19 pandemic and enhancing local community social well-being. Furthermore, engaging local communities in the travel and tourism sector establishes a reciprocal and sustainable business community of practice with a shared sense of belonging rather than alienation.

4.6.2.3 Increased Healthy and Safety Measures

Participants indicated that creating a healthy and conducive environment for the operation of the travel and tourism business has become a vital necessity that assures both clients and staff. An emphasis on enhanced health and safety measures in the travel and tourism industry has emerged to contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19 infections. This includes the provision of hand sanitisers, social behaviour changes involving the mandatory wearing of face masks and observance of social distancing at tourism sites and during travel.

One participant stated the following with regard to health and safety measures:

Mandatory wearing of face masks, use of sanitisers in the office and tourism transport.

Also emerging as the new normal is the mandatory requirement for COVID-19 testing and proof of full vaccination for international tourism and personal or business travel. The need to assure tourists and boost tourism confidence requires implementing effective health measures to minimise the risk of highly contagious and

high-mortality viral infections such as COVID-19 (Rahman et al., 2021). Evidence of containment of the spread of COVID-19 in a country, including vaccination rates and vaccine availability, investing in health and safety equipment and putting in place necessary measures to minimise health risks and protect tourists, will boost tourism confidence and increase tourism demand, thereby attracting more international tourists. It is also important to emphasise the need to ease tourist travel requirements without compromising health and safety standards. Fears of being stuck in a foreign country due to coronavirus outbreaks and potential time-consuming quarantine requirements still abound. Tourism-responsive border policies, such as lifting or easing visa regulations, can enhance travel and tourism. Technological innovations that would enable pre-testing, rapid on-site testing, global recognition of vaccination certificates for COVID-19 and self-isolation options will also contribute towards making international travel less cumbersome. The installation of hands-free (touch-free) technologies and digital biosecurity protocols would also contribute towards ensuring the health and safety of tourists. Equally important is the commitment of travel and tourism businesses to ensure the health of the travel and tourism industry personnel as they interact with local and international tourists during and after the pandemic. This is against a background where incoming tourists have been considered as conveyors of COVID-19 and the primary source of new variants (see Carr, 2020). Overall, there is a dire need to revive tourism demand by implementing safe tourism across all travel and tourism industry players.

4.6.2.4 Capacity Building

Some travel and tourism business entities utilised the low business turnout period to focus on training and retraining their employees in preparation for normalising business and easing lockdown restrictions globally. Participants indicated that some companies supported staff (directly and indirectly) to obtain relevant qualifications in the travel and tourism sector.

One participant stated:

Training and further education aligned with the industry was promoted for staff.

Preparedness of the travel and tourism sector for the post-COVID-19 pandemic era will ensure its future sustainability. Having relevant and qualified personnel is a key factor in post-pandemic preparedness. It also enhances employee confidence and assures continued employment in the travel and tourism sector.

4.7 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the global travel and tourism industry, including in Zimbabwe. The impacts included a reduction in tourist numbers, travel restrictions, health concerns and economic and job losses. Coping with these

impacts during and after the pandemic are important factors in ensuring the sustainability of Zimbabwe's travel and tourism industry. Strategies implemented by travel and tourism businesses included minimising labour costs, streamlining business activities by utilising automation and digitisation technologies, promoting domestic tourism, implementing measures to enhance health and safety provision, and engaging in alternative sources of income generation.

The recovery of the travel and tourism sector in Zimbabwe requires a multi-pronged transformative approach that adequately addresses the diverse socio-economic and political challenges that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes developing short- and long-term strategies to survive current and future global pandemics. Such strategies can include diversifying the travel and tourism business activities and creating a safe and enabling environment for continued travel and tourism activities in the likelihood of similar pandemic incidences in the future. It is also necessary for the government and financial institutions to provide relevant support in order to revive the travel and tourism sector going forward in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. This can be done through the government providing bailouts and tax incentives and the financial institutions providing low-interest loan facilities to the travel and tourism business entities.

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Chapter 5

Impact of COVID-19 on Nature-Based Tourism Electric Energy Emissions in South African National Parks



Mmoto Masubelele and Pauline A. Pophé

Abstract The carbon footprint assessment of the entire nature-based conservation and tourism estate in 2020 showed a variation in carbon emissions across the 19 South African National Parks (SANParks). Electricity was the primary source of carbon emissions at 55% of the organisation's total emissions. The GHG Protocol demonstrated that seven national parks, including Kruger, Garden Route, Table Mountain, Addo Elephant, Golden Gate Highlands, Kgalagadi and Auwabies Falls, accounted for 85% of the organisational electricity emissions. This chapter shows the dichotomy between the staff and tourism electricity consumption and carbon emissions. Further, it investigated the impact of COVID-19 on the seven national parks to propose a post-COVID-19 recovery plan. The results showed an average 20% decline in total electricity emissions during COVID-19. Electricity consumption (thus emissions) fell during the stringent lockdown levels (5–3). However, a slight continued increase occurred with the relaxed lockdown levels (3–1), with some parks' trajectory heading towards pre-COVID-19 values. The results demonstrate that tourism emissions declined significantly during COVID-19, while staff emissions only showed a significant decline in the Kruger NP. As part of the mitigation and awareness campaigns at the park level, a multi-pronged post-COVID-19 recovery response plan (including SANParks Green Energy Strategy) could help maintain the gains made on emission reduction during COVID-19.

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5.1 Introduction

Tourism is highly vulnerable to interference by perilous events with localised phenomena such as wildfires, drought, floods, and global events such as disease pandemics (Lenggogeni et al., 2019; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). Many reports show that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced how the world economies and the living inhabitants survive (IEA, IRENA; WRI; UNWTO). The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the tourism industry tremendously worldwide (Skare et al., 2021) and in Southern Africa (Musavengani & Leonard, 2022), mainly due to the lockdown and travel restrictions national governments imposed. National lockdowns worldwide halted tourism globally to almost no travel at all due to the pandemic. However, leaders had to remain solid and steadfast in the face of adversity while developing protocols for reintroducing their staff and tourists. The tourism sector thrives on the mobility and sociability of destination characteristics enjoyed by tourists, the two things that COVID-19 has undermined (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). According to Butcher (2020), social distancing diminishes the pleasure of a holiday to the extent that many may choose to stay home. Abbas et al. (2021) posit that the COVID-19 pandemic has projected and reflected social, psychological, socio-economic, and cultural influences on various tourism stakeholders, which they continue and will suffer from adversely for a longer time.

Nature-based tourism, like national parks, was in the same boat as staff had to stay locked in their homes within or outside the protected areas. Some staff and the majority of the tourism infrastructure were left without people as international and domestic tourists were not welcome due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021a, b), international tourist arrivals may have fallen between 60% and 80% in 2020 and has been estimated at 72% globally. This has economic implications for the growth of the sector while attempting to achieve the Glasgow Declaration, wherein consensus among tourism stakeholders was that growth and the future resilience of tourism would depend on the sector's ability to embrace a low carbon pathway and cut emissions by 50% by 2030 (UNWTO, 2021a, b). As such, a drop in carbon emissions associated with air travel decline throughout the world was seen as positive by Nhamo et al. (2020). Parida et al. (2021) further highlighted the importance of nationwide lockdowns in reducing anthropogenic CO₂ emissions and improving air quality and the global environment. They suggest that this has somewhat helped reduce atmospheric CO₂ concentrations locally but query the global contribution. Nature-based tourism, especially on the African continent, thrives more on international rather than domestic travel (Christie et al., 2014; Mwamwaja & Mlozi, 2020; Rogerson & Baum, 2020; Pandy & Rogerson, 2021). The latter paper also suggests that sub-Saharan African destinations could be facing reductions in long-haul travel from critical markets as a concern for environmental issues, including GHG emissions reduction, notably as climate change intensifies.

Nagaj and Žuromskaitė (2021) showed that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decline in GHGs from tourism in all Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Musavengane and Leonard (2022) as well as Musavengane et al. (2020) showed pointers on the possible areas affected heavily by COVID-19 in the SADC region, from transportation, accommodation, and restaurants to recreational facilities. According to the Statistics South Africa report of 2021, the number of travellers (arrivals and departures) decreased by 71% between 2019 and 2020. The articles and reports mentioned above suggest that the nature-based tourism sector has experienced the COVID-19 abruptness through a substantial drop in tourism visitation, and therefore revenue generation also declined.

Energy is amongst the most significant contributors to global tourism (Lenzen et al., 2018), especially nature-based tourism (Alatiq et al., 2019; Phophe & Masubelele, 2021) before the pandemic. In descending order, there are five kinds of energy carbon footprint, with electricity the biggest, followed by coal, diesel, gasoline and liquefied petroleum gas (Li et al., 2012). Electricity consumption is the focus of this chapter, classified as energy consumption. Renewable energy is also discussed. During the COVID-19 outbreak, managing energy consumption and CO₂ emission remained a severe problem (Iqbal et al., 2021). These authors examined the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on energy consumption and CO₂ emission to discover that it was negatively significant. Few studies have focussed on the impact of COVID-19 on energy at a national level (Liu et al. 2020; 2021; Parida et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2021), especially in the tourism sector. Most of these studies focus on country-level energy emissions, especially for the ten highest emitting countries, including China, USA, India and European Union countries (Le Quéré et al., 2021), to name a few. Andrade et al. (2020) show that the South African electricity sector was also impacted by the pandemic, which resulted in unexpected changes in supply and demand, thereby putting a further strain on the country's energy systems. Nicolimi et al. (2022) show that all sites in European urban areas at the district level reduced CO₂ emissions during the national lockdowns. The reduction was temporary in most city districts, as emissions rebounded to normal levels once restrictions were eased.

In literature, the relationship between COVID-19 and energy is discussed extensively as a matter of energy crisis management (Brosemer et al., 2020), an upward demand for energy (Gillingham et al., 2020; Norouzi et al., 2020; Abu-Rayash & Dincer, 2020), and the switch and potential transitions towards achieving net zero by 2050 in line with the Paris Accord (Kanda & Kivimaa, 2020; Cheshmehzangi, 2020). Others have argued that this has been a massive relative decline recorded for the last 70 years of the total primary energy and the most substantial decline ever in absolute terms at 6% (IEA, 2020c). COVID-19 reduced electricity demand by 20% or more in countries with total lockdown measures (IEA, 2020a), which South Africa had implemented. Electricity consumption was consistent between 2017 and 2019 at approximately 200 TWh in South Africa; however, the COVID-19 pandemic decreased by 5% (Enerdata, 2021). The fact that staff had to remain in their homes meant that electricity consumption and emissions might shift to that of infrastructure if the data is available (Masebinu & Kambule, 2022; Luo et al., 2020). To maintain tourism standards, some lodges and hotels had to keep their appliances and lighting on despite having few visitors due to COVID-19. However, efficient

appliances and building design are essential tools for reducing consumer energy emissions and costs equitably and sustainably in the longer term. Energy efficiency is key to the clean energy transition, particularly in countries with solid population growth or tourism visitors; efficiency can reduce energy demand and overall costs while facilitating the integration of variable renewable energy and reducing impacts in the broader energy system. The IEA report on Sustainable Recovery (2020c) proposes that a range of measures could be implemented to support the expansion and modernization of electricity grids, accelerate new wind and solar installations and repower existing ones. The COVID-19 recovery strategy of countries should heed the call from the latter report by implementing the proposed measures. Each option can potentially have very different impacts on energy resilience and sustainability.

The pandemic exposes the weaknesses of today's energy system and urgently signals the need to speedily and aggressively accelerate the green energy transition. Tan et al. (2021) referred to the June 2020 report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which mentions that the slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the fossil fuel industry has made investments in renewable energy more cost-effective than before. The renewable energy sector globally has continued to increase by 9.1% in 2021 and has been prioritized as the green energy/economy recovery strategy for many countries post-COVID-19 (IEA, 2020a; IRENA, 2020a, b, 2021). As part of short-term stimulus and recovery plans, the energy transition provides a crucial link to medium- and long-term global climate and sustainability goals. The challenge for developing countries is that COVID-19 burdens households as such governments are allocating the least resources to social protection and general economic stimulus programs, thereby postponing climate objectives, including green recovery and renewables (Lazo et al., 2022). South Africa has also outlined a green economy recovery plan that promises renewable energy at the core of its response to COVID-19. Safeguarding existing renewable projects and ensuring stable policy frameworks for transition-related infrastructure will be essential (IRENA, 2020a, b). SANParks has committed to transitioning its energy to renewable energy and reducing fossil fuel energy by 2% yearly. Phophe and Masubelele (2021) showed that 8% year-on-year would be ideal. Since then, the SANParks Green Energy Strategy (2022) has been outlined to target energy on the demand side and increase the renewable energy base through private-public partnerships. Of all COVID-19 energy implications, "nature-based tourism emissions" is not yet studied extensively and understood. Although the overall energy demand declines, the spatial and temporal variations are complicated and often not understood depending on the destination and national park involved.

The appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an exceptional shock event posing unprecedented challenges for tourism and hospitality enterprises (Dube et al., 2020; Gursoy & Chi, 2020). The emphasis is on the sector's capacity to return to pre-crisis growth paths. This perspective is projected by much of the tourism industry and the majority of national governments, including the Department of Tourism in South Africa. The positive impact of COVID-19 on energy emissions

should be on the flip side of this narrative; however, little research has been published on the gains accrued on emission reductions. This second school of thought views COVID-19 as a watershed or turning point for tourism and projects that its impacts will be irreversible as it will fundamentally shift the nature of tourism and human mobility into the future. The main nature-based attractions for tourists to South Africa include national parks such as Kruger NP, Garden Route NP, Addo Elephant NP, Kgalagadi NP and Table Mountain NP, which brings a staggering revenue to SANParks. According to our data, SANParks experienced a 50% decline for six months during COVID-19 and had no visitors in its accommodation. The tourism division of the organization put in the work and fought bravely to entice local and international tourists whenever restrictions were lifted. On the flip side, SANParks staff had to work from home.

This chapter overviews the impacts and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic on electric energy consumption and carbon emissions of nature-based tourism using South African National Parks as an example. SANParks energy consumption and carbon emissions before the pandemic were strongly driven by fossil fuel energy. During the pandemic, the type of tourist who prefers operating in low carbon emissions has grown globally. The Nature-Based tourism sector should be concerned if national parks such as Kruger, Table Mountain, and Garden Route do not address greenhouse gas emissions because a decline in the dominant tourism market that prefers greener approaches will stifle the countries that rely heavily on the sector. Thus, it is essential to understand how all these critical nature-based tourism national parks are dealing with energy consumption and carbon emission and were affected by COVID-19. Literature review on the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism's energy footprint is highlighted broadly and at the country to the local level. The chapter also highlights energy-related lessons and emerging opportunities to keep emissions lower post-COVID-19 while staff operations and tourism increase. The chapter hypothesized that the emissions from staff meters would increase during lockdown due to the number of staff spending most of their time in staff accommodation and expected tourism meters to decline. Energy consumption will thus decline in all the national parks during the lockdown. The post-COVID-19 recovery plan for maintaining lower emissions and contributing to SANPark's future energy targets is also discussed. The key focus is on how to achieve the Green Energy Strategy despite COVID-19 impacts on the energy system of this nature-based tourism organization.

5.2 Literature Review

This literature review lays the foundation for the impact of COVID-19 on tourism, energy consumption, and GHGs globally.

5.2.1 Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism Emissions

The rapid spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in early 2020 prompted a global lockdown from March to July 2020 (Tan et al., 2021). Due to strict lockdown measures, many countries experienced economic downturns, negatively affecting many industries, including energy, manufacturing, agriculture, finance, healthcare, food, education, tourism, and sports. Luo et al. (2020) outline that GHGs reduction requires the joint efforts of all countries, especially in the tourism industry, to balance greenhouse gas emissions and economic growth (Paramati et al., 2017; Gössling et al., 2021) to enable the achievement of sustainable tourism development. Yuan et al. (2021) show that the air quality is closely related to the number of tourists. However, the lack of tourism emission data severely limits the development of governments' decarbonization policies, especially at the destination level (Pham et al., 2022). The carbon risk is higher for those destinations that attract more international visitors, even though there is considerable exposure for remote destinations dependent on domestic self-drive markets. Despite this, the COVID-19 pandemic provided a rare opportunity to observe the impacts of worldwide lockdown on global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and climate change (Tan et al., 2021). Compared to 2019, there was a significant reduction in global CO₂ emissions 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.2 COVID-19 Impacts on Energy Demand, Consumption and Emissions

The energy supply and consumption of many countries (Abu-Rayash & Dincer, 2020; Kuzemko et al., 2020; Le Quére et al., 2021; IEA, 2020a, b; IRENA, 2020a, b; Parida et al., 2021; Suvarna et al., 2022; Hartono et al., 2021; Werth et al., 2021) and also commercial tourism cities exhibited downward trends due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Zhang et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic affected electricity consumption in many countries due to national lockdowns (IEA, 2021). After China enforced a lockdown in January 2020, electricity consumption began to drop, and a significant reduction of 11% was recorded in February 2020 compared to 2019 levels (Hartono et al., 2021). Another study mentioned how global electricity consumption was reduced to weekend levels (Tan et al., 2021). However, electricity usage rebounded with eased lockdown measures to pre-COVID-19 levels. Warmer temperatures in February 2020 were also responsible for the lower usage.

Jiang et al. (2021) showed that structural changes in energy demand and consumption occurred in the short term versus long term with varying expectations for the different sectors of the energy industry, including residential versus non-residential consumption. The peak demand patterns and consumption philosophy during and after lockdowns also varied. Other changes include the consumed products and energy intensities in the different regions. Khalil and Fatmi (2022)

mentioned understanding the implications of the imposed COVID-19 lockdown concerning energy usage in residential versus commercial locations. Iqbal et al., 2021 alluded to how novel their insights into CO₂ emission and energy consumption patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic were. In this chapter, we present what would be novel insights for nature-based tourism energy consumption and emissions to the best of our knowledge.

5.2.3 Impact of COVID-19 on Energy Transition and Renewables

It was recommended that countries and organizations consider renewable energy transition methods as an opportunity for society by implementing policy recommendations on energy consumption that improves the future effects on ecological value (IEA, 2020c; Tian et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022). He et al., 2022 traced high spatial heterogeneity in renewable energy footprint on national and global scales with energy efficiency improvement (SDG 7.3). It decreased the footprint-to-energy ratio to reduce the GHGs footprint.

While coal-based electricity fell during the pandemic, renewable energy generation increased (Tian et al., 2022; Parida et al., 2021; Werth et al., 2021). The comparison of different countries and regions showed that the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced the electricity demand, while the output of Renewable Energy Systems has increased (IEA, 2020d; Ling et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Despite severe problems in the renewable energy sector, such as delays in the supply chain, difficulties in tax stock markets and the risk of not being able to benefit from government incentives (Eroğlu, 2021), there has been a surge in renewables including in South Africa.

Challenges for energy transition during the pandemic from the perspectives of government support, fossil fuel divestment, renewable energy production capacity, global supply chain, and energy poverty have also been mentioned. Shao et al. (2022) postulate that China's current stimulus packages alone are insufficient for the CO₂ peaking target and 2 °C goals. They argue that the short-term changes in carbon emissions resulting from lockdowns and initial fiscal stimuli in the "economic rescue" period have minor long-term effects. In contrast, the transitional direction of future fiscal stimulus exerts a more predominant impact on long-term carbon emissions. Parida et al., 2021 argue that with suitable government policies, switching to a cleaner mode of energy generation other than fossil fuels could be a viable option to minimize CO₂ emissions under increasing demand for energy. Tan et al., 2021 suggest that the slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the fossil fuel industry has made investments in renewable energy more cost-effective than before. This cost reduction was mainly attributed to better technologies, improved production at scale, and more experienced renewable developers. Eroğlu (2021) discusses how the investors may act unstable due to the uncertainty in the renewable sector, but also that countries need to demonstrate severe clean energy

incentives. Tian et al. (2022) proposed that the post-pandemic energy transition roadmap for broadening green financing instruments, strengthening international cooperation, and enhancing green recovery plans will be valuable. Cazcarro et al. (2022) support the notion that decarbonization and sustainability must be the drivers for policy action and that energy transition needs to assess potential impacts on social aspects.

With all these suggested actions in mind, nature-based tourism estates must shift their renewable energy objectives towards carbon neutrality and net zero. Phophe and Masubelele (2021) have mentioned how SANParks must transition and target an 8% year-on-year energy reduction with an energy mix supported by energy efficiency and renewable energy base increase without considering the impact of shock events like COVID-19, which has cascading events on tourism and energy use as well as acquisition overall. This has been discussed in the chapter to encourage and stimulate discussion on the nature-based tourism estate contributions to net zero transition by evaluating the SANParks Green Energy Strategy of 2022.

5.3 Materials and Methods

The greenhouse gas protocol (GHG) is the most widely used international accounting tool for governments, including many in the conservation sector, to understand, quantify, and manage GHG emissions. It is widely accepted as standard practice in GHG assessments. SANParks electricity emissions were estimated for over five years (2014–2018), before COVID-19 (2019/20) and during COVID-19 (2020/21). The assessment was done for seven of the 20 national parks belonging to SANParks (Fig. 5.1). This includes Kruger NP, Garden Route NP, Table Mountain NP, Addo Elephant NP, Golden Gate Highlands NP, Kgalagadi NP and Au-grabies Falls NP. The total electricity GHG emissions were calculated annually (over 12 months) following the GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard methodology (GHG Protocol, 2013; Lin et al., 2016). Following this GHG protocol, all emissions from organizational activities and operations were divided into three scopes. However, we only report on electricity and Scope 2 included emissions associated with the consumption of purchased electricity (Eskom & Municipal receipts) that the reporting company does not own or control. This assessment used the emission factor from ESKOM to calculate electricity emissions over a study period. We mainly focus on primary electricity energy use in three periods of the 5-year average, pre-pandemic (and pre-lockdown) and during the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. This allowed tracking of how energy consumption changed monthly and during the enforced lockdown levels.

We apportioned the electricity consumption meters to assess tourism and SANParks staff infrastructure contributions towards total park consumption – the separations of consumptions per tourism and SANParks meters for five parks. We could separate the meters; however, it was difficult for Table Mountain and Kgalagadi NP Kgalagadi NP only has one meter used by both staff and tourists, and

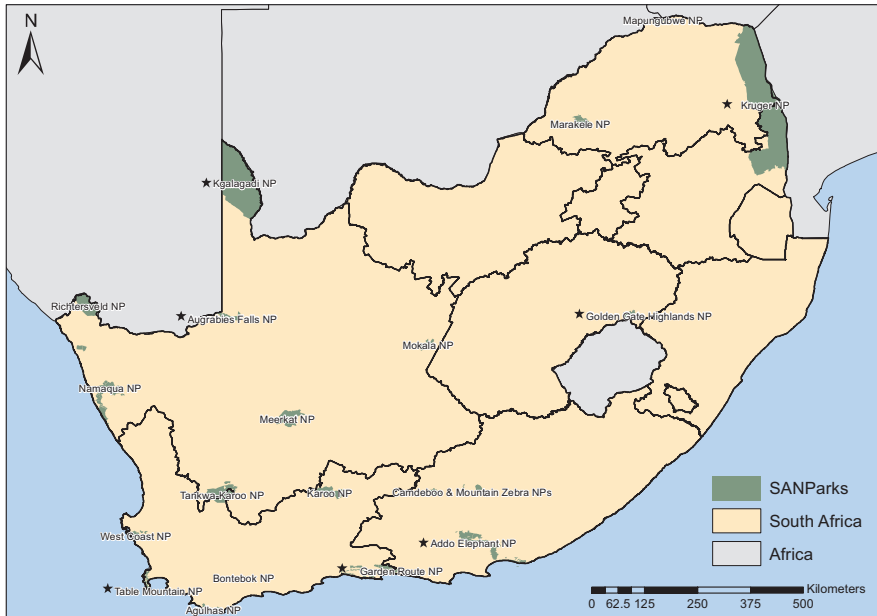


Fig. 5.1 Map of all the national parks belonging to SANParks. * denotes parks that were included in the analysis for this chapter

the data format for Table Mountain could not allow for apportioning. Kruger NP was superior in data, and analysis and comparisons were made separately from the rest. Statistical comparisons were made between SANParks staff and tourism in the three periods (5-year average, pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19).

Total staff numbers active per park before and during the pandemic were obtained from SANParks Human Resources and Park management. We used this information on staff numbers to estimate based on a set criterion that considered the number of operational staff during the different lockdown levels and whether they lived in the park permanently. The percentage change in staff numbers was calculated for pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19. The tourism numbers were obtained from the SANParks Hospitality and Tourism Management System. The percentage change in tourism numbers was calculated for pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19. A relationship was drawn between staff numbers in both periods with the percentage change in electricity emissions. This was done to ascertain whether staff or tourism numbers substantially influenced this change in electricity emissions.

For future energy interventions aligned with the Green Energy strategy, we obtained energy efficiency improvement data or information in the SANParks Green Energy Strategy. These were depicted to show how COVID-19 may hamper or support current and future efforts as part of a COVID-19 recovery plan.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 *Energy Consumption and Emissions Before and During Lockdown*

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, energy consumption remained stable and cyclical for all nature-based tourism locations (Fig. 5.2a). For example, Golden Gate Highlands NP consumption peaked from June to August, whilst Augrabies Falls NP peaked between December and January 2014. Although there were minor fluctuations between 2014 and 2018 for the different national parks, the trajectory of change remained relatively stable for all the high-emitting national parks mentioned here. A slight decline in energy consumption occurred in 2019 for most national parks just before COVID-19 hit the globe, except for GGHNP and GRNP (Fig. 5.2a, b). During the COVID-19 year, energy consumption declined between March and July for most of the parks except for Golden Gate Highland NP, which only declined for one month (April). Energy consumption after that started increasing significantly from September 2020 onwards (Fig. 5.2b, c).

The graphics in Fig. 5.2c demonstrate the variation in electricity consumption in national parks during the COVID-19 year. The decline and peak in electricity consumption coincide with the COVID-19 lockdown levels. The highest consumption for GRNP and AFNP was recorded in October during lockdown level 1, while for the rest of the parks, it was recorded during lockdown level 3. The decline in energy consumption coincided with an extended lockdown from level 5 until level 2 (around September). In all the parks, the energy consumption increased after lockdown level 2. The results showed that the challenging lockdown levels 5 and 4 between March and May decreased energy consumption for all parks from 6.2% to 51%, with an overall average decline of 23%. Augrabies Falls NP had the most decline at 51%, while Table Mountain NP had the least at 6.2%. During the moderate level 3 from May until July, the energy consumption started increasing at 10% on average, despite two parks showing an average decline of 21% and the others showing an increase of 23%. During the more lenient levels 2 and 1, average energy consumption increased drastically to 26%. The most percentage increase occurred at Kruger NP at 46%, whilst only Golden Gate Highland NP experienced a decline of 7%.

Individual parks should be targeting peak periods if they are to put a dent in energy consumption at a park level. For example, GGHNP should prioritize winter (June to August), whereas AFNP should prioritize summer (December to January). Kgalagadi NP should target winter and summer, while Garden Route NP should target school holidays throughout the calendar year.

When looking at the pre-COVID-19 period, the lowest energy consumption was recorded from AFNP at 63266 kwh, while the highest consumption was recorded from GRNP at 337728 kwh. Similarly, the lowest energy consumption was recorded from AFNP at 41873 kwh, while the highest was GRNP at 277033 kWh during the COVID-19 year. Comparing the peak months for pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19 showed a decline of about 18% in consumption for GRNP, while there was a more significant decline in the lowest consumption at about a 34% decline for

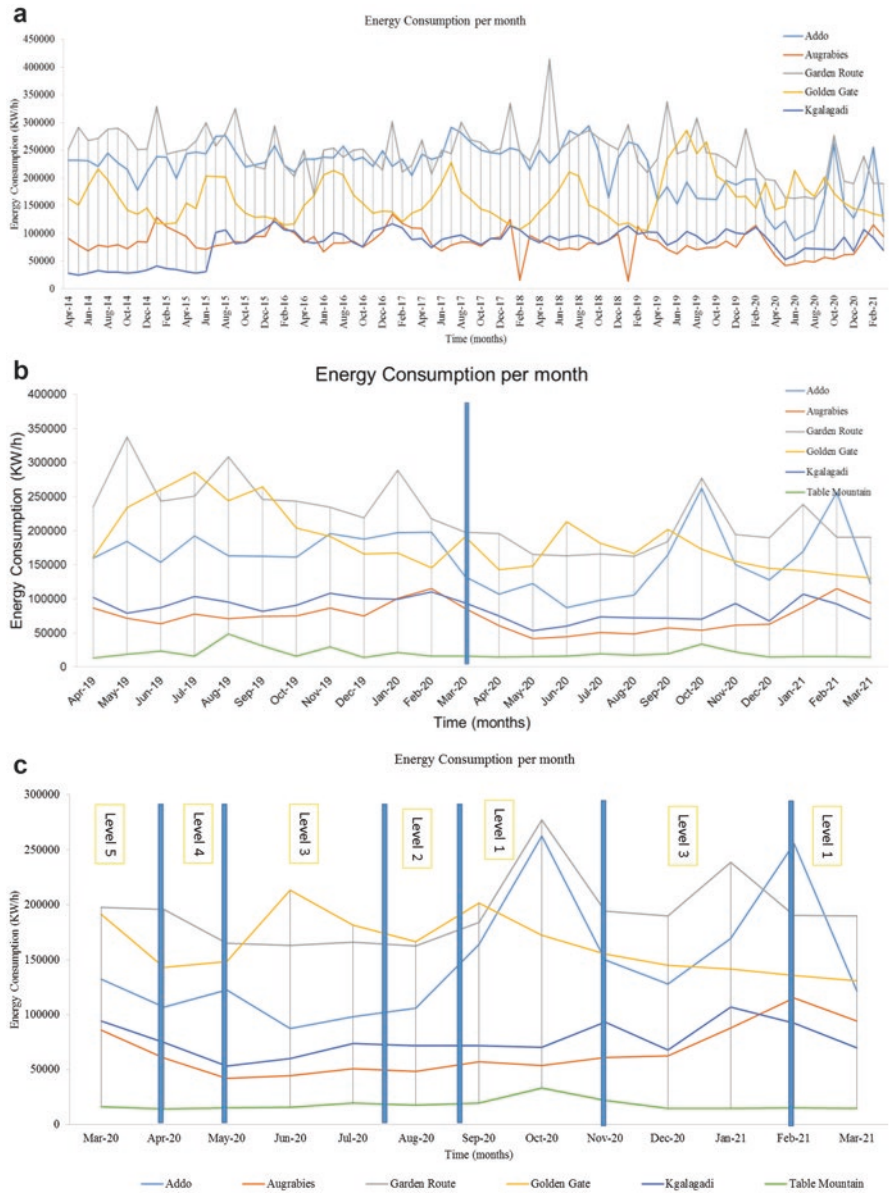


Fig. 5.2 Energy consumption across the six national parks (a) long term, (b) pre-COVID-19 vs during COVID-19 and (c) during different lockdown levels

AFNP. Although not included in the graph, KNP had the highest energy consumption in total across all parks, unrivalled at 23,375,941 kWh. However, it dropped to 22,682,040 kWh during COVID-19. This equates to a 3% decline overall. The peak pre-COVID was 2,369,971, and the most minor was 1,936,864. The peak during COVID-19 was 2,094,579 kWh, and the lowest value was 1,359,794 kWh. The KNP peak declined by 30%, while the most negligible value declined by 12%.

5.4.2 SANParks Staff Versus Tourism Energy Carbon Emissions Before and During COVID-19

The results showed a decrease in energy carbon emissions by an average of 20% across seven national parks due to COVID-19. Garden Route NP (23.3%), Golden Gate Highlands NP (23%) and Kgalagadi NP (21.4%) showed a biggest decline followed by Au-grabies Falls NP (20.8%), while Addo Elephant NP (15.1%), Table Mountain NP (17.6%) and Kruger NP (18.8%) declined the least.

The results in Fig. 5.3a showed a significant difference between the long-term average and the pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19 for staff emissions across all parks. However, no significant differences were observed between pre-COVID-19

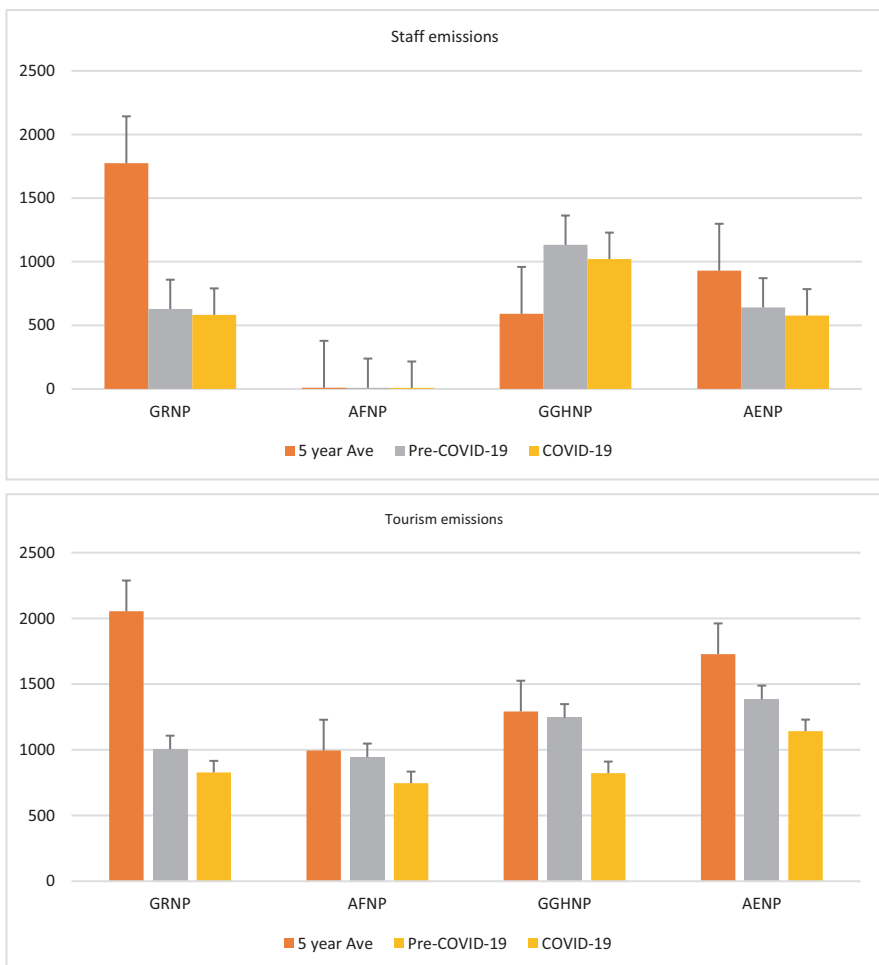


Fig. 5.3 Comparison between (a) SANParks staff and (b) tourist energy carbon emissions at four national parks before and during COVID-19

and during COVID-19. The 5-year average energy carbon emissions remained higher on SANParks meters except for Golden Gate Highland NP. In Fig. 5.3b depicting the tourism meters, the long-term average was only significantly different for Addo Elephant NP and Garden Route NP compared to the pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19. The latter periods were significantly different across all the national parks. During the COVID-19 period, tourism carbon emissions remained significantly higher than SANParks staff except at GGHNP, wherein the opposite was true.

For KNP, however, the SANParks staff emissions declined slightly between the long-term average versus the pre-COVID-19 year, whilst during the COVID-19 year, energy carbon emission declined significantly compared to the two periods (Fig. 5.4). A similar pattern was observed for tourism emissions. Tourism was consistently higher in energy carbon emissions than staff in all periods at KNP.

The number of staff was lowest at Augrabies Falls NP, 41 before COVID-19, and 23 staff members were active during COVID-19. Being active implies using SANParks facilities associated with the staff electricity meters, for example living in the park or visiting offices. The highest number of staff was at Kruger NP, 2589 before COVID-19, and an estimated 1467 were active during COVID-19. When averaged, the remaining five national parks hovered around 222 staff before COVID-19 versus 126 during COVID-19. The number of active staff declined by 43% on average during COVID-19 for the five national parks.

For tourism, the number of tourists was lowest at Augrabies Falls NP, 12,252 before COVID-19 and 746 visited the park during COVID-19. The highest number of tourists visited Kruger NP at 1,833,061 before COVID-19 compared to 830,392 during COVID-19. On average, tourists declined by 50% among the five national parks.

The percentage change in emissions was weakly correlated with several SANParks staff pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19 (Fig. 5.5). However, tourism numbers appeared to have a more robust relationship than staff numbers.

The relationship between the percentage change in energy carbon emissions and staff numbers is weaker than that of tourists. This implies that the tourism numbers contributed more to the emissions decline than staff numbers. Tourism numbers during COVID-19 have a stronger relationship with the percentage of energy carbon emissions decline. This was almost double the contribution pre-COVID-19.

5.4.3 Future Electricity Energy Savings in Short to Medium Term (2021–2026)

In the SANParks Green Energy strategy (2022), energy efficiency measures will be implemented, including technological and social/behavioural interventions. (a) The most immediate actions and outputs revolve around conducting energy audits and

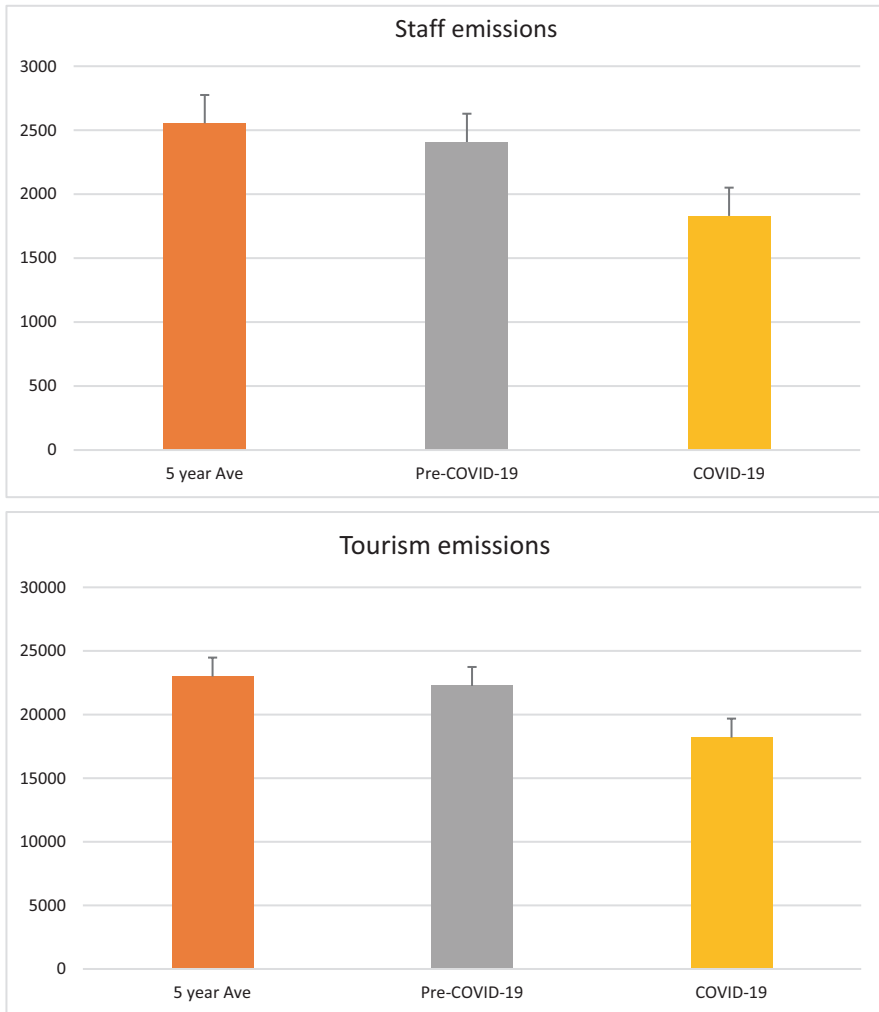


Fig. 5.4 Kruger National Park staff (a) compared to tourism emissions (b)

evaluating energy consumption patterns within and across parks to establish baselines where necessary and continue monitoring where baselines are available. (b) Introducing measures to reduce energy consumption through staff and visitor efforts to do so. (c) Monitoring the impact of energy efficiency interventions at various scales (e.g. camp/ park/organisational). The values in the table below show the priority interventions proposed in the strategy for the seven national parks. The number of LED lights and solar geyser units corresponds to the needs analysis conducted for each park. Kruger NP receives the highest investment, followed by Garden Route NP. This shows that energy efficiency has been prioritised, but the decline in

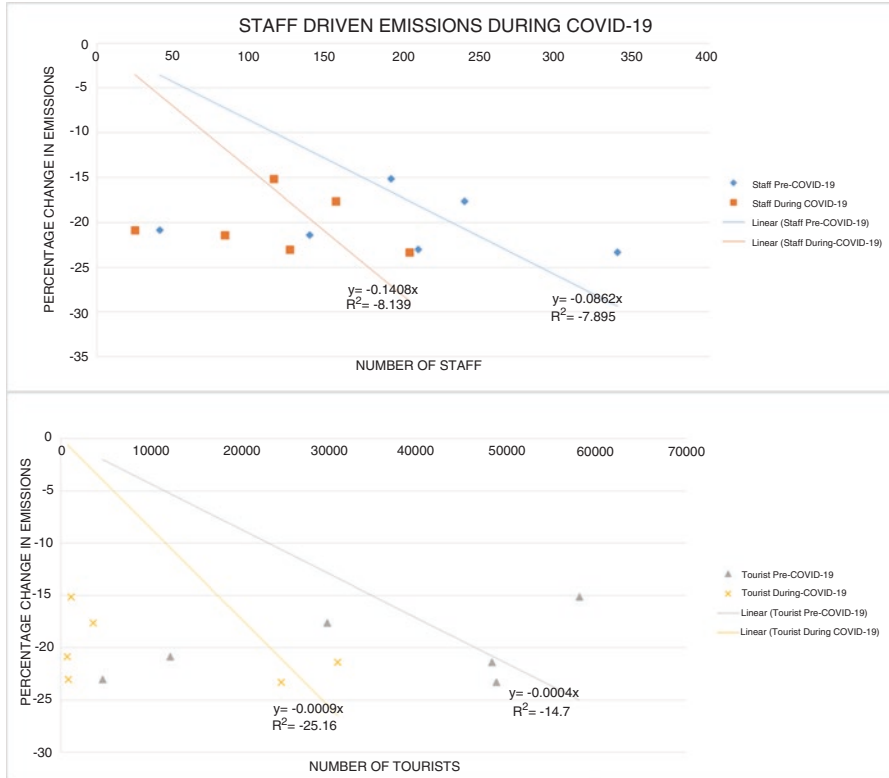


Fig. 5.5 Relationship between percentage change in electricity emissions (a) and SANParks staff numbers as well as (b) tourist numbers before and during COVID-19

revenue due to the lack of tourism caused by the pandemic may impact this plan. It will thus be essential that this opportunity for going green as part of a COVID-19 green energy recovery plan is implemented.

Park	Total LED numbers by 2026	Total LED numbers during COVID-19 (%)	Number of solar geysers by 2026	Solar geyser energy (kWh) saved/ annum by 2026	Number of solar geysers installed during COVID-19	Solar geyser energy (kWh) saved/ annum during COVID-19	Emission (tCO ₂ e) avoided by solar geyser during COVID-19
Augrabies Falls NP	500		78	204,984	26	17,082	17
Kgalagadi NP	1115		140	367,920	30	21,681	21
Addo Elephant NP	8800	1800 (21)	131	344,268	25	18,068	18

Park	Total LED numbers by 2026	Total LED numbers during COVID-19 (%)	Number of solar geysers by 2026	Solar geyser energy (kWh) saved/ annum by 2026	Number of solar geysers installed during COVID-19	Solar geyser energy (kWh) saved/ annum during COVID-19	Emission (tCO ₂ e) avoided by solar geyser during COVID-19
Garden Route NP	3927	1300 (33)	209	54,9247			
Golden Gate Highlands NP	1600		151	396,828	25	180,685	18
Kruger NP	8900		563	1,479,564			
Table Mountain NP	252	800	20	52,560			
Total	25,094		1292	3,395,371			73

Obtained from the SANParks Green Energy Strategy (2022). Additional data from technical services included.

The percentage of solar geysers installed during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates SANPark's commitment to implementing its Green Energy Strategy. Although nothing was done for TMNP, KNP and GRNP, on average, SANParks implemented 21% of its solar geysers share per Green Energy Strategy commitments until 2026. A similar figure was already achieved in 2021, if not surpassed, concerning this commitment despite the financial strains caused by the lockdown. For LEDs, 8000 of the total 33,000 committed by 2026 for all national parks were installed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This equates to 24% achieved during COVID-19, and a further 38% was achieved in 2021.

5.5 Discussion

Various studies have shown or projected a decrease, caused largely by the measures implemented to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be around 6–8% below 2019 levels using different approaches and datasets such as the Global Carbon Budget, monthly energy data available for the United States, European Union countries and India, and the Carbon Monitor as well as the assessment from the International Energy Agency (Le Quéré et al., 2021). Another important element was that the energy load dropped significantly during the COVID-19 expansion throughout Europe (Werth et al., 2021). According to the Global Energy Trends report by Enerdata (2021), total energy consumption for South Africa experienced

a 9% fall in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, have increased by 7% in 2021 after being stable at 1.3% increase prior to COVID-19. Electricity consumption increased by 2.3% post-COVID-19 in 2021, after declining by 5% in 2020. Coal consumption also recovered by 7% in 2021, after a 7% decline in 2020. The industry was the main electricity consumer (52%), followed by the residential sector (20%) and the services sector (15%). South African National Parks, as a nature-based tourism entity, aimed to contribute to national targets by reducing fossil-fuel-generated energy consumption by 2% per year until carbon neutrality is achieved. However, 8% year-on-year was projected to reach neutrality (Phophe & Masubelele, 2021). The parks presented in this chapter were responsible for 34,072 tCO₂e, which translated to 83% of the total energy emissions (40,681 tCO₂e). It is thus important to understand how the country's dynamics in energy mentioned above due to the pandemic influences nature-based tourism sites and their planned energy-saving strategies.

5.5.1 Energy Consumption and Carbon Emission Before and During Lockdown

South Africa experienced a severe drop in electricity consumption at a country level of 28%, and the peak demand declined by 20% (Adrade et al., 2020). There was substantial evidence showing that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted energy consumption and emissions in the tourism sector (Tan et al., 2021). This chapter showed a 20% decline in energy carbon emissions due to COVID-19. While little evidence exists for the tourism sector on the COVID-19 impacts on energy consumption and carbon emissions, knowledge gaps still exist regarding how COVID-19 affects nature-based tourism. The findings in this chapter represent a novel insight into the nature-based tourism sector, wherein declines in energy consumption between March and July follow the global trends reported at the national and global levels when the lockdown was enforced. However, there was variation between the different parks showing a local footprint on energy consumption and carbon emissions dynamics.

Iqbal et al. (2021) suggested revising the energy consumption patterns by developing and implementing a national action plan for energy consumption and environmental protection. This is like the SANParks Green Energy Strategy implementation on reducing energy demand and consumption throughout all the nature-based tourism parks. Energy consumption patterns observed in this chapter revealed a level of dynamism between individual parks and thus should be prioritized as such. The focus on the most emitting parks is thus warranted.

Variation existed between the seven nature-based tourism sites and demonstrated how individual parks responded differently to the lockdown phases (Figs. 5.2 and 5.3). These results showed that the energy consumption dropped by 6–51% in 2020 (March–May) during the complete lockdown phase, followed by 10% (May–July)

during the moderate unlock phases and gradually increased to 26% between August to November 2020 under complete unlock phases. This followed global trends in some instances; for example, Suvarna et al. (2022) found that the energy consumption dropped by 15–33% in 2020 (March–May) during the complete lockdown phase, followed by 6–13% (June–August) during the unlock phases and gradually reached the norms by September 2020. Hartono et al. (2021) presented evidence that the energy consumption of the first quarter in 2021 increased by 6.5% compared to the same timeline in 2020 comparable quarter was pandemic-free. They further postulate that the increased energy consumption implies a rebound in the economy, often carrying the risk of supporting an increase in fossil-generated electricity. The rebound in coal consumption in South Africa by 7% after COVID-19 supports this notion (Enerdata, 2021). This was the case for SANParks as the status quo of increased consumption occurred with the return of staff and tourists, although variation exists between the different nature-based tourism parks. COVID-19 enforced lockdown, thus leading to a temporary reduction in anthropogenic CO₂ emission (Sikarwar et al., 2021).

Before COVID-19, there was already a drop in consumption and thus emissions due to energy efficiency measures implemented by SANParks. Phophe and Masubelele (2021) showed that SANParks achieved its 2% year-on-year energy reduction prior to COVID-19. COVID-19 led to a further 3% decline in Kruger's energy consumption, of which this nature-based tourism site is unrivalled across the seven parks. Peak energy consumption declined by 30% during the COVID-19 pandemic, while minor energy consumption decreased by 12%. The latter park is the most significant contributor to energy-related emissions towards the total SANParks energy carbon emissions. However, a decrease in energy carbon emissions across the seven parks of 20% was achieved due to COVID-19, as mentioned earlier. The energy consumption decline shown in the results and the previous paragraph may represent a positive outcome for carbon emissions. It may be deduced that COVID-19 lockdown levels influenced emissions differently across nature-based tourism due to the variation shown by the energy consumption patterns. Ultimately, the more stringent lockdown phases resulted in positive outcomes for energy carbon emissions compared to the more lenient lockdown levels wherein energy carbon emissions increased.

5.5.2 SANParks Staff Versus Tourism Emissions Before and During COVID-19

When looking deeper into the SANParks staff versus tourism facilities, energy carbon emissions differed across the various nature-based tourism parks (Figs. 5.3 and 5.4). Tourism energy carbon emissions were significantly higher than SANParks staff energy carbon emissions before and during COVID-19 across all parks except for Golden Gate Highlands NP. For the latter nature-based tourism site, SANParks

staff energy carbon emission was significantly higher than tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Todeschi et al. (2022) have demonstrated that residential space heating increased by around 13% during the complete lockdown while the residential cooling demand increased by around 28%. Golden Gate Highlands NP appeared to follow a seasonal trend primarily associated with cold conditions in winter; installation of a new facility (Dinosaur Museum) and staff accommodation could also have played a role in the increase. As Tan et al. (2021) mentioned, weather plays a vital role in heating or cooling. During the lockdown period, global energy consumption was reduced to weekend levels (Tan et al., 2021). Edoma and Ndulue (2020) demonstrated that increased cooking, home laundry, showering, and some professional practices that moved to the homes impacted higher energy consumption within the residential sector.

Regarding tourism energy carbon emissions, the most significant change was the decline in tourist numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic (50%). This was strongly correlated to energy carbon emissions during the COVID-19 year, more so than before COVID-19 (Fig. 5.5). The correlations for SANParks staff numbers and staff energy carbon emissions were weaker than the tourism ones. Phophe and Masubelele (2021) argued that the building size to park size ratio accounting for energy use intensity was also an essential driver of carbon emissions in nature-based tourism sites. The decline in tourism numbers could have reduced the energy use intensity during the COVID-19 pandemic, for which the authors demonstrated that most of the parks studied in this chapter had higher energy use intensity prior to COVID-19. Kruger NP, Table Mountain NP, Garden Route NP and Golden Gate Highlands were amongst the top four. The COVID-19 pandemic has thus resulted in a decline in energy carbon emissions in nature-based tourism sites in the short term. It may be deduced that infrastructure associated with tourism and staff will have a stronger relationship with electricity emissions. This is because, for example, some of the guest accommodation requirements to keep lights on and maintain certain conditions according to legislation, and emissions would remain relatively high. However, a critical post-COVID-19 recovery entails putting in place measures to improve the efficiency of buildings and appliances to be implemented urgently. SANParks post-COVID-19 electricity energy consumption and carbon emissions reduction strategies will benefit from maintaining these COVID-19 levels while increasing staff and tourism activities. International Energy Agency argues that implementing all cost-effective energy efficiency measures would reduce emissions in 2030 by around 2 Gt CO₂ (IEA 2020d) and require around \$50 billion in additional investment per year (IEA 2020e). These strategies have been advocated for in another IEA report (IEA 2020c) to be part of the recovery strategies of countries Yu, Bai & Liu (2019) predict that it would be critical also for tourists to adopt low-carbon consumption patterns and for energy optimization of service suppliers to improve energy use efficiency and the renewable energy ratio. The authors further suggest that public entities and governments should seek lower energy costs and reduce carbon emissions throughout the life cycle of their commodities.

Hybrid models employed during COVID-19 will be an essential arsenal for reducing staff's electricity consumption and energy emissions. Each park will need

to look at its infrastructure, evaluate what percentage of staff would be in the office, and allow those who do not necessarily need to be the office-bound to work remotely. Building size to park size was shown to be important by Phophe and Masubelele (2021), and as such, reducing electricity emission intensity by going with solar water geysers and LED lighting to improve energy efficiency will help cut the emissions significantly as prioritized in the SANParks Green Energy Strategy (2022). The same strategy would be vital in dealing with tourism infrastructure-related emissions. While it is evident that some restrictions strongly correlate with load drop concerning the impact assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak on the use of energy in buildings, improvement in energy monitoring or auditing using highly accurate and efficient software and devices will be essential to allow for a prompt response during peaks times during the day and season.

Increasing tourism numbers while maintaining lower energy consumption and emissions will be critical. Educating staff and tourists on the importance of saving electricity and sharing statistics and knowledge on how SANParks contributes to the 1.5 C° pathway ahead for achieving net zero by 2050 will improve understanding and maintain electricity emissions. Khalil & Fatmi (2022) demonstrated that by integrating occupant behaviour within residential energy use for detailed energy quantification during the pandemic, the daily average in-home-activity duration increased by 80%, resulting in an energy consumption spike of 29%. However, they projected a 32% increase after the pandemic, compared with the pre-pandemic situation, which equals a 12% increase in energy consumption. Quantification and behaviour responses should be essential to post-COVID-19 energy reduction and recovery strategies. Lastly, energy efficiency inclusive of renewables will potentially provide opportunities to create local value by setting up a domestic industry around solar water heaters, especially when looking at the required capacity across the entire SANParks estate and the policy-enabled increase in renewable energy supply measures implemented by the government. Long-term energy scenarios suggested in the SANParks Green Energy Strategy and by Phophe and Masubelele (2021) may be achievable since the 8% year on year has been exceeded by some of the parks due to COVID-19, thereby getting SANParks closer to its 2030 and 2050 targets.

5.5.3 Renewable Energy Changes Due to COVID-19

Generating clean alternative energy from available and non-polluting sources of the environment, such as the energy generated from the sun and wind (Metwally, 2019), is well supported by many nationally determined contributions in line with the Paris Accord. Globally, the renewable base has continued to increase while fossil fuels-related energy declined due to COVID-19 (IEA, 2021; IRENA, 2021). In South Africa, renewable energy in the percentage of electricity production increased from 7% in 2019 to close to 8% in 2020 (Enerdata, 2021). It continued the upward trajectory with a further 9% increase in 2021. The IRP2019 targets adding 16 G.W. of

wind and solar by 2030 about 2018, made up of 9.5 GW of wind and 6.5 GW of solar. Wind should account for 15.7% of installed capacity in 2030 and solar for 10.5%. The rapid growth of solar P.V. and wind has been paired with impressive cost reductions of close to 80% on average for solar P.V., 40% for onshore wind and 30% for offshore wind power over the past ten years (IRENA, 2020a, b).

Sun et al. (2020) proposed integrating procedures into national systems linking the sectoral carbon emissions of tourism with international climate commitments and progressing implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The post-COVID-19 recovery plans should push to limit the rise in global temperatures by 2050 to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, a pathway to that goal, one that decarbonizes all end uses, with electrification and energy efficiency as primary drivers, enabled by renewables and green hydrogen investments that may pave the way for equitable, inclusive and resilient economies.

Phophe and Masubelele (2021) recommended that national parks belonging to SANParks with high energy emissions (including KNP, GRNP, TMNP, GGHNP, and AENP) should follow the Dolphin scenario, which is similar to the best-case scenarios for the DoE. In the previous report published by the authors of this chapter in 2020, an 8% year-on-year reduction was proposed to achieve energy net emissions by 2050. SANParks Green Energy Strategy's purpose is to reduce reliance on fossil-fuel-based power generation and its associated adverse economic and environmental consequences. This will be achieved in three ways. Firstly, energy efficiency measures will be implemented, including technological and social/behavioural interventions. The LEDs purchased and installed during and after COVID-19 demonstrate the urgency that SANParks has dealt with improving energy efficiency. Over 60% of the committed LED installation for all parks has been achieved in two years. Awareness campaigns have been conducted in 2021 and will continue in 2022. Secondly, investment into and promoting renewable energy technologies will directly address and reduce the organizational carbon footprint. Solar geysers were also installed in the seven parks during the COVID-19 pandemic and in 2021. A few new solar P.V. plants were installed in some of the national parks not used in this study. Thirdly, the increased use of renewable energy sources will contribute to a more sustainable and efficient mix and energy use and reduce energy costs in the long term. An investment worth 1.3 million dollars (U.S.) will set the organization well ahead of most conservation estates globally.

SANParks has an opportunity to create renewable off-grid jobs, but this will have to be balanced against surviving the impact of COVID-19 on its revenue, a challenge identified by Ali et al. in 2022. Ali et al. (2022) mentioned that in the off-grid areas of developing countries, the dilemma of whether to extend the existing grid or adopt off-grid energy systems had been further worsened due to the impact of the pandemic on the economy and worsening poverty and rising unemployment. Although this conclusion is made at the country level, considering that SANParks has individual isolated grid systems per park prioritized for renewable energy going into the future, the SANParks Green Energy Strategy (2022) implementation plans for renewable energy may be hampered due to COVID-19, as suggested.

Alternatively, the push for low carbon transition in developing countries, including South Africa, as part of the COVID-19 recovery plans may lead to the availability of funding in government (The Presidency, 2020; Government S.A., 2021), which might speed up the transition and help maintain emissions experienced during COVID-19 thereby allowing for more than 8% year-on-year energy reduction at an organizational level. If green policies are pursued, additional employment and economic activity can be achieved while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

5.6 Conclusion

According to a literature review in this chapter, COVID-19 has caused significant challenges to the tourism and energy industry. This has resulted in potentially new practices and social forms being facilitated by the pandemics, impacting energy demand and consumption. The nexus between tourism and energy (Hoseinzadeh & Heyns, 2021) has been a neglected topic in the literature, studying the relationship between energy consumption and the tourism sector ignoring CO₂ emissions. This is among the few studies demonstrating and concluding that nature-based tourism affects energy consumption in South Africa. The decrease in energy consumption and carbon emissions due to COVID-19 were roughly aligned with the global national and international situation. The chapter demonstrated that nature-based tourism entities also experienced a decline in energy consumption and carbon emissions during the COVID-19 pandemic, similarly to the country and international level. Although there was variation at individual park levels driven by local context, the timing of lockdown and unlockdown levels, seasonal context, and energy efficiency measures were put in place. Tourism energy carbon emissions declined significantly in all the nature-based tourism parks compared to staff-related emissions except for Kruger NP, wherein staff emissions declined significantly. As governments take measures to bolster their economies, they must pay particular attention to the challenges posed by the pandemic in the energy and tourism sector and capitalize on the opportunities that it may present to drive the clean energy transition.

The crucial message from this chapter was that when staff and tourism numbers gradually increase to levels before COVID-19, energy efficiency due to the prioritized interventions highlighted here should also increase. Thus, COVID-19 emissions should thus be maintained or decline slightly. Half the reduction achieved during the COVID-19 year will be enough to maintain the required 8% year-on-year reduction to achieve the net zero proposed in the SANParks Green Energy Strategy. Intensifying existing and new approaches and regulations to support an energy transition towards more renewable energy will be necessary. At the current rate, this nature-based tourism entity has demonstrated that aggressively targeting energy efficiency measures and renewable sources may lead to permanency in COVID-19 achieved energy reduction and carbon emission declines. However, the limitation of this study may be that, in some instances, it was difficult to assign tourists compared

to staff energy consumption data for a few nature-based entities. It would be important going into the future to adequately draw relationships between pre-pandemic, during and post-pandemic tourism numbers, energy consumption and carbon emissions in these nature-based tourism entities.

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Chapter 6

The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Tourism Enterprises and Their Future Growth Prospects in Zimbabwe



Douglas Runyowa and Shepherd Nyaruwata

Abstract Tourism in Zimbabwe is one of the anchor sectors of the economy alongside mining, agriculture, and manufacturing. The impact of this pandemic has been felt strongly in rural destinations, which largely rely on drive-through tourists. This study assesses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural enterprises and assesses their future growth prospects in Zimbabwe. It adopted a mixed method approach and used a survey and in-depth interviews to collect primary data from (90 participants). The participants were drawn from three case studies. Data from the survey questionnaires were analysed using IBM SPSS v26 as the computational statistical tool. Thematic content analysis was applied on the data from key informant interviews. The study found that the COVID-19 pandemic has further dampened both international and domestic tourists, with rural community enterprises/destinations which feed off the travel supply chain from mainstream tourism resorts being the worst affected. It also found that the rural tourism enterprises were reluctant to engage in digital marketing and, thus, lost out on their ability to reach many potential travellers broadly. The need to amplify the participation of rural enterprises in digital spaces, thus, emerged as one of the key strategies to build resilience in the wake of the pandemic and enable their future growth.

6.1 Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in China in December 2019 and its global spread brought the world to a standstill. Measures put in place by different governments to limit the spread of the pandemic such as national lockdowns, closure of national borders, and bans of internal and international flights brought the tourism industry to its knees. The relentless spread of the pandemic and its mutation into different variants has forced governments to continue with a wide range of measures

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aimed at mitigating the overall impact of the pandemic on societies and this, in turn, has restricted the recovery of the tourism sector. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) indicates that international tourist arrivals were -20% in 2021 (January to September) compared to the same period in 2020, and that the figure was -76% compared to that of 2019 (UNWTO, 2021). The World Travel and Tourism Council indicated that some 121 million jobs were at risk worldwide due to the impact of the pandemic (WTCC, 2021). The majority of African countries relied on international tourism and therefore were hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic (Rogers & Baum, 2020). Efforts by the majority of African countries to develop a viable domestic tourism sector to even out the risks relating to dependence on international tourism have not been successful due to a number of factors (Musavengane & Mureyani, 2021). For instance, the size of the population in African countries with adequate disposal income to participate in holidays is small, and a large proportion of the African population view going on holiday as an unnecessary luxury (Mutana & Zinyemba, 2013). Due to the ravages of the pandemic, it is estimated that in 2020, the continent lost US\$ 83 billion in contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) from tourism, and a total of 7.2 million jobs in (UNWTO, 2021). The negative impact of the pandemic on Africa and its tourism sectors continued in 2021 with the continent recording a 77% decline in tourist arrivals for the period January to September 2021 compared to the same period in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021). Rural tourism enterprises, especially, the community-based enterprises, were dealt a heavy blow which they have found difficult to recover from.

Tourism facilities in Africa became empty overnight and companies had to implement survival strategies, the majority of which negatively affected employees in the sector. Zimbabwe was not spared these challenges. From March 2020 onwards, the COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc on the economy of Zimbabwe as a whole. The pandemic has greatly affected the performance of the tourism industry in Zimbabwe and it hit the country at a time when its economy was facing the “devastating impacts” of climate shocks associated with the drought and Cyclone Idai (Chigumira, 2021). Hotel managers’ reports show that 80% of the enterprises experienced massive booking cancellations with average room occupancies dropping to 15% throughout 2020 and in parts of 2021.

The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority 2020 annual report showed that the national average accommodation room occupancy stood at 19% which was a decline of 25% from the 2019 figure. The country’s prime tourist attraction, Victoria Falls, recorded a 13% room occupancy rate for the year which was a decline of 39% from a similar period in 2019 (ZTA, 2022). Rural tourism enterprises, especially, the community-based enterprises, were dealt a heavy blow which they have found difficult to recover from. The overall result of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe has been massive closure of enterprises, furloughing of employees, cutting down on the number of employees through dismissals, early retirement and turning towards part-time employment (Nyaruwata et al., 2021). Given the dominance of nature tourism in Zimbabwe, rural tourism enterprises are predominantly located on the periphery of key tourism destinations like national parks and national heritage sites. Being owned by individual rural entrepreneurs or communities, these

enterprises tend to face challenges of profitability and sustainability due to a number of factors. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 and its subsequent global spread from China resulted in the decimation of global tourism, especially rural tourism business, and Zimbabwe was no exception. Therefore, this chapter aims to highlight the impact that COVID-19 has had on rural tourism enterprises in Zimbabwe and their future growth prospects. The study will provide strategies that will assist entrepreneurs to reposition their businesses for sustainable growth during and beyond the COVID-19 period.

6.2 Literature Review

Rural tourism takes place outside urban areas, and in Zimbabwe, this is largely in National Parks areas, Forestry and Heritage sites which are largely in the countryside. A number of scholars have offered several frameworks/models through which rural tourism enterprises can restart (Mudzengi et al., 2020; Noorashid & Chin, 2021). The frameworks are based on broad areas of resilience and also on transformation strategies. According to Noorashid and Chin (2021), the resilience strategies entail, among others, the following:

- Quick recovery response and understanding of the new market.
- Diversifying products and service to meet the demands of the domestic market.
- Government financial and technical assistance.
- Incorporation of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Social Media in business operations.

With regard to transformation strategies, Noorashid and Chin (2021) highlight the need to adopt the innovation of roles and practices; for example, expansion of the business into other ventures; and focussing more on local culture, heritage and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in product and service offerings. It is important to note that whilst the strategies offered are a useful pointer to what rural tourism enterprises and CBTs can use as a basis to restart their operations, area-specific strategies need to be investigated if sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by these businesses in different parts of the world are to be successful.

Rural tourism enterprises have experienced higher devastations from the impacts of COVID-19 than those located in tourism resorts and urban areas due to a number of factors (Hanani et al., 2021). This is because such enterprises are owned and managed by rural entrepreneurs or communities whose linkages with the metropolitan centres of their own countries are limited and hence their chances to benefit from the mitigatory measures put in place by their own governments have been limited (Stone et al., 2021).

In a number of global destinations, the COVID-19 pandemic created a totally new outlook on the business environment. For example, coastal rural areas of the Mediterranean region which, prior to the onset of COVID-19, teemed with masses of beach tourists, found themselves dealing with limited numbers of visitors, most

of whom were local tourists (Destimed, 2021). The Mediterranean region's focus is now on issues of recovery, regeneration, resilience, and collaboration between all stakeholders (Destimed, 2021). The region is further repositioning itself by targeting new market segments, that is, seeking nature-based tourism products by creating a "sense of connectedness to nature among a broad spectrum of the public" (Destin Med, 2021: 1). A study carried out by Costanho et al. (2021) in the Azores Islands showed that the majority of the respondents to the survey, some 67.4%, the majority whom were SMEs, had experienced dramatic decline in business as a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors concluded that the extension of the government financial support to the sector was critical to offset the negative impacts of COVID-19 and would be key to the survival of the businesses (Costanho et al., 2021).

Within the Caribbean region, COVID-19 had a disastrous impact on the economies of most of the islands due to the dominance of the exclusive resort model for tourism development. As pointed out by the report of CAF ideas for the future (Gopaul, 2021) in Caribbean, cruise ships and all-inclusive resorts are the most popular forms of tourism within the Caribbean. The lockdown measures implemented by the source market countries, for instance, the United States and Canada as well as those implemented by the Caribbean member states themselves, resulted in zero tourism arrivals to the region. Both the resort business and rural tourism enterprises in the region found themselves without any clientele as the region does not have any meaningful domestic market (Gopaul, 2021). The vulnerability of rural communities which depended on the tourism sector for their livelihoods was aptly demonstrated in a study carried out in Bolivia by Loza et al. (2021). They postulated that the pandemic negatively affected the livelihoods of more than 500 families who operated tourism enterprises in the country. Further, 80% of the community entrepreneurs had to migrate to other sectors of the economy to get some income to support their daily needs (Loza et al., 2021).

The situation that prevailed in the tourism sector in the Caribbean region was also similar to that noticed by Soliku et al. (2021) in the Savannah region of Ghana. They noted that the ecotourism enterprises in the region suffered a catastrophic downturn in business because of their overreliance on international tourism (Soliku et al., 2021). They further argue that due to the fragility of the rural economies in most developing countries, Ghana included, the long-term negative social and ecological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the area could be ruinous. The study highlighted how the local economy had collapsed and how this had affected local livelihoods (Soliku et al., 2021).

A similar case is observed by Stone et al. (2021) in Botswana where both community-based tourism enterprises and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) have been hit hard, economically and socially, by the spread of COVID-19 and the attended measures that were put in place by the government to mitigate its spread in the country. They pointed out that the "impact on community livelihoods due to COVID-19 has been astronomical" (Stone et al., 2021). Their research leads them to question the wisdom of the government's policy which has traditionally focussed

on “high value-low volume tourism” thus making the country overdependent on international tourism for the overall growth and development of the sector.

The challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic to rural enterprises and Community-Based Enterprises (CBT), especially in Africa, is aptly summarized by the quote given by Lendelvo et al. (2020) in their introduction to their study on the issue in Namibia: *COVID-19 is testing the years of investment in Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) across all thematic areas. If this global pandemic is not well managed both in Namibia and globally the CBNRM programme will be on the edge of falling apart, given the umbilical cord of the programme attached to conservation hunting and tourism.*”

Lendelvo et al. (2020) posit that the Namibia government adopted a wide range of measures that were aimed at ensuring the continued survival of the CBTs in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. These included mobilising some N26 million dollars from the government, the private sector and nongovernmental organisations for distribution to Conservancies (CBTs) throughout the country (Lendelvo et al., 2020). The Namibian government’s approach reflects its need to preserve the heavy investment it made in the Conservancies programme since its inception in 2003 (Jones & Weaver, 2009). The programme, which is aimed at empowering rural communities and the conservation of wildlife resources, has been the cornerstone of Namibia’s policy on the participation of rural communities in the tourism sector (Barnes, 2008).

In Zimbabwe, Mudzengi et al. (2020) argue that by the time it was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme was already under stress due to a variety of factors which included climatic change, donor fatigue, and hyperinflation. They further postulate that the Mahenye case study indicated how a community that has survived previous shocks could develop a range of coping mechanisms for the COVID-19 pandemic. In different parts of the world where rural tourism enterprises and community-based tourism businesses have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of governments and non-governmental organisations involved in CBTs is on how to restart these businesses (Hanani et al., 2021). There is a general concern about the need to put in place policies and strategies that ensure that these enterprises are in a resilient position which will enable them to absorb future shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic (Soliku et al., 2021; Loza et al., 2021; Mudzengi et al., 2020).

The clarion call in many developing countries has been for the repositioning of the tourism industry and ensuring that developmental policies seriously address the development of domestic tourism. This position is fully articulated by Noorashid and Chin (2021). They argue that to revive tourism and the community economy, operators must shift their focus to the domestic market while concurrently adapting technological advancements and recalibrating the approach of diversifying local products, services and resources. Similar views are expressed by Soliku et al. (2021) in the case of Ghana and by Stone et al. (2021) in the case of Botswana.

Since rural tourism has been at the centre of developmental policies of many developing countries to alleviate rural poverty and encourage biodiversity

conservation (Nyaruwata, 2011; Mbaiwa et al., 2019; Munyanyiwa et al., 2019), the ravages that have been brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic require serious considerations for the rural enterprises to restart in a sustainable manner.

6.3 Research Design

The study was done using a pragmatic research design whose philosophical underpinning allows using qualitative and quantitative methods in a singular study (Östlund et al., 2011). This mixed method of inquiry is a widely used mode of inquiry (Terrell, 2012), and is considered richer than independently using either qualitative or quantitative methods (Creswell, 2013). The target population of the study were community-based tourism enterprises in rural Zimbabwe. A survey was used as a data collection tool. It was administered to a sample of 90 participants purposively sampled from three selected community tourism enterprises: namely, Chesvingo Cultural Village in Masvingo province, Tengenenge Cultural Village in Mashonaland Central province, and Gairezi Ecotourism Resort in Manicaland province. Whilst the study focused on three case studies, a national approach could be revisited in the future. To its credit, this micro approach enabled a detailed analysis at a destination level. It is critical to shape policies that seek to achieve a geographical spread of tourism in support of the devolution thrust, itself a centrepiece of Zimbabwe's developmental thrust of leaving no one and no place behind.

Crossman (2020) identifies purposive sampling as the use of a non-probability sample selected on account of the characteristic features of a group of people and the objectives of the study. The researchers further used in-depth interviews to explore issues generated in the survey in a bid to arrive at a better understanding of how the community enterprises were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Boyce and Neale (2006) argue that in-depth interviews help to unearth respondent's perspectives on a particular situation, programme, or idea. The key informant interviews from the public and private sector were selected based on their expert knowledge in the field of study.

A structured questionnaire was employed as a data collection tool during the survey. It had two sections: Section A inquired on demographic data whilst Section B inquired on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community enterprises. The validity of the questionnaire was tested using expert review for face validity and was pretested to sharpen the tool and remove irrelevant questions. Previous studies were also consulted to ensure formulation of a reliable questionnaire. In addition, the researchers piloted the questionnaire to test whether it was collecting the required data in line with the objectives of the study. This resulted in some questions being refined and some being dropped altogether.

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed; however, only 90 were successfully completed resulting in a 76.6% response rate. Bryman and Bell (2015) identify a typical response rate greater than 60% as good enough for data collection. This 60% threshold is further corroborated in other studies such as Pronk et al. (2019).

The overall response rate of 76.6%, being above the 60% threshold, represents that the researcher's content that the sample considered for this study was optimal and significant.

Results of the study indicate that the sample was mostly dominated by male respondents (60.4%), compared to female respondents (39.6%). The majority of respondents (50.1%) was in the age group 50–60 years, which represents a fairly aging populace consistent with most rural areas. The respondents were fairly educated as the majority (65%) had attained a secondary school level qualification. The findings also show that more than 50% of the respondents had been working with the community enterprises for more than a year, which shows that the study collected data from people who had the requisite experience and knowledge of their community enterprises.

Data were captured and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and the descriptive statistics were generated using the IBM SPSS v26 as the computational statistical tool (IBM, 2019). The researchers adopted thematic analyses of data gathered from in-depth interviews. After data was transcribed, it was arranged according to emerging themes to identify underlying ideas and views using a manual approach on excel before its analyses.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

The study upheld ethical considerations throughout the duration of the research participants were sought and obtained before data collection. Their confidentiality was assured, given that the information was for academic purposes only. As alluded to by Bryman and Bell (2015), the names of the participants were not recorded to ensure the study remained confidential. In keeping with ethical considerations, the researcher did not use any incentives to induce the respondents to participate in the study.

6.5 Findings/Results

6.5.1 *Product Offering*

Study results indicate that whilst the tourism enterprises were all located in rural areas, they differed in their product offering. Tengenenge Cultural Centre is mostly a culture creative industry-based attraction where the major attraction is the internationally acclaimed sculptors which allows for experiential tourism. They also offer traditional cuisines and accommodation in their chalets and camp sites. Chesvingo Cultural Village is largely a daily life trail product, supported by scenic views of the lake Mtirikwi. The place is mostly a day tripper's venue as their accommodation

and camping sites are undergoing reconstruction. On the other hand, Gairezi offers fishing and scenic walking trails supported in the main by accommodation chalets and camping along the Gairezi River.

6.5.2 Impact of Covid-19 on Business Performance

Evidently, the results of the study indicate that the pandemic has reshuffled the travel patterns for both local and international tourists. The disruption of global supply chains has led to domestic travel emerging as the dominant force on the demand side as shown in Fig. 6.1.

Overall, domestic tourism has been on an upward trend whilst international tourism traffic has declined. A total of 309 international tourists were recorded at the three facilities in 2020 compared to 263 in 2021. Equally, 1335 tourists were received in 2020 compared to 1638 in 2021. Although the domestic tourists' numbers have been on an upward trend, interviewees reported a decline in revenue. One interviewee at Tengenenge had this to say:

We have previously relied more on international tourists as they pay three times more than the domestic travellers. The closure of borders has affected our access to the German market which we enjoy largely because of the popularity of our sculptures in that market.

At Gairezi, interviewees indicated that their domestic travel had been affected by the poor road linkages from Troutbeck Turnoff to Nyafaru which is not easily navigable. All the respondents also reported that the severe lockdown which resulted in ban on intercity travel slowed down group travel especially from schools, which

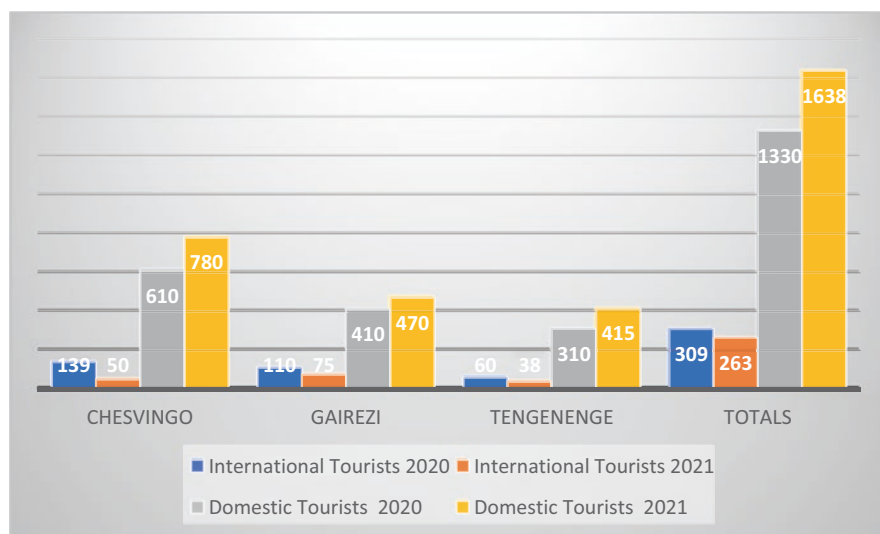


Fig. 6.1 Tourist trends at the case studies. (Source: Survey Data)

were also further affected by the disruption of the schools' calendar over the period. Eighty percent of the interviewees were vociferous in blaming government for the imposed lockdowns which have left their business on the verge of collapse.

A respondent at Tengenenge stated that "I have had to resort to farming yet all these years I have eked a living out of sculpturing and the tourism traffic to our enterprises." Evidently, the impacts of the pandemic have not only disrupted businesses but have affected livelihoods reliant on tourism leading to communities shifting focus from tourism to other sectors.

On revenue generation, 90% of the respondents were not keen to disclose the actual extent by which revenues had declined citing confidentiality clauses of the enterprises. However, the dominant response was that the pandemic had literally wiped their revenue bases including savings due to prolonged periods of lockdown.

6.5.3 Other Social Impacts of the Pandemic

All the three enterprises were having active management structures that are led by the communities as obtained in the survey data. However, the convening of management meetings was greatly disrupted by the COVID-19 restrictions. At Gairezi, the mandate of the committee had expired and they had not been able to meet to elect a new leadership due to the COVID-19 restrictions. There was evident disgruntlement as some respondents felt the current leadership was using COVID-19 as an excuse to cling to power. This points to other social impacts of the pandemic beyond its economic effects.

6.5.4 Recovery Support from Government

The study inquired on the support that the community enterprises received during the COVID-19 period. One key informant indicated that the COVID-19 Pandemic Stimulus Package benefitted mostly the top companies in the tourism sector. The government did not have the financial capacity to offer grants to SMES in the sector as was the case in Botswana and South Africa and, in addition, with limited cash flows, smaller enterprises had no hope to approach banks to benefit from the availed loan systems.

6.5.5 Marketing Coping Mechanisms

The study also inquired on the marketing strategies being used by the community enterprises to try and stay connected with past and future markets in the wake of the pandemic. Results of the study indicated poor coping mechanisms in relation to

adaptation of digital marketing strategies. All the three facilities relied mostly on traditional marketing channels of referrals, brochures, and the participation at travel shows to link with their markets. One respondent at Chesvingo said: “We have over the years relied on tourists visiting Great Zimbabwe Hotel who take day trips to this end and the closure of the hotel has really left us in limbo.” One respondent at Gairezi also had this to say: “Our business is largely from school tours who visit in groups and the closure of schools wiped our business. Even when schools resumed in 2021, trips were not considered essential travel and we barely had visitors.”

6.6 Discussion

6.6.1 Impact of COVID-19 on Tourist Arrivals

The reported decline in tourism activities noted in the study is consistent with the general decline in tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe due to the pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector registered an average growth rate of 6% between 2012 and 2019, and arrivals increased from 1.7 million in 2012 to 2.56 million in 2018, while tourism receipts grew from US\$ 749 million to US\$ 1386 billion (GOZ, 2020). However, in 2019, tourist arrivals registered an 11% decline from 2,579,974 to 2,294,259, and tourism receipts also declined from US\$ 1386 billion to US\$ 1247 billion over the same period (GOZ, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 on tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe has been severe as arrivals into Zimbabwe fell from 2,294,259 in 2019 to 630,356 in 2020. The trend continued in 2021 as arrivals suffered a further 40% decline to 375,799 which figures are similar to tourism arrivals of the year 1992 (Fig. 6.2).

What is evident though is that this decline is global and is not peculiar to Zimbabwe alone. In neighbouring South Africa, the same trend is also reported as tourists’ arrivals dropped by 71% from 15.8 million in 2019 to 2.8 million in 2022 (South Africa Statistics, 2021). A key point to also note is that the COVID-19

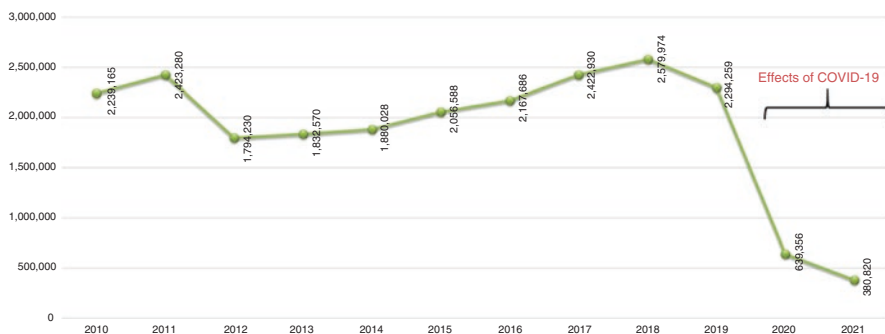


Fig. 6.2 Impact of COVID-19 on tourists arrivals in Zimbabwe. (Source ZTA)

pandemic constrained the operating environment of the sector because in 2020, the tourism sector was literally closed for 5 months between March and July 2020 and in 2021, cumulatively the sector was closed for another six months. In order to claw back to pre-pandemic performances, authorities will need to strengthen management of the COVID-19 protocols without resorting to recurrent lockdowns.

A perusal of tourist arrivals in South Africa reveals that between 2019 and 2022, Zimbabwe remains the leading SADC country contributing the most inbound travel. Equally, for Zimbabwe, South Africa remains a major source market accounting for over 60% of tourist arrivals (ZTA, 2020). As a recovery strategy, there will be need for the two countries to deepen their cooperation in tourism and harmonise travel arrangements. Evidently, COVID-19 has reshuffled travel patterns with the domestic market emerging as more ready and stronger. This, therefore, strengthens the clarion call reported in the literature to reposition domestic tourism (Noorashid & Chin, 2021; Soliku et al., 2021). In this vein, Zimbabwe has taken a bold step to aggressively promote domestic tourism through the ‘ZimBho’ campaign. The campaign is part of the government’s efforts to promote domestic tourism in the wake of depressed international arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic (GOZ, 2020). In essence, it was modelled along the ‘Sho’t left’ domestic tourism promotion campaign in South Africa. There is need to sustain this campaign through enhanced private sector participation. A study by Matura (2021) also underlies the need for strong partnerships between government, the private sector and host communities to successfully promote domestic tourism in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.7 Future Growth Prospects of Rural Tourism Enterprises

The future growth prospects of rural enterprises in Zimbabwe hinge on enhanced finance and adaptation of digital skills. The study revealed that whilst the Government of Zimbabwe had developed financial mechanisms for bigger players to cope during the pandemic, there was no arrangement put in place for smaller players. Lendelvo et al. (2020) posit that the Namibia government mobilised N26 million dollars from government, the private sector and nongovernmental organizations for distribution to Conservancies (CBTs) throughout the country. To strengthen the resilience of community enterprises, there is also need for authorities in Zimbabwe to structure funding mechanism for the smaller players in tourism affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study reported low use of digital skills as a hindrance on recovery strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Literature identifies technologies as a tool for building resilience during times of crisis (Hall et al., 2017). Previous studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector have also identified the low adaptation of technologies as a major setback to building the resilience of intervention strategies such as domestic tourism (Woyo, 2021). It is therefore not surprising that the low usage of digital skills has contributed to the decline of businesses during COVID-19. Sigala (2021) posits that companies that are technology ready are

more likely to survive the pandemic than those on the other side of the digital divide who are likely to suffer from “infordemic,” which is a mixture of the effects of the pandemic and lack of information adaptation.

6.8 Study Implications

Results of the study underpin the need to capacitate rural tourism enterprises with digital skills and the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority could leverage these insights. Rural enterprises will therefore find it difficult to survive and thrive beyond the pandemic if they do not adapt to technology. A key focus area is to put in place capacity-building programs which can also be supported through partnership with development cooperating partners. One quick win will be for ZTA to provide practical training programs for such enterprises and also integrate their websites on their platforms as a way of driving digital traffic to the rural enterprises. Given the need to build sustainable and resilient rural tourism enterprises, Government must widen their access to finances through established funding windows such as the Women Empowerment Bank and the Youth Empowerment Bank whose tentacles must boldly spread to rural areas. Given the challenges of collateral, the institutions will need to explore innovative funding mechanisms including accepting livestock as collateral.

6.9 Conclusion

Community-based tourism enterprises in Zimbabwe were devastated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The negative social and economic impact of the pandemic was compounded by lack of government support to the communities to enable them to absorb the shocks that were brought about by the pandemic. The dependency of the rural community enterprises on the traditional product distribution model means that the businesses are going to face an uphill struggle to restart because the post-COVID-19 customer is now highly dependent on information communication technologies (ICTs) for sourcing holiday products. The community-based tourism enterprises in Zimbabwe, therefore, need to embrace digital platforms for the distribution of their products if they are to revive their businesses.

6.10 Recommendations

The study recommends that authorities in Zimbabwe enhance the digital skills and access of communal enterprises in the tourism sector to sharpen their digital marketing skills. The digital skill training programme is also an opportunity for

partnerships with development cooperating partners within the country. The programme will help improve the digital skills of the rural participants and result in the improvement of their enterprises. This will help tremendously in promoting destination visibility and keeping tourists informed of even the most remote destinations and in the process better prepare the tourists for future travel to such destinations.

It is further recommended that the Emergency Road Rehabilitation Program that the Government of Zimbabwe has undertaken to improve the state of roads in the country be extended to roads leading to tourist destinations to make them easily accessible. A case in point being the Troutbeck-Nyafaru Road which leads to Gairezi Resort. Roads are always key enablers to tourism development and are key contributors to destination competitiveness. It is further recommended that such efforts should also encompass improvement of signage to improve visibility of tourism products in less-beaten tracks. The study further recommends, overall, the need to strengthen domestic tourism.

It is evident from the study that during the recovery period of the tourism sector, the domestic market is ready to travel and efforts need to be sustained to consolidate the gains from this market and grow it as the basis of recovery for the sector. The study also laid bare the need to strengthen the National COVID-19 Management Plan in the tourism industry to improve access to finance by the small to medium enterprises. The framework should also encompass a sustainable funding platform to improve access to finance by community-based tourism enterprises. In the absence of such a plan, some small to medium tourism enterprises may not be able to reopen post the pandemic.

The study also recommends the need for authorities to put in place an inclusive policy framework to link community enterprises with existing tourism companies. This will help in ensuring skills flow, mentorship and business linkages, which is critical for the success of community-based tourism enterprises.

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Part III
Management of COVID-19
in Tourist Destinations in Zimbabwe
and South Africa

Chapter 7

Women's Participation in Community-Based Tourism During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case of Sengwe Community in Zimbabwe



Godfrey Makandwa, Forbes Makudza, and Simbarashe Muparangi

Abstract Rural women are involved in community-based tourism initiatives at varying degrees. This chapter aims to determine the levels of involvement of rural women in community-based tourism activities. Also, the research addresses how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced rural women's participation in community-based tourism. Empirical data from 40 women involved in community-based tourism in the Sengwe community, Zimbabwe, were used in the study. Based on Reid's ladder of participation, the results indicate that women passively participate in community-based tourism by attending meetings to get feedback, and the least number self-mobilise themselves and participate as entrepreneurs. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic constrained the ability of women to run viable craft ventures due to limited markets and increased family care burden. The findings add to the discussion on how women's participation in rural economies influences household livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, few studies have been concerned with ascertaining the nature of women's participation in community-based tourism in rural contexts. This study identifies how rural women participate in community-based tourism and their impact on rural livelihoods.

Keywords Community-based tourism · COVID-19 · women participation · Zimbabwe

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7.1 Introduction

Southern Africa's tourism resource base (wildlife and culture) has propelled the region into a major player in international tourism (Zhou, 2014; Dube, 2022). South of the Sahara, it plays second fiddle to the Eastern Africa region in terms of destination attractiveness (Giddy & Webb, 2018). Most governments in Southern Africa promote community-based tourism (CBT) as a means to ensure local community participation. Notable communities that have been involved in CBT initiatives over the years include Makuleke (Makuluke project, South Africa); the Caprivi region (Kwandu Conservancy, Namibia); the Bawa (Tchuma Tchato project, Mozambique); the Kachikau and Mabele (Chobe Enclave Conservancy, Botswana); and Sengwe (Malipati Safari Area, Zimbabwe) (Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017; Khumalo & Yung, 2015; Suich, 2013). Most of these CBT initiatives are located in rural contexts where most of the population comprises women (Hlengwa & Maruta, 2019). This makes women's participation in CBT initiatives inevitable primarily because of their familial responsibilities (Mkono et al., 2021). This research seeks to ascertain how the COVID-19 pandemic has altered women's participation in CBT activities. The assumption is that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the communities' daily way of life, and women's participation in CBT (a socio-economic phenomenon) is no exception.

Previous research on CBT in Southern Africa has focused on the challenges host communities face, the impacts of CBT activities, benefits sharing and institutional governance (Hlengwa & Maruta, 2019; Jones, 2002; Lenao, 2015). These research were done prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, thus the need to appreciate the impact of the pandemic on CBT activities located in rural contexts. This is crucial considering that international tourism arrivals suffered a massive decline; for example, 18.5 million international tourists visited Africa in 2021 compared to 68.2 million in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021). Evaluating women's participation in CBT helps determine ways to boost the performance of CBT initiatives. This is so because women play a crucial role in sustaining rural households (Makandwa et al., 2021). Rural women in Southern Africa are faced with the dispossession of primary sources of wealth, that is, land and cattle (Mkhize & Cele, 2017), and the COVID-19 pandemic further compounded their woes as it led to reduced remittances and spousal job losses (Chirisa et al., 2021). Although there is a general lack of academic focus on gender issues within the CBT context (Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016), the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic calls for greater participation of women in rural economies. Besides, Burgos and Mertens (2017) explained that CBT projects aim to achieve social inclusion and gender equity. This research reinforces the same by determining the level of women's participation in CBT initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much literature viewed communities involved in CBT as homogenous entities; for instance, Boasiako and Yeboah (2021) analysed the impact of external agents, such as the government, on community participation in tourism activities. Amoako-atta et al. (2020) used community participation models to appraise the different

ways community members participate in tourism activities. Mudzengi et al. (2021) examined factors that have facilitated the Mahenye project's resilience in the face of various challenges. These studies focused on community participation in the African context and overlooked the ability of different actors (based on power and gender) within a community to participate in tourism activities (Sandbrook & Adams, 2012; Segobye et al., 2022) and the impact of the novel COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in general and CBT activities in particular (Nhamo et al., 2020).

Few studies that focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Zimbabwean context failed to appreciate the power differences within communities emanating from being feminine (Mudzengi et al., 2022; Musavengane et al., 2020; Woyo, 2021). Research relating to CBT in the Zimbabwean context has considered host communities as homogenous (Chirenje et al., 2013; Gandiwa et al., 2014). That is, the focus has been on "community participation" thereby overlooking the patriarchal nature of rural communities where men maintain dominance over women (Afenyo-Agbe & Mensah, 2022; Chitsike, 2000; Gohori & van der Merwe, 2021). All the same, women have differing influences at both the household and community levels. Such power differences are based on having different positions of power within the community, demographic characteristics and civil status. For example, Makandwa (2021) observed that older women influence decisions relating to resource allocation at the household level. Therefore, this research probes the participation of rural women in CBT activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account their different characteristics. This research applies Reid's Community Participation Model to gain insights into women's participation in CBT initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the participation of rural women, a marginalised group helps capacitate them and create a sustained social capital (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2012).

7.2 Literature Review

CBT is any form of tourism activity undertaken within a particular community and involves one or more community members (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2012). In this case, community involvement is varied in decision-making and enjoyment of benefits (Ismail & Halim, 2014). The establishment of CBT initiatives in Southern Africa over the past two decades has been driven by the desire to ensure that benefits cascade to the host communities (Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017). Runyowa (2017) added that CBT initiatives should benefit the host communities to offset the related costs they incur. Communities in Southern Africa have realised mixed outcomes from their involvement in CBT activities. For example, Kavita and Saarinen (2016) observed that Namibia's Caprivi region derived meaningful benefits from CBT activities, while Mbaiwa and Tshamekang (2012) noted that communities in the Chobe Enclave obtained only seasonal employment opportunities in lowly paying positions. The benefits also differ from year to year, even within one community, due to contextual factors (Makandwa, 2021). The enjoyment of the same benefits

within a particular community also differs among community members. This research unravelled the participation of rural women as a means to understand how local communities participate in CBT initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is based on the premise that women's participation in CBT initiatives is a capacity-building process (Rasanjali et al., 2021). The involvement of women, a marginalised group, in CBT results in benefits cascading to the household level (Phanumat et al., 2015).

Apart from ensuring that the host communities enjoy the benefits of the CBT developments, participation can also be viewed from the involvement of the locals in the decision-making process (Burgos & Mertens, 2017). Okazaki (2008) explained that CBT initiatives should foster social inclusion and gender equity as a strategy to facilitate community development. This research emphasises the impact of CBT on community members, women to be precise. Women in developing countries face an unfavourable economic position characterised by the inability to access services that strengthen their participation abilities (Gajić, 2021). Most African cultures regard women as inferior to men, and their contribution to community development is influenced by their role in the family (Phungwayo & Mogashoa, 2014).

7.2.1 Participatory Techniques in CBT

Salazar (2012) explained that communities could develop CBT initiatives either independently or with the aid of external interventions. The same notion was supported by Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2017), who indicated that the internal community participatory approach and external stakeholder involvement could contribute towards implementing CBT. The degree of external interventions, in turn, influences the communities' participation. Such participatory techniques range from self-mobilisation to passive participation (Nkwanyana et al., 2016). While the degree of involvement varies, Gutierrez (2022) concluded that external participation and involvement remain critical in pursuing any tourism initiative, including CBT.

7.2.2 Passive Participation

Afenyo-Agbe and Mensah (2022) noted that passive participation in CBT relates to an approach by the local communities, who rely on external agencies to be directed on what to do and how to do it. During developing or formulating policies to advance CBT initiatives, the community's responses are crucial and need to be considered (Lintangkawuryan, 2022). The community is provided with information about what will take place to gain the voluntary submission of the community (Okazaki, 2008). In this instance, Afenyo-Agbe and Mensah (2022) highlighted that local communities are rather docile and order takers owing to the strong external influence. Mudimba and Tichaawa (2017) explained that residents in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe,

are passive participants owing to their minimum involvement in the tourism developments taking place in the town. Muyambo et al. (2022) noted that women's participation in economic activities during disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial for rural revitalisation. Nonetheless, Fuhrman and Rhodes (2021) explained that lockdown restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have seriously affected women's livelihoods and economic opportunities.

7.2.3 Participation by Giving Information

Yanes et al. (2019) posit that when local communities participate by giving information, they are subject to a research study. They can descriptively elucidate their local operations since they have all the information at their fingertips (Lee & Jan, 2019). However, Pradini et al. (2022) highlighted that the major challenge of using locals as information silos is that it creates a hands-off attitude among local players. Pradini et al. (2022) further noted that information-giving is more instrumental for theoretical building, which may not necessarily be practically acceptable in some local communities towards promoting CBT. In light of the preceding discussion, Tosun (2014) envisaged that the community's participation is limited to providing information in response to questionnaires and surveys designed by external agencies. In Hatay County, Turkey, for example, an airport was constructed with little regard for the concerns of the local communities (Tosun, 2014). Rather, the communities were interviewed concerning how they earned their livelihoods. Resultantly, the local communities lost the most fertile soils suitable for agricultural purposes, and migratory routes for birds were also disturbed (Tosun, 2014).

7.2.4 Participation by Consulting

Through participation by consulting, the community is consulted on the proposed tourism developments pursued by the external agencies, but its views are limited to selecting a policy designed by the external agencies (Afenyo-Agbe & Mensah, 2022; Reid, 1999). External agencies may take the views of the host community but are not obliged to do so. Nonetheless, Okazaki (2008) argued that this mode of participation has a negative bearing on CBT activities since the external agencies lack knowledge about indigenous knowledge systems and how communities interact with the natural environment. Clark et al. (2018) cited the introduction of the brown tree snake on the Island of Guam, West Pacific, which began consuming native rainforest birds resulting in nine of the 11 native bird species becoming extinct. Thus, Kopher-Gona and Atieno (2022) conclude that consulting the locals gives external stakeholders insight into areas that need intervention. However, the implementation should be bottom-up by driving the locals to be active participants, not mere information providers.

7.2.5 Participation by Material Incentives

Most communities that live in areas endowed with tourism resources are remote and poor (Wang et al., 2022). The external agencies may seek to achieve conservation goals by providing material incentives. According to Tosun (2014), the incentives entice the communities to abandon their traditional practices like agriculture as they contrast with the conservation goals of the external agencies. People will be given cash and food in return for labour and, in some cases, land (Afenyo-Agbe & Mensah, 2022). Sithole et al. (2021), however, epitomised that the sustenance of CBT initiatives pursued through incentives is in jeopardy since the external agencies' withdrawal will leave the community with no incentive to pursue them. The community would also have no knowledge that would enable them to sustain the project. Kepher-Gona and Atieno (2022) added that external financial and material support is limited to a stipulated time frame, after which the funding is withdrawn. Financial support may be withdrawn when the CBT initiatives are still in their infancy, defeating the need for sustainable CBT. In addition, donors are not compelled to continue financing the project until it can sustain itself; consequently, they may abandon it once they feel that their interests are compromised due to other circumstances (Manwa, 2003; Mhaka, 2014).

7.2.6 Interactive Participation

In interactive participation, the community's participation in CBT activities is seen as a right, and the community is involved in the joint analysis and development of the action plans (Ngo et al., 2018). Through interactive participation, people participate in joint analysis, the development of action plans and the formation or strengthening of local groups or institutions (Bagus et al., 2019). Kongolo and Bamgose (2002) concurred with the above sentiments and stated that the local community members at this stage take control of local decision making and resource allocation. Interactive participation is achieved through interdisciplinary processes that seek to maintain community structures and practices (Zielinski et al., 2020). For example, the establishment of a Disney America Project in Prince William County, USA, could not be carried out as the local communities resisted the developments (Tosun, 2014). Thus, the community continued to access most local land and continued their conservation initiatives through joint analysis with the donors.

7.2.7 Self-Mobilisation

The community participates by taking initiatives independent of external agencies, and the community's collective action does not seek to challenge the existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Reid,

2001). Panta and Thapa (2018), however, concluded that although self-mobilisation is desirable, it is hindered by a lack of financial and technical expertise on the part of the host community. Self-mobilisation is also based on the supportiveness of the legislative framework of the host government in terms of land ownership (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2020). Diamantes (2004) cited the Makuleke community as one such a community that has made significant strides in CBT. The donor community, TRANSFORM to be precise, have been limited to the provision of technical expertise whilst decision-making relating to the development of CBT activities was done by the community.

7.3 Materials and Methods

7.3.1 Study Setting

There have been concerted efforts to ensure women's participation in CBT initiatives in Zimbabwe (Chipfuva et al., 2015). For example, establishing the Women's Empowerment Bank seeks to ease the financial challenges faced by women. The bank seeks to provide financial assistance to women with ease and at low-interest rates. Nonetheless, Nyaruwata and Nyaruwata (2013) observed that the promotion of women's participation in tourism initiatives had been lagging in the Southern Africa region. Mkhize and Cele (2017) attributed this scenario to race, high illiteracy levels and being located in rural areas. This research focuses on the Sengwe community in the south-eastern Lowveld of Zimbabwe. The region is arid and susceptible to weather-induced disasters, including cyclones, floods and drought (Makandwa et al., 2022).

The Sengwe community is found in Chiredzi District, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. The community is subdivided into three wards: ward 13 (Masukwe, Machanani, Pahlela, Chilugwi, Gezani), ward 14 (Bondela, Gwaivi Kosvi, Mpandle, Sengwe) and ward 15 (Malipati, Hlarweni, Mugivisa, Samu, Chilothela, Dumisa) (Tavuyanago, 2016). Most villages are involved in the CAMPFIRE programme, notable ones being Gezani, Sengwe and Malipati. The tourism base in the community includes natural attractions (Manjinji Pan, Malipati Safari Area, Davata Hot Springs, Bosman site and bordering the Gonarezhou National Park) and cultural attractions (festivals, ceremonies, traditions and daily way of life). Apart from tourism, other economic activities include subsistence agriculture (Muzeza, 2013). Zinhiva et al. (2017) also observed that stream bank cultivation is noticeable along major rivers. The community also relies upon remittances from relatives working in nearby South Africa, while Dzingirai (2004) also indicated that illegal cross-border trade had sustained the community.

There are different opportunities for community participation in CBT initiatives, and communities in Zimbabwe have realised mixed success from CBT development. Chiutsi and Saarinen (2017) noted that there are limited efforts to involve the

Sengwe community in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) initiatives. Rather efforts have been on removing the locals to pave the way for animals to roam between the Gonarezhou National Park and the Kruger National Park. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 presented another challenge to community participation in CBT activities (Nhamo et al., 2020). A raft of measures that the government introduced to curb the virus's spread altered the Zimbabwe populace's daily way of life (Chamunogwa, 2021). Chirisa et al. (2021) stated that travel restrictions, curfews and other additional measures covered in statutory instruments shaped the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on tourism activities (in terms of arrivals, earnings and job losses) is more pronounced at both the national and international scale (see Musavengane et al., 2020; UNWTO, 2021; Woyo, 2021). The lack of statistical records relating to tourism activities in rural landscapes, such as the Sengwe community, has stifled an assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in rural contexts.

7.3.2 *Methods*

The study sought to understand women's participation in CBT initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, using an experimental research design, the Sengwe community was selected to facilitate in-depth probing of the various ways women participated in CBT activities. The selection of the Sengwe community was justified because it was one of the rural communities in Zimbabwe where women actively participated in CBT (Makandwa, 2021); hence their selection would enhance the validity of the study's results.

The target population for the study were women involved in CBT activities and were part of the Sengwe community either by birth or marriage. This provided them with a platform to voice their experiences as previous research interviewed household heads (of which the majority are males), traditional authorities and CAMPFIRE male leaders (Mudzengi et al., 2022). The inclusion criteria for selecting women respondents was based on involvement in CBT activities as CAMPFIRE committee members, employment by tourism businesses in the Chiredzi district, wildlife awareness volunteers and entrepreneurs whose ventures were located within the Sengwe community. These women were purposively sampled from three villages: Malipati, Sengwe, and Muhlangueni. The inclusion criteria for the selection of the villages were based on their participation in the CAMPFIRE programme, availability of tourism attractions of repute, proximity to Gonarezhou National Park (GNP) and being part and parcel of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) (Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017; Tchakatumba et al., 2019).

A snowball sampling technique was used to identify potential respondents because there was no clear-cut sampling frame and women in CBT were not easy to find in the public domain. Through snowballing, the traditional leadership helped to identify the first respondents. Meanwhile, the identified respondents linked the research team to other potential respondents. The process of snowballing and

referrals continued until all available leads were exhausted. In the end, a sample of 40 respondents was obtained. This sampling process is supported by Lucas (2014) who indicated that in-depth exploratory studies gain merit based on the depth of information obtained from a few respondents.

Data for the study were collected between February and March 2022, and permission to carry out the study was obtained from Chiredzi Rural District Council (CRDC) and the traditional local leadership. The study made the necessary appointment with respondents using WhatsApp. Having solicited the respondents' consent and informed them of the study's aims and their rights to anonymity, in-depth interviews were conducted with the aid of native Shangaan translators. Immediately after collection, data analysis was done. Data was collected qualitatively, and thus qualitative data analysis using thematic and transcriptional analysis techniques. Analysed data was further interpreted and discussed regarding Reid's ladder of community participation to enhance an easy understanding of the results. The discussions focused on how rural women are involved and their ability to influence the decision-making processes relating to CBT.

7.4 Results and Discussion

7.4.1 Women's Participation in CBT Before the Outbreak of COVID-19

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, rural women in the Sengwe community participated in CBT as committee members (10%), volunteers in wildlife awareness campaigns (5%), employees (2%), and entrepreneurs (83%). Employment represents the least participation because tourism organisations such as the GNP are outside the Sengwe community, and women could not balance work-family responsibilities. Most of the respondents are entrepreneurs managing culturally based micro-ventures such as food operations and crafts. Women's involvement as entrepreneurs is necessity-driven (Makandwa et al., 2021) and is the dominant form of participation because of limited barriers to entry and the flexibility of working from their homes and/or at nearby shopping centres. The respondents explained that their dominance, particularly in bead-making and pottery, is largely because they are an extension of their daily household routines and the support they receive from donors.

7.4.2 Participation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the imposition of travel restrictions, intercity travel was banned, and national borders were closed (Chirume & Kaseke, 2020). Findings reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the participation of

women in CBT through the cancellation of cultural festivals, travel restrictions, increased household chores and failure to access health facilities.

Khumalo and Freimund (2014) noted that CBT reduced poverty levels in rural communities in Southern Africa. Nonetheless, the study findings revealed that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed opportunities presented by CBT activities. The respondents indicated that few women who provided casual labour to accommodation facilities in and around the Gonarezhou National Park (GNP) found themselves unemployed. UN Women (2021) noted that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the tourism industry has been disproportionate. The research findings from Mauritius and Tonga concluded that women were hardest hit with job losses because they were concentrated in the food and beverages sector. OECD (2021) noted that the existing records relating to job losses focused on formal employment and overlooked those employed in the informal sector. As such, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the material incentives (wages) that rural women employed by tourism organisations earned. The situation was slightly different for men as most of them remained employed by tourism organisations as security personnel, plumbers and game scouts. More so, the respondents indicated that, unlike men, they opted not to be employed during the COVID-19 pandemic because tourism organisations required that they live on the premises instead of returning home and taking care of their families.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the respondents' ability to acquire skills through education and training. Chigonda (2017) explained that CAMPFIRE committee members and volunteers were involved in regular training programs and awareness campaigns that NGOs primarily conducted. The NGOs further trained women entrepreneurs in crafts (Makandwa et al., 2022), improving their technical skills. The respondents indicated that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic thwarted such training programs and awareness campaigns. In the case of CAMPFIRE committee members, regular updates were provided on WhatsApp groups. The researchers noted that such a form of participation by giving information excluded women who were committee members because either they did not have a compatible mobile device or were not able to read WhatsApp messages. Thus the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the exclusion of older women from passive participation in tourism activities. Most married respondents thought social media platforms like WhatsApp were meant to socialise and no meaningful debates could be done. Hence, even those with compatible mobile devices did not make contributions in the WhatsApp groups.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to lockdown restrictions that limited travel and banned community gatherings and events (Chamunogwa, 2021). The respondents indicated that major cancelled events include the Great Limpopo Cultural Fair and Chiredzi Agricultural Show. Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, rural women participated in these events through traditional performances, drama, and enterprise (selling crafts and food) (Makandwa, 2021). Gopaul (2006) explained that community festivals and events provided women with democratic spaces to improve their decision-making processes and readiness to shoulder responsibilities. As such, the women involved in CBT faced challenges in building

their confidence and earning income through active participation in tourism experiences.

The respondents also highlighted that COVID-19 limited their alternative livelihood options (tourism profits, reduced remittances and wages). They revealed subsistence crop farming as the only economical option during COVID-19. However, recurring droughts and cyclones that hit Southern Africa during this period reduced the ability of substance farming to sustain rural women's household livelihoods. Arroyo et al. (2019) alluded that women's participation in CBT activities helped them to earn income and improve their social status within the community. Rural women's involvement in CBT as entrepreneurs helps them to earn profit. More so, the income is cascaded within the community system as women entrepreneurs mostly employ their friends and relatives and use their earnings to purchase local produce (Otieno, 2017). Evidence from the study supports Chamunogwa's (2021) assertion that the informal economy was the hardest hit, with women being the worst affected.

The respondents also explained that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to urban-rural migration. This is because rural areas are often viewed as safe spaces that offer comfort and decent living standards that help individuals facing economic shocks recover (Chirisa et al., 2021). The respondents explained that household chores increased as a result of the arrival of the urbanites. Consequently, craft entrepreneurs could not make their crafts (necklaces and bracelets) to meet local demand. Valdez (2016) concluded that rural women prioritise fulfilling domestic chores over economic activities. As such, the craft entrepreneurs viewed bead-making as a pastime activity they had to forgo in the face of increased family responsibilities. From this perspective, the researchers observed that the COVID-19 pandemic perpetuated existing inequalities among women within the same community and occupying same positions.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted local and international travel (Woyo, 2021). The respondents in the Sengwe village, particularly the food operators, revealed that travellers en route to the Sango border post and illegal entry routes into South Africa were the primary consumers of their products. The lockdown restrictions meant a decline in customers as the only bus that plied the Chiredzi Sengwe route stopped operations. Unlike women entrepreneurs running the same food operations ventures in the urban centres, rural women food operators were suddenly faced with no demand for their products. This reinforces UN Women's (2021) assertion that the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were more pronounced for rural women than their urban counterparts. The location of Sengwe women entrepreneurs further compounds their woes as they could not access the government's relief funds distributed among disadvantaged groups. The respondents cited the lack of network coverage as the principal reason they did not access the relief funds, as they were distributed using the one-wallet mobile money transfer.

Chamunogwa (2021) observed that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the supply chains of informal markets, and the informal tourism activities in the Sengwe community were no exception. The respondents noted that the closure of their informal ventures deprived them of their alternative source of income. They noted their

position was made worse by the fact that, unlike men, they do not have assets such as livestock and grain that they can sell to cushion themselves against reduced tourism earnings. The study findings support Mkhize and Cele's (2017) conclusions that power dynamics in rural contexts in Southern Africa denied most women the possession of primary sources of wealth such as land.

Although the respondents highlighted no incidences of gender-based violence, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, they cited increased unplanned pregnancies. One of the respondents explained that the rural health centres were used as isolation centres for COVID-19 patients. This disrupted their access to sexual and reproductive health services, negatively affecting their ability to perform economic activities even when the lockdown restrictions were subsequently eased.

The respondents also indicated that the GNP management would allow them to harvest thatching grass from the park and subcontract them when renovating their chalets prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. In this case, rural women participated by getting material incentives from tourism organisations. Subcontracting and employment opportunities were usually availed to the able-bodied women living in villages adjacent to the national park. The respondents indicated that they no longer enjoy the same material incentives such as subcontracting, harvesting grass, and training workshops that they enjoyed prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

7.5 Conclusions

The researchers concluded that women passively participated in CBT initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic due to reduced demand for their products, failure to access health care and increased familial tasks. The researchers recommended that the CRDC avails space for the sale of crafts on its website and other online sites. The researchers recommended that women entrepreneurs be availed of financial and technical support to facilitate their ability to sustain their operations in the face of depressed demand. Promotion of local demand, for example, exhibition in schools as the COVID-19 regulations are relaxed. However, it must be noted that the challenges bedevilling the Zimbabwean populace, such as high inflation rates, deindustrialisation and unemployment, make domestic tourism an unsustainable recovery option.

The researchers concluded that cultural tourism is undervalued, and little is done to tap into the opportunities in this niche market. Gandiwa et al. (2014) noted that the success of nature-based tourism is a result of the development of formally institutionalised structures for managing wildlife resources. Such formalisation has helped attract partners and implement sound marketing strategies even during the pandemic. Chiutsi and Saarinen (2017) also highlighted that weak policy frameworks had hindered the integration of informal tourism ventures into mainstream tourism activities. This has negatively impacted the formalisation of women-owned ventures, and ultimately unable to benefit from government programmes to cushion the tourism industry against the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this

case, institutionalisation strengthens regulative mechanisms and processes that help women to benefit from pro-poor policies that favour them (Musavengane et al., 2019). This calls for the need to ensure that women entrepreneurs are represented in council structures and other tourism bodies to facilitate airing their views and concerns.

The success and subsequent growth of women-managed micro-ventures that were hard hit by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic lie in the support frameworks provided by the government and donor agencies. The women's safety nets will not provide enough funding to ensure business viability even when international tourism is on an upward trajectory. Simultaneously, the researchers concluded that the recovery of rural women from the COVID-19 pandemic might be enhanced by their ability to harness electronic marketing of their resources. Hosting festivals such as the Great Limpopo Cultural Fair may also greatly assist rural women who rely on tourism demand.

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Chapter 8

Towards a Management Intervention Framework for Mahenye Ecotourism Biophysical Resources to Cope and Recover from COVID-19 Pandemic Shocks



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Abstract The sustainability of ecotourism in Zimbabwe is under strain due to shocks, including the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The contagion can potentially hinder the efforts the ecotourism sub-sector has been making towards the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 15 on promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halting land degradation and biodiversity loss. The study's main aim was to develop a management intervention framework for biophysical resources to cope and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic at the Mahenye ecotourism project. Qualitative research methods were adopted, incorporating data mining, key informant interviews, and researchers' prior knowledge about Mahenye. The COVID-19 contagion has led to perceived biodiversity losses and a heightened risk of wild animals contracting the virus from humans at Mahenye. Therefore, a resilience-based management intervention framework is needed to enable biophysical resources to recover from these negative impacts to ensure that

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the project remains attractive to ecotourists. The proposed management intervention framework highlighted the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic shocks on ecotourism biophysical resources. The framework also underscored possible management coping and recovery strategies for the impacts of COVID-19 contagion shocks and livelihood outcomes.

Keywords COVID-19 pandemic · Ecotourism · Recovery strategies · Sustainable management · Virtual ecotourism · Mahenye

8.1 Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been dispersing swiftly worldwide since the initial confirmed case in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019 (World Health Organisation, 2020). The COVID-19 contagion has had a global impact on the tourism sector matrix, and destinations have enforced travel restrictions for tourists leading to income and employment losses (Spenceley, 2020; United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020; Dube et al., 2021). The epidemic has left the world heading for an economic downturn and humanitarian crisis that could lead to decreased financing for African conservation initiatives and amplified threats of degradation of biophysical resources, which ecotourism relies on for its viability (Worldometer, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020). The impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on African ecotourism and ecological conservation have mainly been negative (Lindsey et al., 2020; Mudzengi et al., 2021).

Socio-ecologically sustainable ecotourism ventures lead to enhanced biophysical environmental conservation outcomes and progressive local community development (Newsome & Hassell, 2014; Musavengana, 2018; Siakwah, 2018). Therefore, the dearth of ecotourism visitation due to the COVID-19 pandemic presents a significant impediment. In addition, the lengthier the COVID-19-induced tourism restrictions are enforced, the more threat there is of biodiversity losses at numerous nature destinations (Maron, 2020). This poses a significant threat as ecotourist visitation relies on the ecological attractiveness of animal and vegetation diversity. The ecotourism sub-sector has been making efforts towards the realisation of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 by promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halting land degradation and biodiversity loss (United Nations, 2015; United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2018; Mudzengi, 2021). Given the inroads the ecotourism sub-sector has been making towards attaining the UN SDG 15, it is of interest to offer strategies that ensure the Mahenye ecotourism project biophysical resources cope and recover from the shocks springing from the COVID-19 contagion. This will enable the Mahenye project to remain sustainable and attract visitors. There is also a gap as no previous research has focused on the COVID-19 epidemic shocks on the biophysical resources at Mahenye. The research also contributes to the crisis management literature by proposing resilience-based strategies for community ecotourism

biophysical resources to survive the shocks emanating from a highly contagious zoonotic infection. Pennington-Gray (2018) called for the advancement of crisis management literature to enhance businesses' resilience to disasters. Thus, the specific objectives of the research were to (i) document the perceived shocks emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic on biophysical resources, (ii) suggest possible coping and recovery strategies for biophysical resources to the COVID-19 pandemic shocks, and (iii) develop a management intervention framework for biophysical resources to cope and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic at Mahenye ecotourism project.

8.2 Literature Review

The tourism industry is one of the most affected sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic. The global tourism sector has lost immense revenues due to the cancellation of bookings due to the contagion (Nicola et al., 2020; United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020; Yamin, 2020). In the USA, the economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic-induced closures of protected areas have been significant. For example, Arches National Park reported about 404,000 fewer visitors between March and May 2020 (Spenceley et al., 2021). Further, communities living around national parks were the most brutal hit, with the largest unemployment rate in Utah (Division of the Utah Department of Workforce Services, 2020). The management interventions adopted to enable parks in the USA to recover from the contagion included strategies to ensure safer visitation, such as timed entry, signage for social distancing, guidelines for responsible recreation and increased infrastructure cleaning (Spenceley et al., 2021). In Germany, protected areas and forests easily accessible from urban areas and areas within the parks known for their tranquility reported increased visitation. The factors for this were the population's desire for nature, the preference for quiet places compared to crowded ones and the wish to break free in nature during COVID-19 epidemic-induced restrictions. In order to cope and recover from the COVID-19 epidemic stresses, some parks in Germany have developed online ways of sharing nature. For example, the Black Forest National Park used an online format to substitute physical-guided tours (Spenceley et al., 2021).

In Brazil, protected areas were closed to visitation in March 2020 and only reopened between August and November with fewer visitors (Spenceley et al., 2021). This led to jobs and revenue losses. Reopened protected areas in Brazil applied strict COVID-19 pandemic health protocols, including face masks, social distancing and sanitising (Spenceley et al., 2021). The COVID-19 contagion also hit Costa Rica during its high season, and visits to protected areas ended abruptly in March 2020. By mid-May 2020, due to business sector pressure, 18 national parks reopened at 50% capacity with strict health protocols. As of June 2020, 27 protected areas had reopened, but visitation was down by nearly 80% because of restrictions on international travel. Despite continued domestic visitation, conservation agency revenues have been reduced since citizens pay only 20% of the national park entry

fees that international visitors pay (Spenceley et al., 2021). Tourism products and services diversification in Ecuador were used to mitigate the loss of revenues emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic (Spenceley et al., 2021). Further, the Indonesian government ensured that tourism in geoparks could cope and recover from the COVID-19 epidemic shocks by offering support in the form of reduced electricity and water costs and tax relief (Cahyadi & Newsome, 2021).

The COVID-19 contagion-induced travel restrictions also compromised the viability of African tourism destinations. In East Africa, the Maasai Mara Community Conservancies, Kenya, lost significant revenues, resulting in landowners being less willing to manage their land for conservation (Lindsey et al., 2020). These developments have made the community conservancies vulnerable to encroachment and poaching. The management interventions to these shocks have included promoting domestic tourism and aggressive marketing (Lindsey et al., 2020). Further, in North Africa, the COVID-19 epidemic shocks have led to a dramatic drop in visitation at a public-private-partnership ecotourism initiative in Wadi el Gemal National in Egypt. The stress response has involved implementing a Crisis Management Plan financed through the partners' resources and an international donor (Abu Ghosoun, 2020). A package of socio-economic development programmes is helping to mitigate the social impacts. These include the Village Savings and Loan Association micro-credit programme, five organic beekeeping projects and a local women's handicraft project (Elgebal, 2020). Support is also given to the village's Health Unit, as well as supplies of protective equipment, face masks, sanitisation, food supplements, awareness-raising material and training (Spenceley et al., 2021).

Furthermore, communal conservancies in Namibia and Botswana have suffered major financial losses due to the shocks induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Management interventions to mitigate these negative outcomes have included increasing domestic tourism marketing and offering performance payment schemes that reward local people for conserving wildlife (Lindsey et al., 2020). South African tourism businesses have also responded to the stresses emanating from the COVID-19 epidemic by encouraging domestic travel, enhancing best practices relating to safety and cleanliness and promoting the contactless economy (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). The COVID-19 contagion-induced revenue losses have also led to wildlife tourism-reliant communities in Binga and Mbire districts, Zimbabwe, failing to finance the activities of ward-level anti-poaching units. This has subsequently increased poaching incidences (Zamasiya et al., 2020). The community ecotourism projects in the two districts have intervened by seeking the support of private safari operators to fund the upkeep of anti-poaching units. The other intervention has been to conduct awareness campaigns to educate local communities on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to contain the virus (Zamasiya et al., 2020).

8.3 Materials and Methods

8.3.1 Study Area

Mahenye is a rural and communal ward found in the southeast Lowveld region of Zimbabwe (Fig. 8.1). Located at the extreme southern end of Chipinge District, Manicaland Province, near the border with Mozambique, Mahenye covers about 210 km² (Murphree, 2001). The ward lies between the Save River in the west and the Rupembi River in the east. The northern boundary of Mahenye is Mutandahwe ward. To the south of the study area across the Save River is the northern boundary of Gonarezhou National Park (Murphree, 2001). Mahenye is inhabited by the Shangaan people, who subscribe to the collective nomenclature Tsonga. The traditional socio-political life of the Shangaan clusters around chiefs and headmen (Mombeshora & Le Bel, 2009). Mahenye is within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTCA). The Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs)

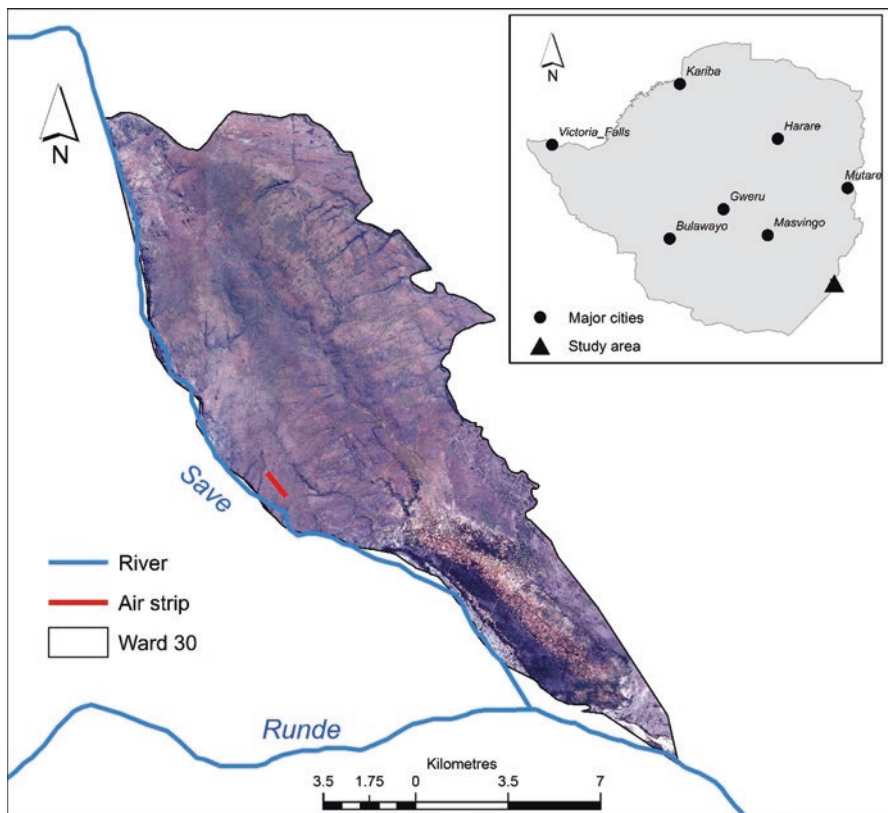


Fig. 8.1 Map of Mahenye ward in the southeast Lowveld of Zimbabwe. (Source: Authors)

initiatives strive to stimulate and expedite regional cooperation, peace, tourism, bio-physical environmental conservation and socio-economic development in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Ferreira, 2004).

The Mahenye community owns the ecotourism project, and its day-to-day running is under the Jamanda Community Conservancy and Trust. Office bearers of the Jamanda Community Conservancy and Trust are voted by the community (Wildlife in Livelihood Development Programme, 2015). The Mahenye ecotourism project started in 1982 as a community-driven programme in partnership with the then Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management, now Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA), making it the birthplace of Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa. This arrangement was legally endorsed when the Zimbabwean government granted Appropriate Authority over wildlife resources to Chipinge Rural District Council (RDC) in 1991 (Murphree, 2001; Mudzengi et al., 2020b).

The study ward experiences a tropical savanna climate that alternates dry, cool winters and wet hot summers. The average monthly maximum temperatures are 25.9 °C in July and 36 °C in January. The average monthly minimum temperatures vary between 9 °C in June and 24 °C in January (Gandiwa et al., 2011). The average rainfall is low, ranging between 400 and 600 mm per annum (Gandiwa et al., 2011), and the area is prone to droughts and cyclones, which are becoming more frequent with climate change.

Mahenye is mainly characterised by mixed mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*) and *Combretum* woodland vegetation. However, a thick riverine forest comprising trees such as the Fever Tree (*Acacia xanthophylls*) and Ilala Palm (*Hyphenea petersiana*) is found on the banks of the Save and Runde rivers supporting a wide range of bird species. Some of the bird species are rare in Zimbabwe, such as the southern banded snake eagle (*Circaetus fasciolatus*), Madagascar squacco heron (*Ardeola idae*), green coucal (*Ceuthmochares aureus*) and barred cuckoo (*Cercococcyx montanus*) (Murphree, 2001). A wide variety of animal species are also found in the ward comprising the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), lion (*Panthera leo*), buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), zebra (*Equus quagga*), hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) and kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) (Gandiwa, 2011).

The focal ecotourism activities at Mahenye are consumptive, including trophy hunting and fishing and non-consumptive, comprising game drives, a photographic safari, birdwatching and identification, canoeing, village tours, lodges and scenic views, for instance, at Chivilila Falls along the Save River (Gohori, 2020). The other key economic activities in the study ward are crop cultivation and livestock farming. The main crops grown are sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) and maize (*Zea mays*). The livestock reared encompass cattle (*Bos taurus*), goats (*Capra hircus*), donkeys (*Equus asinus*) and poultry (Gandiwa et al., 2013). There is also community gardening, marketing artefacts and curios to visitors and vending of a traditional wine brewed from Ilala palms (*Hyphenea petersiana*) known as *njamani*. Some residents are also involved in lowly paying jobs at the Chilo Lodge, accommodating ecotourism visitors. Some local inhabitants have also been trained as natural resource

monitors and game rangers. Moreover, residents also carry out traditional dances to visitors at cultural festivals (Gohori, 2020).

The ecotourism sub-sector in the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe is one of the worst affected businesses by the COVID-19 epidemic (Zamasiya et al., 2020). The COVID-19 contagion shocks are tallying with the strains of ecotourism over the years (Gandiwa et al., 2013; Mudzengi et al., 2020a). The pandemic has also adversely affected the sustainability of the Mahenye ecotourism project in southeast Zimbabwe (Mudzengi et al., 2020a). The Mahenye ecotourism project has faced substantial stresses but has been resilient to survive the shocks such as marginalisation of youths and women, hyperinflation, climate change, donor fatigue, reduced international visitation and global hunting restrictions (Gandiwa et al., 2013; Mudzengi et al., 2020a).

8.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The research was approached from a qualitative perspective based on data mining, key informant interviews and researchers' prior knowledge about Mahenye, having carried out the research in the area from 2004 to 2021. Given that the researchers had some prior knowledge about the Mahenye ecotourism project, bias was avoided by not bringing preconceived notions into the current research. The inquiry also made use of the case-study approach. A case study is a systematic and in-depth exploration of a particular instance in its context to generate information (Yin, 1994; Bryman, 2008; Rule & John, 2011; Creswell, 2013). A case-study approach allows for examining a particular instance in greater depth rather than looking at multiple instances superficially (Rule & John, 2011). Therefore, the case-study approach was used for this research as it is intensive rather than extensive. The case study approach also thoroughly examined the perceived shocks emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic on biophysical resources at Mahenye. However, Mahenye ecotourism project biophysical resources' experiences with the COVID-19 epidemic were related to the situation in other African tourism destinations.

Purposive sampling was employed to choose the key informants to participate in the scheduled interviews. Purposive sampling is distinctly discretionary. Scientists arbitrarily select individuals or units to be encompassed in the sample built on the judgement that the selected cases will provide the vital answers to the questions to satisfy the research objectives or the possession of particular traits being sought or their know-how (Saunders et al., 2009; Cooper & Schindler, 2011; Cohen et al., 2018). The key informants chosen in the research had extensive involvement with the Mahenye ecotourism project, environmental management and tourism. The key informant interviews were conducted between November 2021 and February 2022. In conducting the interviews, digital platforms such as cell phones and e-mail were employed. The interviews were carried out virtually due to human movement restrictions and social distancing requirements being used as COVID-19 health containment measures. The interviewees were pre-informed of the academic purposes

of the research and gave their informed consent to take part. A prepared interview schedule was used during the interviews. However, flexibility was adopted to allow respondents to raise additional issues and for the interviewer to probe aspects further. This allowed for gathering additional information, thereby enriching the interviewee's response. However, flexibility was not possible for the interviews conducted through e-mail, where the conversations were not held in real time. For these follow-ups, the respondents were made to clarify responses that were not clear to the researchers. The interviewees were asked questions on the perceived shocks emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic on biophysical resources at the Mahenye ecotourism project. The interviews also sought data on possible coping and recovery strategies for biophysical resources to the COVID-19 pandemic shocks at Mahenye.

Key informant interviews included six people. One interview was carried out with a senior environmental management official at the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) headquarters in Harare, hereafter referred to as Key Informant 1. Another key informant interview was conducted with a senior officer at the ZPWMA, referred to as Key Informant 2. Key informant interviews were also carried out with a marketing professional at the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) in Harare, hereafter referred to as Key Informant 3, and a Chipinge RDC CAMPFIRE official referred to as Key Informant 4. Further, interviews were conducted with two key informants with extensive involvement in the Mahenye community ecotourism project, hereafter referred to as Key Informant 5 and Key Informant 6. These two key informants are inhabitants of Mahenye Ward and have vast experience working for the community ecotourism project. Key informant interviews were sought to corroborate data from academic articles and authors' field experiences.

A mixture of content and thematic analysis was used to arrange the large volumes of collected data into focused and meaningful information to address the study objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Woodhouse, 2006; Gupta & Levenburg, 2010). Content and thematic analysis were valuable for detecting patterns and experience in qualitative data provided through key informants' answers. Qualitative data from structured interviews and non-participant observations were analysed and categorised into different conceptual or thematic categories as per the study objectives. The responses from the interview participants were read through to gain a general perspective of the data concerning the study objectives. Then, the segments of the obtained data were coded for more detailed analysis. Similar codes were grouped to determine recurrent patterns representing emergent themes. Exemplary quotations were then extracted for clarifying the identified themes.

The collected literature and data relating to the shocks emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic on biophysical resources and possible coping and recovery strategies to the stresses at tourism projects were analysed using the qualitative interpretative approach. This was done by noting and synthesising the shocks emanating from the COVID-19 contagion on biophysical resources and mitigation strategies to the stresses at tourism projects. Data analysis also included identifying and documenting the perceived shocks induced by the COVID-19 epidemic on ecotourism biophysical resources at Mahenye. Mahenye ecotourism biophysical resources

coping and recovery strategies for COVID-19 contagion stresses were determined from the authors' field experiences, strategies stated in the academic articles and key informant interviews. The use of peer-reviewed journal articles and the triangulation of several data sources reinforced the reliability of our results. The information obtained from data analysis and authors' field experiences was then used to develop a management intervention framework for enabling ecotourism biophysical resources to cope and recover from COVID-19 contagion shocks. The management intervention framework was adapted from the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) (Scoones, 1998; Morse & McNamara, 2013). The SLA is a problem-solving tool that offers the basis for understanding and improving the sustainability of livelihoods facing biophysical, socio-economic and health shocks.

8.4 Results and Discussion

8.4.1 *Perceived Shocks Emanating from the COVID-19 Pandemic on Biophysical Resources*

This study found that the shocks induced by the COVID-19 contagion have perceptibly led to biodiversity losses and heightened the risk of wild animals contracting the virus from human beings at Mahenye ecotourism. These shocks have the potential effect of reducing photographic and hunting ecotourism visitation at Mahenye. Reduced ecotourism visitation could then lead to less conservation funding as ecotourism entrance fees decline. Less revenue for the ecotourism venture could also lead to reduced capacity to maintain ecotourism infrastructure and carry environmental education programmes. Thus, biophysical environmental degradation presents a major threat to ecotourism projects relying on the ecological attractiveness of animal and vegetation diversity to attract guests.

8.4.1.1 Biodiversity Losses

All six key informants perceived that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to biodiversity losses at Mahenye. The biodiversity losses were perceptibly due to increased illegal harvesting of faunal and floral resources. The loss of biodiversity reduces visitations at Mahenye as ecotourism relies on the ecological attractiveness of animal and vegetation diversity. The increased harvesting of vegetation resources also can lead to soil erosion and the siltation of the Save and Runde rivers. The siltation of these rivers could negatively affect canoeing and fishing, reducing ecotourists' enjoyment and satisfaction at Mahenye. Key Informant 5 noted the following:

We have seen the illegal harvesting of wild animals and plants increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. The anti-poaching activities of community game rangers have been hindered by a lack of personal protective gear, distress of catching COVID-19 and low drive.

The perceived upsurge in illegal harvesting of faunal and floral resources at Mahenye was due to reduced ecosystem monitoring by the anti-poaching personnel and ecotourists who make available an extra eye (Higginbottom et al., 2001). Escalations in the illegal harvesting of biophysical resources have presented more fodder for the global anti-consumptive safari lobby against hunting ecotourism (Machena et al., 2017). Lindsey et al. (2020) also affirm that due to the crises springing from the COVID-19 epidemic in Africa, local food insecurity and poverty have worsened as government authorities devote more funds to health and less to agriculture in communities depending more on natural resources. This poses an amplified risk to biodiversity as people engage more in illegal hunting for bush meat and tree felling for wood fuel to earn income. Cases of human-wildlife conflicts also upsurge as people go out into the backwoods in pursuit of biophysical environmental resources.

Incidences of illegal harvesting of fauna and flora at Mahenye were increasing when anti-poaching programmes were made vulnerable by the dearth of ecotourism and conservation funding brought about by the COVID-19 contagion (African Conservation Foundation, 2020). At the same time, rotating anti-poaching staff and supplying them with vital consumables have been interrupted to some extent (Lindsey et al., 2020). Incidences of illegal harvesting of fauna and flora were also surging in the COVID-19 era as wildlife offenders purportedly come back to their home areas from the diaspora, urban settlements and prisons. A significant number of Zimbabweans were returning home from foreign lands, comprising mostly but not limited to South Africa, Botswana and Britain, in the wake of the COVID-19 contagion. Some Zimbabweans were also being released from congested prisons as a measure to limit the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic. This notion is supported by Lindsey et al. (2020), who state that Malawi is freeing some detainees to decongest jails as a COVID-19 control measure leading to the fear that some of those freed may comprise wildlife offenders. A rise in poaching incidences is also linked to increased human-wildlife conflicts in communal areas flanking state-protected areas across Zimbabwe as park officials suspend mitigation and engagement as well as fencing schemes (Lindsey et al., 2020). National Park authorities have had to temporarily suspend these projects due to budgetary limitations and the need to reduce COVID-19 transmissions. Key Informant 2 had the following to note:

Human-wildlife conflict resolution and mitigation, community engagement and infrastructure development plans had to be suspended by the ZPWMA due to financing constraints as visitor entrance payments fall. The deferment was also due to the need to contain COVID-19 transmissions.

8.4.1.2 Heightened Risk of Wild Animals Contracting COVID-19 from Humans

Four of the key informants perceived the risk of ecotourists, ecotourism employees and Mahenye villagers spreading COVID-19 to wild animals. Some wild animals were predisposed to diseases that affect humans. Key Informant 1 noted that:

COVID-19 has the potential to spread from humans to wild animals and vice versa. If this were to happen at Mahenye, the project's revenue-producing potential for the photographic and hunting safari could be jeopardised.

Newsome (2020) avers that great apes are predisposed to human ailments, and ecotourists are likely transmitting COVID-19 to gorillas. Further, Weber et al. (2020) state that, under typical ecotouristic settings, gorillas interact closely with guests even with stringent wildlife-human interface protocols being implemented. This has resulted in gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*) ecotourism lineups being provisionally closed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda (Newsome, 2020; Spenceley, 2020). In addition, the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Sierra Leone temporarily suspended its facilities to ecotourists partially due to the fear of spreading COVID-19 to the primates (Lindsey et al., 2020).

The heightened risk of wild animals contracting COVID-19 from humans has the potential to increase pleas for consumptive safari and wildlife trade bans. This amplified appeal for consumptive safari and wild animal trade prohibitions has adversely affected earnings from trophy hunting at Mahenye. This is so as hunting safari is the largest revenue stream for the project. Income from hunting tourism at Mahenye was under strain even before the COVID-19 contagion outbreak owing to some ivory trading prohibitions under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Gandiwa et al., 2014; Mudzengi et al., 2020a). The hunting safari industry was also under stress due to unilateral obstructive guidelines by the USA and some European countries restricting hunters' importation of some trophy specimens (Lindsey et al., 2016).

CAMPFIRE revenue, therefore, plummeted to US\$2.1 million in 2014 and then to US\$1.2 million in 2015 from US\$2.3 million in 2013 due to these hunting and wildlife trade restrictions (Machena et al., 2017). The global media framing and portrayal of consumptive ecotourism safari were also adversely affected by the illegal killing in north-western Zimbabwe of 'Cecil', a radio-collared lion, by a trophy-hunting client from the USA in 2015 (Gross, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2016). This triggered motions for the downright prohibition of trophy safari all over the African continent (Di Minin et al., 2016).

Furthermore, consumptive safari and animal product trade prohibitions lead to abridged access to bush meat for the local community (Mudzengi et al., 2021). This was also noted by Key Informant 4. This results in a reduced amount of meat protein for the locals. The ingestion of reduced meat protein leads to adverse medical effects for the local inhabitants. The reduced availability of bush meat also means fewer benefits from preserving biophysical resources, leading to the local community's abridged willingness to back the Mahenye project's conservation initiatives. Less support for the project would likely result in increased incidences of illegal harvesting of biophysical resources leading to environmental degradation. The environmental degradation would likely, in turn, lead to reduced ecotourist visitation.

8.4.2 *Coping and Recovery Strategies for Biophysical Resources*

The present research findings point to the need for promoting and offering virtual ecotourism experiences at the Mahenye project. Offering virtual ecotourism experiences could enable the project to continue receiving income from its biophysical resources. This could enable the local community to continue valuing the biophysical resources as they would benefit from them. Gaining biophysical resources could enable the local community to protect wildlife, thereby reducing the illegal harvesting of fauna and flora. The income obtained from virtual ecotourism experiences could also be used to fund conservation initiatives such as game scouting, environmental education and fire management, thereby reducing biodiversity loss.

Further, the income from virtual ecotourism could support community income-generating projects such as gardening, thereby ensuring that local people do not increasingly rely on poaching for revenue. Further, Rogerson and Rogerson (2021) endorsed the importance of the contactless economy in the ecotourism industry in light of the COVID-19 epidemic. Government travel restrictions such as COVID-19 contagion containment measures have positively influenced the need for touchless travel since the epidemic's commencement (Serra & Leong, 2020). The UK witnessed a trebling in searches for virtual reality tours between February and March 2020, while the USA observed a nearly quadruple upsurge in the same period (Buglar, 2020). Thus, the relevance and usefulness of virtual reality tourism have augmented due to the COVID-19 epidemic (Chinazzi et al., 2020; Rogers, 2020; Talwar et al., 2022). Further, Key Informant 3 was of the view that:

CBNRM touristic sites such as Mahenye had to sell their products aggressively by offering virtual ecotourism experiences. This would ensure that revenues for conserving biophysical resources keep flowing to the destinations.

The study findings also showed the need to link the marketing of the Mahenye ecotourism project with other non-wildlife attractions in Zimbabwe. Non-wildlife attractions denote those touristic fascinations beside wildlife encompassing cultural diversity, archaeological and cultural sites, hotels and lodges, dams and rivers, pools, mountains, hills, caves and monuments (Kuguyo & Gandiwa, 2022). Non-wildlife attractions at Mahenye include the Chilo Lodge, Chivilila Falls, Shangaan cultural festivals, dances and artefacts. Zimbabwe is also endowed with various non-wildlife attractions comprising Victoria Falls, Great Zimbabwe Monuments, Mana Pools, Matobo Hills, Nyanga Mountains, Chilojo Cliffs and Chinhoyi Caves. Linking the marketing of wildlife ecotourism resources with non-wildlife fascinations could positively impact the broad tourism economy in Zimbabwe (Kuguyo & Gandiwa, 2022). Key Informant 3 also noted the offering of tour packages comprising both wildlife and non-wildlife touristic sites as an innovative marketing strategy towards tourism recovery following the stresses stemming from the COVID-19 contagion. However, some scholars have called for the need to limit tourism progression and highlighted the opportunities emerging from the COVID-19 contagion for

escaping the unsustainable global tourism growth-oriented trajectory (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Cahyadi & Newsome, 2021).

Further, the study findings showed the need to capacitate the Mahenye community by providing remote communication technology. This could assist the residents in conveying messages to Jamanda Community Conservancy and Trust rangers once they sight wildlife poachers. This can then help reduce incidences of illegal harvesting of wild animals and vegetation. This is significant at a period when people's mobility has been constrained owing to the COVID-19 epidemic containment measures. Global conservation partners can also support the local communities by sharing know-how virtually and financing training curricula on the management of ecotourism biophysical resources during the COVID-19 era (Lindsey et al., 2020). Further, Key Informant 4 noted that:

There is a need for anti-poaching staff to be empowered to carry out their duties during the COVID-19 period effectively. This could be done by providing more effective anti-poaching gear and communication equipment.

Further, the study showed that in light of a decline in conservation funding from tourism and the government due to the COVID-19 pandemic shocks, ecotourism projects such as Mahenye need to use other mechanisms to generate funds. Unlocking additional conservation funding mechanisms could result in improved conservation outcomes at the Mahenye ecotourism project. The other mechanisms to generate conservation funding can include payments for ecosystem and cultural services (Mudzengi et al., 2021). Underpayments for ecosystem services at the Mahenye ecotourism project could benefit from maintaining vegetation belts under carbon trading mechanisms. Debt-for-nature swaps can also unlock additional conservation funding. Good et al. (2017) and Lindsey et al. (2020) also noted these additional conservation funding mechanisms. Further, the Mahenye ecotourism project could benefit from alternative funding channels, for instance, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) climate change projects if the local community were empowered by law to manage their natural resources (Tobin, 2014) effectively. Key Informant 1 had the following to note:

Community ecotourism projects like that at Mahenye can generate extra funding via biodiversity credits and international debt forgiveness schemes with bilateral and multilateral aid agencies to protect natural resources. Other funding avenues are putting in place mechanisms ensuring that branding, advertising, television and film industries pay for using lions, elephants, buffaloes and trees such as the baobab in their promotions and scripts.

The present study also indicated the need for ecotourism projects such as Mahenye to put strict wildlife-human interaction regulations in place to ensure that COVID-19 and other zoonotic diseases do not spread from humans to wild animals and vice versa. This could be done by developing an international consumptive safari code of principles to eliminate risky, illegitimate and unsustainable wildlife trading practices that jeopardise the health and ecological conservation (Mudzengi et al., 2021). Developing an international consumptive safari code of principles could also help to stem amplified appeals for animal product trade bans (Machena et al., 2017). In tackling the disease-transmission menace of the consumptive safari business,

Mahenye ecotourism interested parties could work out partnerships with academic and medical institutions to inquire into the inhibition of zoonoses through promoting sustainable environmental management (Mudzengi et al., 2021). Key Informant 2 also had the following to note:

With an up-surging cry for animal product trade bans due to the COVID-19 plague, the consumptive tourism sub-sector has to work out a code of ethics acceptable to the concerned global community.

Further, there is the necessity for ecotouristic projects such as Mahenye in collaboration with other concerned players to redesign the consumptive safari narrative in order to reveal its positive influence towards biophysical resources conservation and often disadvantaged rural community empowerment (Muposhi et al., 2016a, 2017). In reshaping the hunting industry storyline, ecotouristic sites could work with other actors encompassing the CAMPFIRE Association, EMA, ZPWMA, ZTA, Zimbabwe Professional Hunters and Guide Association (ZPHGA), Safari Operators Association of Zimbabwe (SOAZ) and Safari Club International (SCI). It is also essential for the hunting safari stakeholders to implement adaptive trophy harvesting management approaches (Muposhi et al., 2016a, b, 2017).

8.4.3 Management Intervention Framework Towards the Sustainable Recovery of Ecotourism Biophysical Resources Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

The strains from the COVID-19 contagion have perceivably led to biodiversity losses and a heightened risk of wild animals contracting the virus from human beings at the Mahenye ecotourism project. Therefore, it is imperative to formulate management intervention frameworks that ensure ecotourism biophysical resources cope and recover from the COVID-19 epidemic. This is vital if ecotourism is to continue making efforts in the direction of the realisation of the UN SDG 15. The proposed management intervention framework (Table 8.1) illustrates the COVID-19 stresses emanating from the COVID-19 contagion on biophysical resources and their impacts on ecotourism, possible managing coping and recovery approaches and livelihood outcomes. An earlier outline informs the management intervention framework by Mudzengi et al. (2020a) on ensuring ecotourism robustness to stresses induced by an altering environment.

8.5 Conclusions

The stresses from the COVID-19 contagion have been perceived to lead to biodiversity losses and a heightened risk of wild animals contracting the virus from humans at Mahenye ecotourism. This potentially reduces photographic and hunting

Table 8.1 Proposed management intervention framework for enabling ecotourism biophysical resources to cope and recover from COVID-19 pandemic shocks

COVID-19 Shock on ecotourism biophysical resources	Impact on ecotourism	Management coping and recovery strategies	Livelihood outcomes
Biodiversity losses	Reduced ecotourist visitation Less income from ecotourism Reduced conservation funding as ecotourism entrance fees decline Reduced capacity to maintain ecotourism infrastructure Abridged revenue for ancillary capacity building in CBNRM	<i>Short term</i> Offering virtual reality ecotourism experiences Capacitating local communities with remote communication technology in relaying messages to anti-poaching staff once they sight poachers Offering training curricula on the management of ecotourism biophysical resources in the COVID-19 pandemic era <i>Long term</i> Linking marketing of projects to other non-wildlife attractions Unlocking additional conservation funding mechanisms	Improved conservation outcomes Continued attractiveness of ecotourism projects Reduced vulnerability to shock
Heightened risk of wild animals contracting COVID-19 from humans	Suspension of photographic and hunting safaris Increase in blanket opposition to trophy hunting and wildlife trade Less income from ecotourism and the associated impacts, as noted above	<i>Short term</i> Putting in place strict wildlife-human interaction regulations to promote health and safety <i>Long term</i> Forging partnerships with academic and medical institutions to carry out research on the inhibition of zoonoses Developing an internationally acceptable hunting code of ethics	Enhanced sustainable usage of biophysical resources base Continued international desirability of trophy hunting Reduced vulnerability to shock

Source: Authors

ecotourism visitation at Mahenye, leading to lower revenues for the project. The possible coping and recovery approaches for ecotourism biophysical resources to the COVID-19 epidemic strains at Mahenye include offering virtual ecotourism experiences, capacitating local communities through remote communication technology in combating poaching, linking marketing of the venture to other non-wildlife attractions and unlocking additional conservation funding mechanisms. Other possible coping and recovery approach for biophysical resources in light of

the COVID-19 contagion at Mahenye could be putting in place strict wildlife-human interaction regulations to promote health and safety, working out collaborations with academic and medical institutions to carry scientific inquiry on the inhibition of zoonoses and developing a globally acceptable consumptive safari code of principles. Thus, there is a need for ecotourism variables ranging from income streams, marketing and linkages to be restructured if Mahenye biophysical resources are to continue being attractive in the face of an altering operational environment springing from the COVID-19 epidemic and possible future infectious pandemics. There is, therefore, a need for innovative resilience-based crisis management frameworks for ecotourism biophysical resources to enhance destinations' survival in the light of shocks emanating from highly contagious pandemics.

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Chapter 9

Locking in Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic for Tourism Destinations: A Case Study of Wildlife Destinations



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Abstract The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is considered a watershed event in global consciousness about human environmental relations, notably regarding wildlife. This chapter explores the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on wildlife tourism, an important niche in the industry. It employs qualitative methods based on the literature review to address how key industry players may innovate out of the prevailing pandemic and chart a more sustainable and resilient sector, given projections of increasing intensity and frequency of extreme events. Findings point to developing niche tourism tailored to address local needs, integrating sanitation and hygiene dimensions with environmental considerations, expanding local tourism, building operational capacities and strategic public-private partnerships. Lasting solutions will depend on individual country contexts and the proactive engagement of local communities. Moreover, the resumption of global tourism can present two plausible end-spectrum scenarios post-COVID 19. The negative end of the spectrum is when industry players continue with business as usual, with little regard for their surrounding environment and being party to ecosystem degradation. On the contrary, the positive end is where industry players become more proactive about nature conservation which underpins conservation. This is argued to hold promise augmented funding for tourism management and conservation to safeguard ecological systems crucial for sustainable tourism and economic development. The ultimate scenario is a function of political will, ample funding, and the proactive role of public-private partnerships (PPP) that is inclusive of local communities, thus leaving no one behind in the process.

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Keywords Wildlife tourism · Covid-19 · Sustainability · Conservation · Environment · SDGs

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 *Tourism and the Global Sustainable Development Agenda*

Tourism represents one of the core sectors of the global economy. For example, in 2019, the tourism sector accounted for 7% of worldwide commerce (UNWTO, 2021). It is also considered the third-largest sector in exports, only preceded by fuels and chemicals. Moreover, some countries account for more than 20% of their gross domestic product GDP. In other places, the tourism sector sustains one in ten jobs and a source of livelihood for several more millions in economies of both the southern and northern hemispheres. In many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), tourism sometimes represents close to 80% of overall exports and accounts for vital sections of the national economies in both developed and developing countries. Across Africa, the tourism industry accounted for 10% of all export earnings in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021). Due to the critical role played by the tourism sector across the globe, it is often considered a vehicle for facilitating sustainable development (Mearns, 2016). This was underscored by the declaration of the year 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/193 (UN, 2020).

Sustainable tourism is regarded as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UN, 2020). In addition, tourism is considered one of the instruments to significantly promote the three dimensions of sustainable development (UN, 2020). This is due to its connections with other sectors and its capacity to produce decent jobs and trading opportunities (Dube et al., 2018). At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, a key resolution was the need to promote sustainable tourism development. This includes the non-consumptive and ecotourism aspects of the tourism industry as envisioned in Chapter IV, paragraph 43 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (UN, 2020).

9.1.2 *The Nexus of Tourism and the COVID-19 Pandemic*

The global community has been confronted with unprecedented health and socio-economic emergency coupled with cross-cutting issues due to climate change (Donkor et al., 2019), which has been further exacerbated since the outbreak of the

coronavirus pandemic. Key sectors of the global economy, such as travel and tourism, have borne the brunt of the pandemic, characterised by the initial grounding of aeroplanes, closure of hotels, and travel restrictions rolled out in almost all parts of the world (UNWTO, 2022). Thus, it is argued that tourism is amongst the sectors worst impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, affecting economies, livelihoods, and service deliveries and eroding progress and opportunities worldwide. According to the United Nations' World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2021, the volume of export earnings from tourism fell by \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion. This situation had far-reaching consequences, such as reducing global GDP by 1.5% to 2.8% (UNWTO, 2021). Studies indicate that across the tourism value chain, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic was felt. More than 100 million direct tourism jobs were threatened, and industries related to tourism, including the labour-demanding lodging and food services sectors, offering jobs for more than 144 million individuals globally were affected (Donkor & Mearns, 2020b). In this regard, small-scale enterprises, which support 80% of worldwide tourism, have been especially vulnerable. This also has ripple effects on women (Sarrasanti et al., 2020), who constitute 54% of the tourism sector, young people, and workers in the informal economy, considered among the most at-risk sectors. The UNWTO, therefore, stresses "the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole" (UN, 2020).

Wildlife destination tourism is one of the core components of the tourism value chain (Capocchi et al., 2019). It comprises sectors including ecotourism, safari tours and mountain tourism, among other things (UNWTO & CHIMELONG, 2021). The arranged observation of wildlife is often done in protected areas. In many areas across Africa, nature, national parks and wildlife are regarded as important tourist attractions for tourist visits (Fletcher, 2014). Moreover, estimates indicate that 7% of world tourism is related with wildlife tourism, a component that is seeing annual growth of circa 3%.

Furthermore, it has been observed that 14 countries in Africa are producing about US\$ 142 million from charging entrance fees for visiting wildlife destinations. It is noteworthy that such positive reviews of wildlife tourism are not isolated to Africa but have been observed in other areas, too (Fletcher et al., 2020). For example, the World Wildlife Fund posits that 93% of the total global natural heritage sites sustain leisure and tourism, whilst 91% of them supply jobs. In Belize, for example, over 50% of the populace has been recorded as dependent on earnings related to reef-associated tourism and fisheries (UNWTO & CHIMELONG, 2021). In summary, wildlife signifies biodiversity, vital for our health and the well-being of the entire Earth and its vital ecosystems. Given the critical role of wildlife destinations in sustaining households, livelihoods, communities and nature conservation (Challender et al., 2020), it is important to ensure effective management through evidence-based approaches.

Moreover, sustainability is knowledge-intensive, requiring constant reflection and reiteration of policies. The coronavirus pandemic is one of contemporary society's greatest challenges with consequences on the tourism sector (Donkor & Mearns, 2020a). Assessing its impacts will help to enhance policies that help to build back better. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the wildlife tourism industry with a focus on South Africa. It contributes to the debate on how the tourism industry (in general) and wildlife tourism (in particular) can serve as vehicles for realising sustainable development goals and building back better in the post-COVID era. This has become urgent as the world has entered the final decade of action to achieve sustainable development goals.

9.2 Methodology

9.2.1 Research Design

This study is undertaken using the *case study* approach. Literature and theoretical studies are important qualitative methods for understanding related thematic areas under consideration (Creswell, 2013).

9.2.2 Case Study

The case study technique of qualitative research was utilised in this study. Case studies are employed as empirical assessments of contemporary phenomena within real-life settings; when the difference between phenomenon and context is vague; and in which diverse sources of proof are used. Therefore, the case study technique was employed to enable deep insights into the nexus of the coronavirus pandemic and wildlife tourism destinations under consideration and affords the making of valid generalisations.

9.2.3 Methodological Approach

Furthermore, a literature review affords a critical analysis of the present state of scholarship on a topic of interest within a specific time frame. Some critical documents were perused to understand the status quo on the various thematic areas of this study from websites such as Science Direct, Google Scholar and Web of Science, coupled with reviewed popular science media articles. Thus, scientific

articles and journals were studied as the main information sources in the literature review process, mostly during the period of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. 2020 to date). The main inclusion criteria were that such documents must be related to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or published from 2020 when the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a global pandemic. Furthermore, they must address issues related to South Africa. Systematic searches on scientific databases such as Science Direct were employed to garner data on various themes. The searches were organised around particular keywords such as: “Covid-19,” “Tourism,” and “Sustainable development,” which were paired with *Boolean operators* such as *AND* as well as *OR*. Examples of such searches include *COVID-19 and wildlife tourism*, *Tourism and sustainable development*, and *Conservation and tourism*, amongst others. A total of 65 articles were initially scanned, out of which 22 were preselected dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and wildlife tourism. Finally, five articles that dealt with the study theme focused on South Africa (Table 9.1) were selected. These were supported by published documents from the World Trade Organization, the United Nations and other core stakeholders in the tourism industry.

9.2.4 Data Interpretation

Through a thematic content analysis, the core themes stemming from the literature were pieced into similar paragraphs by *meaning condensation*. Meaning condensation denotes a summarisation of repetitive themes into terse formulations (Creswell, 2013). The meaning condensation technique to analysis involves five core steps: the whole of a selected text is first assessed to enable a comprehensive overview; the researcher recognises the meaning units; the key thematic areas as per the meaning unit are paraphrased succinctly; the meaning units are then cross-evaluated; ultimately, the critical themes of the overall text are merged to compose a descriptive statement (Torraco, 2016). This is highlighted further in Table 9.1.

9.3 Discussions

One of the core themes in the sustainable development goals (SDGs) is the need for knowledge co-creation to inform policy and forging partnerships to drive sustainability. One area where this has become urgent is the area of tourism. This study sought to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on wildlife destinations. This is to help inform policies towards building back better in the post-COVID era, as detailed in the forgoing discussions.

Table 9.1 Core themes and arguments on the nexus of COVID-19 and wildlife destinations in South Africa

Title of article	Authors	Main findings
1. Assessing the economic impact of COVID-19 on the private wildlife industry of South Africa	van der Merwe et al. (2021)	<i>The COVID-19 pandemic has come with severe financial impacts on the private wildlife industry, costing circa R6.694 billion (ZAR). Exploring new approaches to securing funding and support from the government and other non-profit organisations is necessary. This is more so as the private-owned reserves sector is critical to the sustenance of the south African economy and employment and its employment prospects.</i>
2. Without white people, the animals will go!: COVID-19 and the struggle for the future of south African conservation	Burnett (2022)	This article addresses pervasive hegemonic neoliberal conservation models in South Africa in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. It throws the spot light on anti-racist equality, contesting any special human-animal relations as uniquely European, whilst articulating a future where land justice is at its core.
3. COVID-19 impacts on tourism: Southern Africa's experiences	Musavengane and Llewellyn (2021)	The article considers tourism sectors that could bear the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic and suggest measures to facilitate recovery in light of the linkages between the pandemic and tourism. This includes market dynamics, health imperatives, social considerations, environmental implications and political will.
4. The collapse of tourism and its impact on wildlife tourism destinations	Newsome (2021)	The author believes that the coronavirus pandemic can positively and negatively impact wildlife tourism destinations. Nevertheless, it has become urgent to foreground consciousness about nature conservation as a key aspect of tourism to promote sustainability.
5. Conserving Africa's wildlife and wildlands through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond	Lindsey et al. (2020)	The coronavirus pandemic poses severe risks to conservation measures in African countries such as South Africa, characterised by limited conservation funds, reduced management capacity, and disruption of community-based natural resource management projects. Decisive measures coupled with adaptive management will help alleviate the negative impacts whilst conserving humans and wildlife for the future.

9.3.1 Promoting Tourism as a Tool for Conserving the Planet's Ecosystem

Lindsey et al. (2020) argue that tourism can serve as a platform to help mitigate adverse anthropogenic or human effects on the environment. The issue of tourism as an instrument for conserving biodiversity and ecosystems has also become more urgent regarding SIDS and LDCs. This is more so as the wildlife sector in several African countries represents close to 80% of visitations. Moreover, in most SIDS, tourism earnings are vital to support marine conservation initiatives. However, the significant drop in tourism revenues resulted in losses in funding for biodiversity

conservation projects. This caused several jobs in the tourism industry to be compromised, leading to increased incidences of poaching, looting and eating of bushmeat. This phenomenon has been attributed to the absence of tourists and employees such as patrol and law enforcement personnel. Wolf and Ripple (2016) observe that Africa is home to more than 2000 key biodiversity areas and represents some of the world's richest biodiversity. Tourism attributed to wildlife destinations are amongst the highest earners for tourism, generating more than US\$29 billion yearly and employing over 3.6 million people.

Moreover, trophy hunting, a component of the wildlife tourism industry, provides circa ~US\$217 million per annum above >1 million km² (di Minin et al., 2016). Nevertheless, African countries, including South Africa, are often confronted with budgetary shortfalls that compromise management effectiveness. For example, in many state-owned savannah PAs with lions, budgetary shortfalls often amount to US\$1.2 billion per annum, causing wildlife and wildlife destinations to become vulnerable to threats, with similar implications for forests (Lindsey et al., 2018). This includes challenges such as loss of habitats, pollution, encroachment, poaching, and climate change (Ebhuoma et al., 2020). These threats were further amplified in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. For example, the cuts in funding resulted in fewer personnel to manage wildlife destinations and enforce patrol to stem illegal wildlife trade. This worsened the incidences of wildlife poaching, illegal wildlife trade and encroachment (Western et al., 2020). It is noteworthy that such challenges did exist prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic due to factors such as climate change, increased populations and poor management. However, the coronavirus pandemic further exacerbated these challenges. Increased measures are needed towards increased *sustainability and green growth* to develop resilience, competitiveness, resource efficiency and carbon neutrality in the wildlife tourism sector. In essence, coronavirus pandemic recovery efforts should be leveraged to enhance the sector's more efficacious usage of energy and water, waste management, and sustainable food sourcing from stakeholder communities. This has to be coupled with greater respect for local communities' culture and enhanced tourism participation.

9.3.2 Cultural Heritage Promotion and Conservation

One of the severe challenges of the coronavirus pandemic on tourism is evidenced in the effects *on heritage conservation* (Burnett, 2022). Wildlife in African countries such as South Africa offers significant cultural and heritage values for several ethnic groups. Furthermore, the charismatic species at wildlife tourist destinations are of immense symbolic value globally (Stolton & Dudley, 2019). In addition, wildlife also represents great "existence" value – the value people gain from just knowing something like that exists (Macdonald et al., 2015). *Therefore, the cultural and social fabric of communities*, especially regarding indigenous groups and

ethnic communities, has gained policy focus as models for effective tourism governance receive greater scrutiny.

Moreover, there are several typologies of community participation in nature tourism, demonstrating how communities, such as indigenous groups, have successfully protected their cultural and natural heritage whilst creating wealth and enhancing their well-being (Tantoh et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020). Thus, a common theme in addressing the critical role of heritage tourism has been how heritage and communities can be safeguarded in light of intersecting risks and a worldwide health crisis. This is important for finding effective policy measures that address the adverse impacts of the combination of hazardous events and the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic (Szromek et al., 2021).

As part of containment measures during the initial pandemic outbreak, several intangible cultural heritage customs and norms, including traditional festivities and related assemblies, were prohibited or postponed (Naramski et al., 2022). Moreover, given the shutting down of markets for artefacts, tourism items, and other related goods and services, indigenous women's earnings and income-generating opportunities have been significantly affected. For example, given that over 90% of countries had shut down their World Heritage Sites, there were significant socioeconomic impacts for communities dependent on the tourism sector. Moreover, UNWTO (2021) estimates indicate that *90% of museums faced closure, with 13% also facing a limited prospect of reopening*. The coronavirus pandemic's significant impact on tourism is also reflected in the demand and supply sides (Naramski et al., 2022). Tourists have been observed to be altering their touristic behaviour. This can be attributed to self-introspection or greater health imperatives due to consciousness about the coronavirus pandemic. This has translated into greater considerations for wildlife destinations' health safety in addition to their site attractions. Therefore, wildlife destinations can help promote the cultural heritage tourism of their host communities. This can be delivered from an innovative approach that embraces the tastes of individual tourists through greater integration of new information and communication technologies (ICT) applications for the development of intelligent tourism.

9.3.3 Wildlife Tourism Destination's Embracement of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Van der Merwe et al. (2021), in light of the new challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism value chain, call for a systemic approach that explores novel approaches to making tourism, including wildlife destinations, more resilient to future risks. One area that continues to gain traction is the use of ICT. This assertion buttresses Newsome's (2021) contention that the pandemic offers negative and positive implications, which wildlife destinations as core tourism stakeholders need to harness. Thus, the coronavirus aside negative impacts can be regarded as a

rare opportunity to enhance tourism across its value chain through increased digitalization and environmental sustainability (UNWTO, 2021). The UNWTO has hence urged further investments towards the building of workers' capacity regarding digital skills. Such skills will help harness big data, data analytics, and AI (artificial intelligence) benefits.

Furthermore, the coronavirus pandemic ushered in the phenomenon of remote work. For example, countries like Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Cayman Islands, introduced new long-term permits to attract tourists whilst urging them to visit with their virtual offices even as they invest in their local economies (UNWTO, 2021). Wildlife destinations in South Africa can also take advantage of such developments in the demand side to introduce new products, such as *virtual safaris*, to adapt to the needs of their clients and safeguard their niche. The value and experience of wildlife tourism can be enhanced with the increased usage of digitalization (Newsome, 2021). This includes developing digital content on websites such that they help facilitate the expansion of the wildlife tourism sector.

Moreover, it can help enhance how tourists can interpret and interact with their wildlife tourist destinations in the whole process through the integration of such new technologies. This comes with ripple benefits on wildlife conservation and staff capacity development. This is an opportune time to promote *innovation and tourism's digital transformation*. This includes facilitating innovation and investment in digital skills, especially for casual or temporary workers and those seeking employment. This will go a long way to help address South Africa's triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality, espoused in the National Development Plan (NDP) or the Vision 2030 (South African Government, 2021).

9.3.4 Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Promoting Wildlife Tourism

Musavengane and Llewellyn (2021) highlight the need for tourism to adopt a more adaptive approach in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and cross-cutting background issues due to climate change. For wildlife destinations to successfully navigate the complex challenges that confront the sector, it is imperative to forge new alliances with other stakeholders in the sector for effective collaboration. It is noteworthy that goal 17 of the SDGs highlights this point, stressing the need to forge strategic and robust partnerships to advance the sustainability agenda. In line with this assertion, the UNWTO (2021) encourages greater coordination and partnerships among stakeholders to revamp and *transform the sector towards attaining the SDGs*. In addition, the World Tourism and Travel Council, in its forecast of the tourism sector's probable scenarios in the coming years, posits that the coronavirus pandemic has increased tourists' interest towards domestic tours and nature and outdoor destinations. This observation stresses the need to develop greater

partnerships with local partners to enhance domestic wildlife tourism. This will go a long way to help cater to this burgeoning market's interests.

Such partnerships must be evident across the wildlife tourism value chain. Van der Merwe et al. (2021) opine that new partnerships that will help secure funding and support from the government and other non-profit organisations are essential. This will help widen the funding base of wildlife tourism destinations for increased revenue generation, overall resilience and sustainability. Such efforts will ripple positive impacts on local communities as it will help mitigate *the socioeconomic impacts on livelihoods*, especially vulnerable groups such as women and youth employment and livelihood security. This is more so as tourism-dependent communities and related economies were among the hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic (Naramski et al., 2022). This triggered a suite of policy measures to be rolled out to alleviate the dire effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism earnings, households and businesses. This includes deploying cash transfers, welfare grants, tax reliefs, payroll supports, and loan guarantees. Many financial institutions also stopped the repayment of loans (UNWTO, 2021).

Furthermore, some countries introduced tailored measures to assist workers in the informal sector, who are a major component of the tourism sector and are highly susceptible. Greater public-private partnerships in the wildlife destination sector will *boost competitiveness and build the sector's resilience*. Moreover, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the wildlife sector stand to gain from the enabling business environment. The crisis has highlighted the relevance of the wildlife tourism sector as a vehicle for alleviating poverty and improving economies. Tourism development has served as a tool for bridging the gap between poor and rich countries in much of Africa. This is evidenced by tourism-reliant countries recording a real per capita GDP growth rate of 2.4% between 1990 and 2019 – markedly higher in comparison to non-tourism-reliant countries (Behsudi, 2020).

9.4 Conclusions

Tourism is one of the most valuable sectors in the global economy, representing circa 10% of worldwide GDP and over 320 million jobs worldwide. This study sought to investigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on wildlife tourism. It highlights the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic on tourism and the millions of livelihoods it supports. Wildlife tourism can significantly promote the Sustainable Development Goals, with ripple impacts on the environment and cultural heritage. Given the sector's vital role in national and local economies, harnessing innovation and digitalization, promoting local communities' cultural heritage and values, and providing decent jobs for all (particularly the vulnerable in society) will propel resilience and growth in the sector.

Furthermore, moments of crisis, such as those occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic, provide an opportunity for reflection and innovation. The COVID-19

pandemic thus presents a unique opportunity to recalibrate tourism's interaction with modern communities, other economic spheres, critical natural resources and ecosystems. Furthermore, there is a need to measure and manage tourism better; to promote an equitable distribution of its benefits, integrate health imperatives and facilitate a rapid transition towards a greener and more resilient tourism economy that promotes the cultural heritage of local communities. This is more so as destinations most dependent on tourism for employment and economic growth are often most impacted, including Small Island States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and several African countries. Efforts to improve the wildlife tourism destination sector have to be premised on collective action and international cooperation. This will be needed in transforming the sector, enhancing its role towards the 2030 Agenda and its direction towards an inclusive, greener sector that harnesses innovation and digitalization, whilst creating decent livelihoods for all, leaving no one behind.

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Chapter 10

Online Training: An Adaptive Strategy to Revive Tourism in South Africa Post-COVID-19



Dumsile Hlengwa 

Abstract The tourism industry worldwide was ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry, however, exhibited some form of resilience despite bearing the brunt of all the COVID-19 response strategies adopted by countries worldwide. However, one of the issues still unclear is how the tourism industry managed to sustain jobs post-COVID-19. Utilising qualitative data collected from 27 participants in South Africa and Ireland, this chapter explores staff training and development as a strategy to reignite travel and tourism and reposition the industry post the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that continuous staff development through online short courses; collaboration among industry, universities, and government; international benchmarking and application of lessons learnt; and development of worthwhile career paths in the tourism industry wield much potential as adaptive strategies in tourism in South Africa. It is recommended that academic and industry misalignment be addressed through the formation and support of relational agencies to strengthen the country's tourism ecosystem.

Keywords Adaptation-level training · University-industry alignment · Revive tourism · THENSA-ATU

10.1 Introduction

The tourism industry worldwide, South Africa included, was ravaged by the COVID-19 Pandemic with the closure of borders leading to grounding of airplanes (de Melo Moreira, 2020; McCarthy, 2020); suspension of visas (Roy, 2020), and closure of hotels and other tourism accommodation facilities (Aharon et al., 2021; American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2022). According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2022), globally, the travel and tourism industry had witnessed nearly

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1.5 billion international arrivals, contributing 10.3% (about US\$9.6 trillion) to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 (WTTC, 2022). However, travel and tourism demand contracted by an estimated 74% in 2020 (Babii & Nadeem, 2021; Matiza, 2021).

The multi-sectorial nature of the tourism industry makes it highly vulnerable to emergencies (Bonacci & Anwar, 2020; Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019). The intricacies involved mean that risk management in the tourism industry must be seen as a process that requires continuous evaluation, analysis, revision, and updating. Prone as the industry is to emerging global crises and hazards, it has also, in the past, demonstrated resilience by bouncing back from many macro factors, such as recessions and natural hazards, among others (Orîndaru et al., 2021). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020) highlighted the importance of the restoration of traveller confidence; support for tourism businesses to adapt and survive, promotion of domestic tourism; and provision of clear information to travellers and businesses. The OECD (2020) further suggested the need for the development and maintenance of capacity, addressing gaps to strengthen cooperation within and between countries, and building more resilient strategies. Available research only focuses on the future of tourism; resilience, mobility, degrowth, sustainable tourism; geopolitics of climate change, and transformation aimed at resetting the tourism industry. Studies that currently focus on developing staff as an adaptive and resilient strategy do not exist. Therefore, this chapter aims to explore staff training and development as a strategy to reignite travel and tourism and reposition the industry post the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study builds on previous works on staff development. Lanquar et al. (2021) identified the transfer of soft and hard skills to harness emerging opportunities as one of the strategies for a successful reorientation of the tourism industry. Babii and Nadeem (2021) supported the view of online training as digital technology could be a bridge to recovery, and Karra (2020) emphasised the importance of retraining the trainer to help students navigate multitasking, contactless service delivery and quick adaptation. Nevins and Matar (2020) argued that innovative companies had expressed concerns about traditional approaches to training and developing their staff before COVID-19. However, the twenty-first century pipeline dream of digital learning does not seem to have played out. COVID-19 forced organisations to rethink how they can train and develop people to strengthen organisational capabilities when it cannot be done in person. Collins-Kreiner and Ram (2020) cited the need for skills training in the digital realm as a recovery strategy for the tourism industry. It was, therefore, not surprising that THENSA (Technological Higher Education Network South Africa) and ATU (Atlantic Technological University) also zoned in on online training as one of the strategies that can be used to resuscitate the ailing tourism industry. This chapter adds to this strand of literature by highlighting the significance of training and aligning university modules with industry needs and developing sector career paths to try and reduce staff turnover.

The chapter is structured as follows: The next section reviews the literature related to the study. This is followed by a discussion of the research methodology that was adopted. After that, the results of the study are presented and discussed. Lastly, implications and conclusions are drawn from the results.

10.2 Literature Review

The next subsections focus on the literature on staff turnover rates in the tourism industry due to COVID-19 and staff development as a strategy to revive tourism in the post-COVID-19 period.

10.2.1 Staff Turnover Rates in the Tourism Industry Prior to and During COVID-19

Human resources are the lifeline of any organisation. It is essential to completing any desired action and creating other forms of capital (Edirisinghe & Manuel, 2019). While the travel and tourism industry is labour-intensive, it is also characterised by high levels of labour turnover (Dwesini, 2019; Kuria et al., 2012; Rehman & Mubashar, 2017). According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics (2014), in Washington in 2013, the hospitality and restaurant sectors had a staff turnover of 62.6% compared to all other private sectors' 42.2%. The trend has also been observed to be the same since 2007 (Rehman & Mubashar, 2017). Chalkiti and Sigala (2010) found that Greek tourism faced similar levels of operational staff turnover as other countries across all tourism industry sectors. They pointed out that the causes were beyond management's control. While the industry was hailed for employing about 10.6% of total labour (334 million jobs) prior to the pandemic, high staff turnover was attributed to the industry's reliance on non-standard and contingent employment arrangements such as self-employment, subcontracting and casual work, with little or no benefits. Non-standard workers form about 65% of the total industry workforce (Martins et al., 2020; Orindaru et al., 2021). In support, Lai and Cai (2022) found unusual working hours, poor working conditions, low remuneration, and insufficient training and skills development as other factors leading to low staff morale and heightened intentions to exit the industry (Ariza-Montes et al., 2019).

Chalkiti and Sigala (2010) noted that although the staff turnover rate may vary from one location or sector, staff turnover in the tourism industry tends to be unpredictable. Edirisinghe and Manuel (2019) observed that labour turnover intentions accumulated over time, starting with a shocking event such as a psychological contract breach followed by disconnection from work long before they leave. Such an emotional disconnection is manifested in lower organisational commitment, absenteeism, and poor performance. High staff turnover is costly for any organisation, and it is directly linked to low financial turnover, poor organisational performance, reduced efficiency, decreased morale, and service disruptions (Chalkiti & Sigala, 2010; Edirisinghe & Manuel, 2019; Jang & George, 2012). Since the tourism industry experiences high staff turnover, in most organisations, managing staff turnover has shifted from people retention to knowledge retention strategies (Chalkiti & Sigala, 2010).

COVID-19 seems to have exacerbated the problem as the grounding of flights and closure of hotels and attractions heightened perceptions of job insecurity. This was exemplified by queues extending outside the terminal and travellers missing their flights at the Dublin Airport in May/June 2022. Travel demand had surged amid staff shortages, leading to total travel chaos (Specia, 2022). Specia (2022) also referred to the Heathrow, Manchester, Schiphol and Gatwick Airports Easter holiday cases where the shortage of security and other staff led to long queues, overcrowding, delays and cancelled flights. In their study, Wong et al. (2021) indicated that hotel occupational stressors caused by COVID-19 resulted in a high level of anxiety and negatively impacted job satisfaction and work commitment, which aggravated exit intentions. To protect customers and employees from the virus, many hospitality businesses implemented new technologies such as artificial intelligence, contactless automation technology and virtual reality in operations and marketing (Pillai et al., 2021), which intensified feelings of job insecurity (Koo et al., 2020). Philip (2022) argued that about 1.7 million industry jobs were shed in Europe alone. Everingham and Chassagne (2020) and Sharma et al. (2021) opine that the future outlook of the travel and tourism industry will be different as robotic, automation technologies and artificial intelligence dominate to reduce costs, improve liquidity and enhance flexibility.

10.2.2 Strategies to Reignite Travel and Tourism Post-COVID-19

Studies by Helble and Fink (2020), Everingham and Chassagne (2020) and OECD (2020) suggested that the promotion of domestic tourism has the potential to reignite the tourism engine. Temporary and permanent national, regional and international synergies were also suggested by Bonacci and Anwar (2020). Other measures included continued government support (Matiza, 2021); price reductions, bilateral travel bubbles and sub-regional travel bubbles (Helble & Fink, 2020); three-wave recovery plan of public-private community partnership and cooperation where local communities act as centres of transformation (McCarthy, 2020; Sharma et al., 2021). Everingham and Chassagne (2020), OECD (2020), and Pangestu (2021) further suggested the importance of restoration of traveller confidence through the provision of clear information to travellers and businesses. OECD (2020) indicated the need for leveraging renewed interest in sustainability and the development of adaptive tourism ecosystems as the other strategy to reignite the tourism industry. Bonacci and Anwar (2020) and Pangestu (2021) further highlighted the significance of understanding tourists' preferences and trends as demand drivers. Grover (2020) indicated the need to adapt tourism infrastructure to facilitate use and marketing activities by using updated data, sharing and networking to improve capacity and solve problems more efficiently. Collins-Kreiner and Ram (2020) identified incentivising job retention; supporting liquidity of companies through stimulus and acceleration of recovery; review of taxes; charges, and regulations impacting travel

and tourism; facilitation of travel; preparation for the future; and investment in human capital and talent development through training as some of the strategies to revive the tourism industry.

Some measures to ensure tourism resilience include increasing workforce quality through training, development, and policy adaptation to meet new circumstances (Pangestu, 2021). Strategies for recovery should switch from a subsidies-based recovery approach to a creativity and viability-based approach, using COVID-19 experiences to fuel innovations, and adopting new methodologies and modalities (Orindaru et al., 2021). The South African Tourism Sector recovery plan (2021) pinpointed, among other intervention drives, the need for strengthening the supply side through resource mobilisation and investment facilitation; support for the protection of core tourism infrastructure and assets; and the execution of a global marketing programme to reignite international demand. Skills development was mentioned as one of the five enablers of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP), which justified THENSA's approach to promoting online training and skills development as a recovery strategy.

Strategic recommendation number 9 of the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan (2021: 8) is to prioritise cooperation with neighbouring destinations for a regional value proposition and a seamless visitor experience through the SADC tourism strategy. Collaboration is seen as an imperative and a crucial success factor in the travel and tourism industry because the essence of tourism products is an amalgam of different but related service providers, making intra-partnerships and alliances vital (Soteriades et al., 2015).

Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). It is a “process through which groups with similar or different perspectives can exchange viewpoints and search for solutions that go beyond their vision of what is possible” (Worku & Tessema, 2018: 2). Local collaborative actions can generate positive externalities for the tourism players (Ammirato et al., 2014). Therefore, it is crucial to form and maintain collaborative relationships to recover from slumps caused by disruptions such as COVID-19. Collaborations allow different stakeholders to work together, pool their resources, and make binding decisions (Worku & Tessema, 2018). In addition, Rao et al. (2016) identified a more comprehensive stock of knowledge, more aggregate experience, additional opportunities, creation of inimitable and non-substitutable customer value as other positive outcomes of collaborations.

10.2.3 Online Training and Staff Development as a Strategy to Revive Tourism Post-COVID-19

People are the most critical source of competitive advantage and performance. Thus, organisations adopt numerous policies and measures to retain their talented employees. Employee retention has emerged as a key driver for organisational

success (Ghani et al., 2022). However, as seen in the previous subsection, the tourism industry is burdened with high staff turnover rates. Edirisinghe and Manuel (2019) posit that training and retaining human capital is vital as staffing is costly in terms of time, effort and money. Biro (2018) stated that employers who do not focus on organisational learning lose out regarding performance, engagement and retention. An estimated 93% of employees would stay in a company longer if it invested in their careers (Edirisinghe & Manuel, 2019). The human capital investment shows that the employer values people and is interested in their success.

Ghani et al. (2022) emphasise effective onboarding, a sustainable and positive work environment, sustainable growth opportunities, and career pathing to retain highly talent-fluid tourism industry staff. Tracey and Swart (2020: 258) opine that employees will have increased access to self-regulated online training programs as the nature of work evolves and technology-enabled solutions become more prevalent to support job-specific content, especially in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

In a study conducted in Kenya, Sitati et al. (2016) found that both internal and external staff training was required in the hotels. Employees indicated that they needed training in job-specific areas such as firefighting, first aid, and life-saving in pools and the beach. The study concluded that training is an important strategy to help the industry build a more committed, productive, and adaptive workforce. In support, Karra (2020) alluded to the importance of online training as technology is being leveraged in many aspects of the industry. Identified the need for a digital workforce to handle the influx of communication as the tourism industry rebounds. Technology was identified by Hall et al. (2017) as a catalyst for innovation and change and a disruptor of the tourism industry – that is, critical in reimagining tourism in the future and reinforcing a digitised tourism industry (Sigala, 2020). It is for this reason that online training has become more significant as a core solution for staff training and development.

10.2.4 Adaptation-Level Theory to Staff Development as a Strategy to Revive Tourism Post-COVID-19

Edwards (2018) regards Harry Helson's 1948 Adaptation-Level (AL) theory as a Gestalt-type theory that quantitatively and qualitatively considers stimulation and context to explain behaviour, as illustrated in Fig. 10.1. Heim et al. (2020) describe adaptation as habituation to some physical intensity or a new situation requiring unlearning (of what was known previously) and relearning new paradigms. The AL theory holds that people and organisations can return to the baseline level of operation following a destabilising event. This implies that they can adapt to almost any situation based on their frames of reference and relativity (Lucas, 2007). Behaviour tends to be adaptive and explained through past outcomes rather than purposive (explained by prospects). This may be why looking up to training is one of the strategies to revive the tourism industry post-COVID-19. As there are

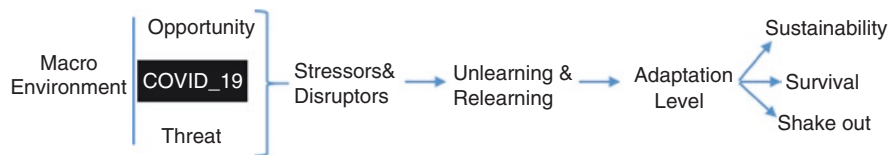


Fig. 10.1 Adaptation-level theory in tourism revival. (Source: Author)

considerable differences in the extent of adaptation in individuals, there will also be differences in the ability to adapt to different tourism businesses because they are owned and operated by people.

Morris et al. (1999) point out that opportunities exist in the external environment (Fig. 10.1) and are created by disasters, new knowledge, demographic change, technological changes, and new sources of financing, among others. Any given opportunity can be capitalised upon in a variety of ways. Morris et al. (1999) further argue that only those who are best able to read and interpret patterns in the environment and adapt quickly survive since adaptation is a function of the ability to learn. Bowling et al. (2005) stated that when a lighter or easier standard is used, people adapt to it, and when a heavier or harder standard is used (COVID-19 and its devastating impact), they also adapt to it. Those who do not adapt fail or get out of the tourism business. Figure 10.1 illustrates that disruptions, such as COVID-19, serve as opportunities to learn and improve. However, the levels of adaptation differ. Some organisations will fail to adapt and divest, others will return to the state they were in before the disruption, and others will use the disruption as an opportunity to learn, grow and do even better.

10.3 Methodology

A total of 27 people participated in the seminar held from 31 May to 2 June 2022 at the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in Galway, Ireland. Qualitative data were collected from discussions over 3 days between THENSA and ATU. The participants were: THENSA CEO, manager and administrative staff; Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation and Engagement) from one of the member universities; CEO of South African Qualifications Authority; two representatives of the Department of Tourism SA; two industry representatives; THENSA researcher; and academics from 11 member universities. On the Ireland side, the participants and presenters were the Head of Galway International Hotel School; CEO of the Technological Higher Education Association; Head of Heritage, Tourism, Languages and Humanities ATU; Managing Director of Ashford Castle, Red Carnation Hotels; Fellow of ATU Galway and Mayo and CEO of Galway International Arts Festival; a representative for the South African Ambassador in Ireland; Head of Culinary Arts and The Service Industries (ATU); and Teaching and Learning Manager and Careers and RPL Manager (ATU) (THENSA Report, 2022: 20–21).

The seminar consisted of presentations, question and answer, and qualitative panel discussions. Notes captured during presentations and discussions, the actual presentations, hyperlinks attached to the programme and the final report were used as data sources. All data that were deemed relevant to the title of this chapter were selected, with the exclusion of deviating comments. Themes were deduced from texts that emanated from presentations and panel discussions. Keywords in context (KWIC) were identified and captured onto the word cloud software for analysis based on their prevalence. The bigger the word (phrase), the more prevalent (Fig. 10.3). Cutting and sorting (pawing) were used to classify issues according to tourism education and the tourism industry (Fig. 10.2), which formed the major themes and highlighted representation at the seminar. Bias was dealt with through the use of many data sources such as notes, actual presentations and the final report written by THENSA. Qualitative tools and techniques (thematic, word cloud analysis and actual words of presenters) were used to present and analyse data in the following subsection.

10.4 Results and Discussion

The Irish Embassy in South Africa awarded THENSA a grant to establish six research and training clusters, including the tourism research and training cluster. THENSA realised the need to form a strategic partnership between educational institutions and industry to explore new directions and innovative solutions to rebuild tourism as an important economic sector (THENSA Report, 2022). The report further highlighted the need to review training programmes to meet industry needs better, address challenges presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), find innovative ways to deal with challenges as they arise, and promote entrepreneurial skills for tourism students.

Most of the time was spent deliberating on the challenges facing the tourism industry, perceived misalignment between university courses and industry needs, and possible measures that can be taken to revive the tourism industry in South Africa from the debilitating impacts of COVID-19. Even though numerous strategies could be employed to revive the industry, THENSA focused on training and development, as already discussed in the literature review. Figure 10.2 presents the challenges identified by the seminar, which training and development could address. They were divided into two emerging themes: tourism education and industry challenges. Both South African and Irish participants believed that students took tourism and hospitality courses as a last resort, and as a result, they were not interested. The Irish side even shared that the “numbers were dwindling because parents did not have confidence in the industry and did not want their children to pursue tourism and hospitality as a career.” Most SA participants felt that students were underprepared and struggling with many modules they had to juggle.

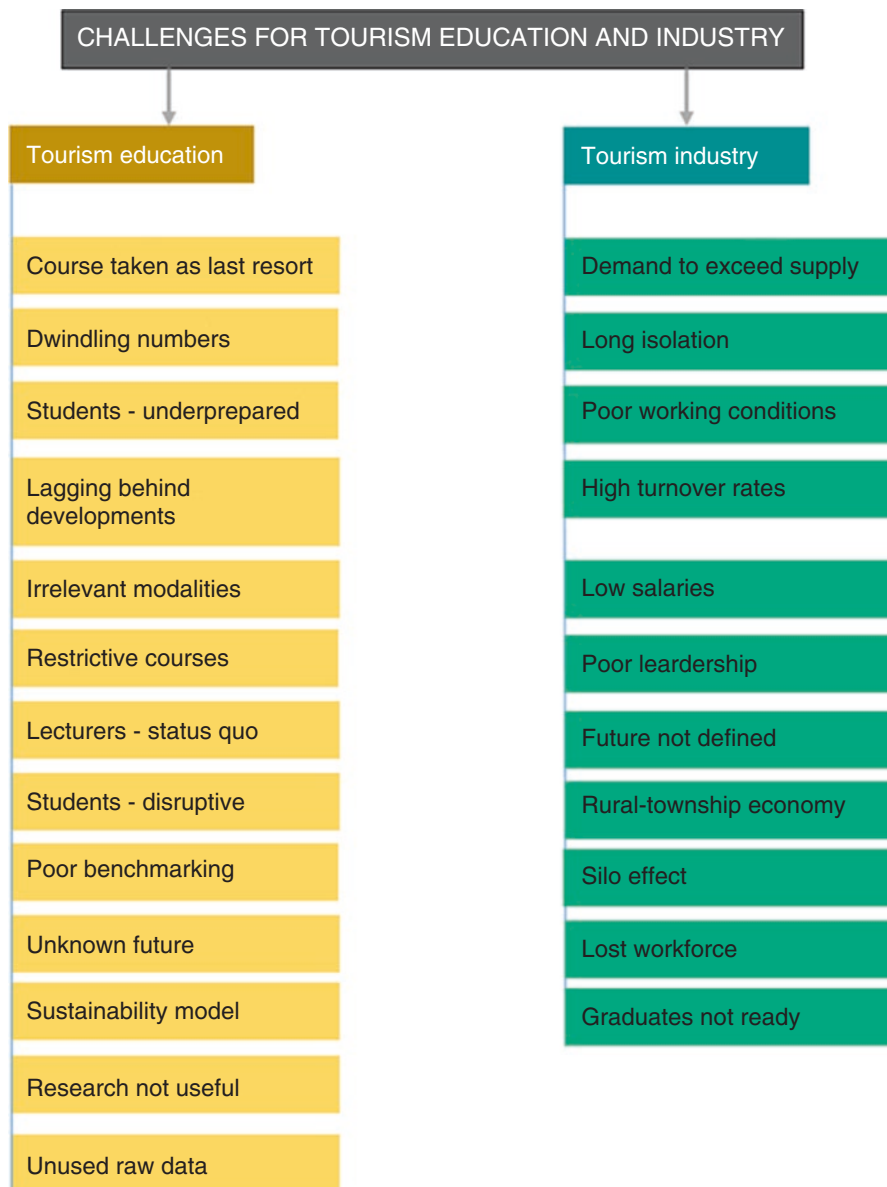


Fig. 10.2 Challenges faced by tourism education and the tourism industry. (Source: Author)

Industry participants raised a concern that training institutions were lagging behind industry developments, which leads to misalignments and graduates that were not industry-ready. Further, the silo operation was creating cracks in what should be operating as a tourism ecosystem. Hence, an urgent need to develop

“relational agencies” such as THENSA (THENSA Report, 2022: 13). A point was raised that the sustainability model of high enrolment plans and expected 80% pass rate was compromising the standards.

The teaching modalities were seen to be fast becoming irrelevant, with lecturers trying to maintain the status quo and frustrating students who are more disruptive in their thinking and approach. There also seemed to be too many modules that were being offered, albeit *not niche-specific*. Poor benchmarking made qualifications restrictive and not portable across training institutions. Representatives of the Department of Tourism (SA) pointed to a need for niche-specific training such as viticulture, gastronomy, and field guiding, as suggested by Sitati et al. (2016). The discussion also highlighted the availability of big data that training institutions did not tap into for research, as well as failure in some cases to align research initiatives with those of the Department of Tourism – which made research output not very useful.

Regarding producing useful research, the Department of Tourism further highlighted the importance of responding to their project calls and aligning research with areas of need that the department identified. As illustrated in Fig. 10.2, there was a consensus that travel and tourism demand would exceed supply after a long period of isolation. The industry was described as not ready to deal with surging demand as too many employees had been laid off, and their possible reluctance to rejoin the industry they perceived as exploitative.

Figure 10.3 presents possible measures to help revive the ailing tourism industry. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) links students with industry by providing them with the opportunity to learn on the job, thus making training relevant. For this reason, WIL had a higher frequency in the discussions. There were suggestions that the WIL mark should be split between work placement and other modalities, such as campus activities, guest lectures, field trips and assessments by adjunct professors (industry experts paid to teach to bring fresh industry development to the lecture room).

Campuses and surroundings could be converted into interpretation sites that could be used as another modality of WIL in crisis times, as just experienced with COVID-19. The delegates were tasked to define the future of the industry and training post-COVID-19. There was consensus that lecturers should be allowed to spend time in the industry regularly as a form of a refresher. Students should also be exposed to industry through field trips from first years to regulate expectations and provide an opportunity to change careers. Collaborations between lecturers, industry and local communities (tourism ecosystem) should be encouraged and supported. This strategy was also mentioned in the literature by Bonacci and Anwar (2020), Helble and Fink (2020), and McCarthy (2020). Local communities were defined as knowledgeable custodians of their environment who know precisely where places of interest are and their origins, and they could be trained (through short online courses) to host guests and become field guides that provide indigenous knowledge to visitors. This was in line with what had been suggested by Matiza

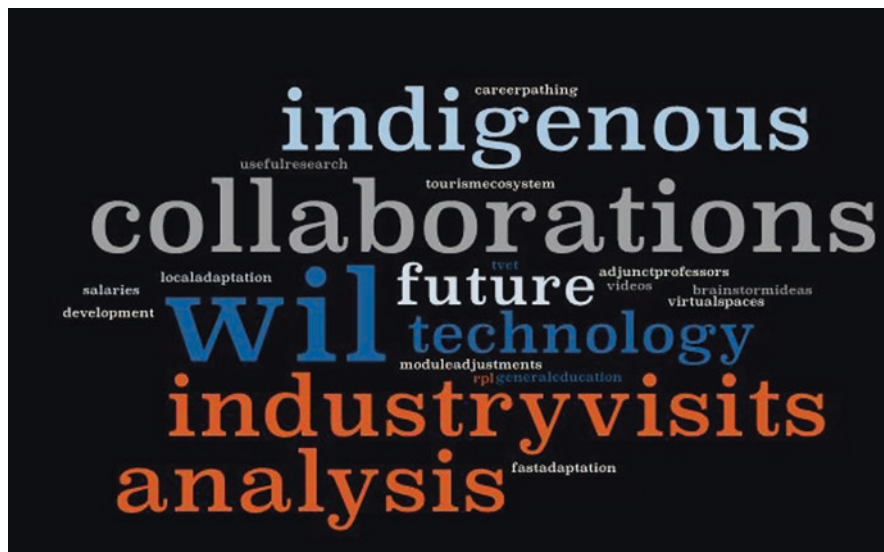


Fig. 10.3 Measures to enhance tourism education post-COVID-19. (Source: Author)

(2021), McCarthy (2020), and Sharma et al. (2021). This idea brought about the issue of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which would open articulation and certification opportunities for participating local community members.

Studies such as industry needs, turnover, and retention analysis should be conducted to enable the industry to make data-based decisions, thus making research useful. Technology has to play a critical role in the future-oriented training and adaptive industry, which Sharma et al. (2021) supported. As the AL theory suggests, universities and the tourism industry must adapt fast to the changing environment while anticipating future disruptions. Lecturers were advised to record videos of what goes on in the industry (receptionist, field guide, event planner, housekeeper, chef, and others) and keep them as training materials. Where funds allow, three-dimensional virtual spaces for various industry sectors could be purchased, installed, and used for training purposes. The literature mentioned that staff turnover rates were high in the tourism industry. This was attributed to low salaries and minimal career advancement opportunities (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019). THENSA felt that staff development through short online niche courses and general education could provide an opportunity for employers to invest in their staff. This would eventually lead to motivation, improved performance, career progression, and reduced turnover rates.

10.5 Implications of the Study

There are numerous strategies which organisations can adopt. However, an organisation would be setting itself up for failure if it tried to target all possible strategies to recover the tourism industry. As indicated in the literature (Bonacci & Anwar, 2020; Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019), the activities targeted at the recovery of the travel and tourism industry in South Africa could be as multi-sectorial as the industry itself. The drive to recovery has to be led by the government through enabling policy frameworks as suggested by both scholars and policy institutions (Helble & Fink, 2020; NDT, 2021; OECD, 2020). Policies should include the expansionary fiscal policy in the form of grants (as awarded to THENSA) and rebates; flexible monetary policy with more manageable payment plans; lower repo rate; and flexible visa policy, among others. Industry players such as airlines, hotels, and attractions remain the most impacted (Babii & Nadeem, 2021; De Melo Moreira, 2020; Matiza, 2021; McCarthy, 2020; Roy, 2020; Aharon et al., 2021; WEF, 2022). They should, therefore, be receptive to recovery plans and adaptive in their management and operations. Local communities have been described as the custodians of tourism environments. It is important to take them on board, enable them to play their role, learn and earn a living. Tracey and Swart (2020) argued that if properly integrated, online self-regulated job-specific training programmes could add great value to a tourism sector's workforce development strategy. This could lead to career development and reduce intentions to exit the industry.

While recovery measures and pace will differ from country to country, Babii and Nadeem (2021) posit that diversifying and shifting to more sustainable tourism models and technologies could help fast-track recovery. The recovery process of the tourism industry should be a multi-stakeholder effort which involves national governments, custodians of destination brands, and tourism service providers, among others (Matiza, 2021) as represented at the TENSAs seminar. Academic institutions, as custodians of the knowledge economy, should in collaboration, play an active role in developing new research methodologies and modalities of learning that are more adaptive to disruptions.

Academic and industry misalignment could be addressed through the formation and support of relational agencies, which are tasked with strengthening the country's tourism ecosystem. Academics should also be creative and adaptive to prepare more adaptive graduates (Everingham & Chassagne, 2020; Sharma et al., 2021). They should also collaborate more among themselves, institutionally, across institutions, and globally to form practice communities, benchmark and share knowledge and skills. Their research funds and staff mobility grants, such as Erasmus, could achieve this. They could also facilitate student mobility across their networks. THENSA, as a technological higher education network, accepted the responsibility to facilitate the development of niche-specific short courses that it will be a custodian of. Industry practitioners and community members that require those skills would be able to access them – thus, promoting online training and skills development.

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the significance of training and development as a strategy to reignite the ailing travel and tourism industry in South Africa. The study emerged from a collaborative initiative between THENSA member universities, ATU, government representatives, and industry representatives from both SA and Ireland. The three-day seminar highlighted the challenges the tourism industry faced before, during, and in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. The seminar also highlighted the potential opportunities to learn, adapt, and improve. The pandemic was not solely to blame for all the industry's woes, as some had been persisting for a long time. Among the challenges that existed prior to the pandemic were: job insecurity, high staff turnover rates, disinterested and underprepared graduates, poor working conditions including low salaries, as well as minimal progression opportunities. COVID-19 exacerbated the problem through the closure of borders, grounding of flights, and closure of hotels and attractions, especially during levels 5 and 4 lockdowns which led to a massive loss of skills from the industry. THENSA's initiative to reinforce training and skills development came at an opportune time when the industry needed to replenish its human capital as it braced itself for travel and tourism rebound and the unfolding normal. The key recommendations of the cluster meeting were for THENSA to conduct the needs analysis of the tourism industry in South Africa; reskilling of staff at member institutions to be adaptive to the recent and future disruptions; exploration of staff and student exchange between South Africa and Ireland; and the possibility of a cultural festival in South Africa under the leadership of the Cultural Arts Organisation in Ireland to promote cultural tourism.

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Chapter 11

Domestic Leisure Tourism: Lessons Learnt from Township Business Operators During the COVID-19 Pandemic Era



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Abstract The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected tourism businesses across the globe. The burden on tourism operators to survive was exacerbated by the emergence of new variants, which threatened an already troubled industry. Since its detection in South Africa in early 2020, the pandemic has relentlessly impacted the tourism industry, especially causing a reduction in the number of visitors. Several strategies had to be adopted to rescue the industry from the devastating effects of the pandemic. Amongst these interventions was the focus on domestic leisure travel. This study examines the factors that restrict township residents' participation in domestic leisure tourism to find the best ways to promote domestic leisure tourism post the COVID-19 pandemic era. To achieve this, qualitative research was undertaken through a focus group discussion with eight members of a selected township community tourism forum in Cape Town. Through a thematic analysis, the study revealed a lack of travel interest among locals due to affordability and perception of travel and cost. The study highlights strategies that could be used to encourage greater participation in domestic tourism.

Keywords Domestic tourism · COVID-19 pandemic · Township tourism · Leisure travel · Recovery strategies

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11.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic decimated the tourism industry resulting in extended suffering for several businesses across the globe. Consequently, massive pressure was exerted on tourism operators, who battled to survive, thus necessitating the need to implement strategies that would enable survival and cushion businesses against running into losses (Aburumman, 2020). During the 2020/2021 period, the impact on South Africa was heightened by several factors that the country had to deal with, including the emergence of the new COVID-19 variants, political unrest and violence and service delivery protests (Landa et al., 2021). The impact of the pandemic was felt across industries, and visitor numbers fell drastically for the travel and tourism sector, threatening several jobs (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Furthermore, it has been estimated that international tourists have decreased by approximately 78%, resulting in a loss of US\$ 1.2 trillion in export revenue and the largest decline in tourism job cuts in history (Jaipuria et al., 2021), which is approximately seven times the impact of the 11 September terrorist attacks (UNWTO, 2020). Moreover, the decline in tourist demand resulted in severe financial difficulties for many businesses (Tsonas, 2021). According to the 2020 Tourism report, the number of international arrivals had plummeted by 71% from just over 15 million in 2019 to fewer than five million in 2020, signifying how severe the pandemic was to the tourism industry (Statistics South Africa, 2021). It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant influence on the tourism sector around the world, including South Africa, mostly because of the lockdown and travel restrictions that were implemented (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

In dealing with the impact of COVID-19, several strategies had to be adopted to rescue the industry from the devastating effects of the pandemic. Amongst these interventions was a focus on domestic leisure travel (Bama & Nyikana, 2021). The South African government had embarked on massive campaigns for domestic tourism as it has proved to be a viable interim option for the industry's survival. In these campaigns, the country was showcased as a safe and friendly tourism destination for individuals and families. During 2020/2021, South Africa recorded a decline in international tourism (Statistics South Africa, 2021), thus necessitating the promotion of travel amongst locals (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). However, the main question is whether this approach is feasible and sustainable for the continuous growth of the tourism industry. This is because the domestic market that should be the target includes those who were affected by the pandemic in several ways (e.g. retrenchment, pay cuts, reduced working hours, furlough etc.). The situation is even worse, especially for the previously neglected groups in South Africa who lack the "travel culture" (Ezeuduji & Dlomo, 2020).

The current study investigates the domestic tourism approach as an intervention strategy that could be adopted by tourism businesses, especially during times of crisis. In addition, it examines how tourism businesses can encourage residents within townships to engage in domestic leisure travel. The impediments to participation in domestic leisure tourism by residents of selected townships in Cape Town

were also explored with the aim of devising ways of enhancing and promoting visits to local attractions. The chapter begins with a review of pertinent literature, including a discussion of domestic leisure tourism, township tourism, and the impact of COVID-19. It continues with the research design and methodology that the study adopted. The findings of the study are then discussed and conclusions and implications drawn.

11.2 Literature Review

This research reviews three streams of literature: (1) South African domestic leisure tourism, (2) South African township tourism, and (3) the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry.

11.2.1 *The South African Domestic Leisure Tourism*

Various scholars have proposed several definitions for domestic tourism. Earlier scholars (Becken, 2009; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010; Kabote et al., 2019) share the view that domestic tourism involves travelling to a unique environment within the borders of one's own country but not seeking employment opportunities at the destination. Hermann and Du Plessis (2016) shared the same sentiments as other researchers (Becken, 2009; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010) and explained further the concept of travel that should last at least for more than 24 hours but not exceed 12 consecutive months. Hermann and Du Plessis (2016) define a trip whereby people leave their usual place and do not stay overnight at the destination as an excursion. This can also be referred to as a day trip, a crucial component of domestic tourism. Due to several connotations associated with defining domestic tourism, Kabote et al. (2017:2) summed up the concept of domestic tourism by stating that despite the definition one uses, the paramount aspect is that they all share a common element, that is, "travel excluding international travellers."

According to Osiako and Szente (2021), domestic tourism is the most important driver of tourism in major countries worldwide. Rogerson and Baum (2020) state that while domestic and regional tourism in Africa is far more prevalent than international tourism, international tourist spending is far higher in developing nations. Hughes (2010) points out that, in comparison to international tourists, locals in poor nations are not highly active participants in tourism. When looking at it from the perspective of emerging countries like South Africa, with high unemployment, it is, therefore, doubtful to bank on the adage that domestic tourism will boost the tourism industry (Panashe, 2020). Earlier researchers (Rogerson & Lisa, 2005; Scheyvens, 2007; Kabote et al., 2017) expressed concern about the slow development of domestic tourism in less economically developed countries. This is because domestic tourism could be used to cushion the tourism industry in times of crisis

such as COVID-19. The slow development of domestic tourism in many African countries could be attributed to the fact that this market is considered not lucrative due to its low spending in comparison to the international market (Rogerson & Baum, 2020). Surprisingly, besides its low contributions, especially in the less economically developed countries, several governments have resorted to this market to resurrect the tourism industry with the anticipation that it would provide much-needed revenue in the tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic period (Garau-Vadell et al., 2018; Kozak & Kim, 2019; Panashe, 2020; Arbulu et al., 2021; Woyo, 2021).

The South African Department of Tourism devised a Domestic Tourism Strategy in 2012 with the goal of increasing tourism expenditure (Department of Tourism, 2019). However, according to the statistical report, this plan may have failed to produce the expected outcomes of increasing domestic travel between 2015 and 2018. (Department of Tourism, 2019). According to the report, 24.3 million domestic overnight journeys were registered in 2016, a 0.4% decline from the previous year's domestic travel (South Africa, Department of Tourism, 2019). In 2017, 17.2 million total overnight domestic journeys were recorded, a decrease of 29.2% from the previous year's figures. The Department of Tourism (2019) reported a small increase (2.8%) in total overnight domestic trips of 17.6 million in 2018, compared to 17.2 million in 2017. In 2019, there was a substantial increase (61.3%) in the overall number of overnight domestic trips, with 116 million trips reported. The most common purpose for travel was visiting to friends and family. Domestic travel was fully shut down when COVID-19 surfaced in early 2020 due to the lockdown limitations that impeded people's movement. On the other hand, international travel has been a major driver of tourism in South Africa. This could be because South Africa has been highlighted as a preferred destination in sub-Saharan Africa, with at least ten million international arrivals registered annually between 2016 and 2019. (Department of Tourism, 2019). Between 2018 and 2019, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany were the top three international source markets (Department of Tourism, 2019). However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 71% drop in foreign markets due to the closure of international borders. The worldwide market is starting to pick up again as countries begin to ease regulations, but at a slower rate than before.

According to Stats SA (2021), before the pandemic, South Africa's unemployment rate was at 28.7%. The unemployment rate currently stands at 35.3%, the highest since the quarterly labour force survey began in 2018 (Reuters, 2022). The weakened situation of the domestic economy because of the pandemic, which resulted in numerous job losses, has hampered people's capacity and affordability to travel, according to the Department of Tourism (2021). As a result, the domestic market alone lacks the capability to maintain the sector's stability, necessitating the return of foreign travel in accordance with the "new normal." Furthermore, this shift resulted in significant lay-offs, spiking unemployment and had far-reaching consequences for local communities and businesses. According to Arndt et al. (2020), tourism is made up of a variety of activities, all of which were adversely impacted by the lockdown. Since the lockdown began in March 2020, the Department of

Tourism (2021) has seen a dramatic drop in hotel sales, airline traffic, and the hospitality business. The reliance on inbound tourism to keep the tourism industry afloat gives rise to the idea that domestic tourism is a strong challenger in terms of the measures being taken to protect the tourist industry from serious devastation. Furthermore, Mazimhaka (2007) contends that, even though overseas visitors bring in a significant amount of money, domestic tourism is the foundation of a destination's tourism industry. One could argue that this adage is particularly applicable to countries that are more economically developed, as evidenced by the fact that many individuals in Europe travel domestically and within European countries (Statista Research Department, 2021). However, applying the same concept in less economically developed countries, where there is a large socio-economic imbalance, may be a bit of a stretch. This is because people were unable to travel overseas and therefore had to spend their discretionary income within their own countries. European countries such as Germany, Italy, France, and Spain, to mention a few, experienced a boom in internal tourism after the lockdown limitations were lifted (Statista Research Department, 2021). However, this is not the case in developing countries such as South Africa, where the bulk of the population is struggling to meet their basic needs because of employment losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Panashe, 2020).

11.2.2 The South African Township Tourism

The apartheid policy in South Africa was strengthened through the formulation of several policies that favoured the ruling party of the time. Mbambo and Agbola (2020) contend that when the Urban Areas Act of 1923 was enacted, it recommended the clearance of slums in urban areas where Black people lived. In addition, the Act gave authority to municipalities to establish separate locations for African people, mainly on the outskirts of urban areas. The origins of townships in South Africa date back to the late 1920s. Van Den Berghe (1966) argues that it was when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 that they proceeded to make large-scale segregation as impermeable as possible through the policy of the "Group Areas Act." According to Maharaj (1997), under the Group Areas Act (1950), the cities and towns of South Africa were divided into segregated residential and business areas. Thousands of coloureds, blacks, and Indians were removed from areas classified for white occupation. Van Staden (2019) contends with Van Den Berghe (1966) that it was both the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 that were responsible in very large measure for the dislocation and relocation of millions of blacks, coloureds and Indians away from the cities. Van Den Berghe (1966) further states that tens of thousands of people were expropriated, expelled from their domiciles and relocated according to their skin colour. This was then how townships were established in South Africa. Omonona et al. (2021) contend that the township as a concept is used to describe historically developed places (through central planning) to racially segregate South African cities and generate labour

pools for the colonial and apartheid economies. People of colour had to thrive under hard conditions in the townships. The post-apartheid era in South Africa has seen major townships becoming popular tourist attractions with lots of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Petersen et al. (2020) identified township economies and the informal sector as ones that continue to represent important livelihood options in attempts to reinforce the heavily damaged South African economy after the prolonged impacts of COVID-19. South African townships are places that are highly populated and so provide plenty of business opportunities. Petersen et al. (2020) further state that the structure of the township economy is poorly understood, and most micro-enterprises operate outside of an effective policy environment. “Township economy” is referred to by Retief (2021) as enterprises and markets based in the townships. Township entrepreneurs operate these enterprises. Township enterprises are diverse, with a high rate of informality and provide a range of goods and services to meet the needs of township communities and beyond. Retief (2021) further likens the township economy to a heart that never stops beating, where resiliency and hard work prevail over hardships. Much work still needs to be done to ensure that the needs of township dwellers are taken care of through the provision of basic services and necessary infrastructure. SME South Africa (2021) states that the impact of past neglect, lack of investment, overpopulation and isolation from urban centres is still largely evident today. Most notably with the lack of resources and infrastructure and high unemployment levels, townships have always been disadvantaged.

Mbambo and Agbola (2020) have asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a widespread economic slowdown in townships and rural economies and has also affected different sectors of the economy. Retief (2021) further argues that townships bring hope for the fulfilment of dreams and fortunes. Omonona et al. (2021) state that townships were previously viewed as dormitory settlements plagued by unemployment, poverty and crime, high population density, informality, poverty, general socio-economic backwardness, and apartheid’s footprints still exist. SME South Africa has listed popular township businesses, including Internet cafes, car wash, hair salons, bulk buying/reselling, youth entertainment, coffee shops, food markets, towing services, tourist guiding services and tour operating services, as well as hospitality services. The participants in this study included tour operators, tourist guides and hospitality business owners.

The UNWTO referred to 2021–2022 as a year of “Tourism for Inclusive Growth,” and the theme was further reinforced by the 2020–2021 theme of “Tourism and Rural development.” Mahlalela (2021) found the two themes to be going hand in hand because it is impossible to have inclusive growth without a self-reliant and vibrant township economy. Mahlalela further stated that there could never be a vibrant township economy without tempering the economy’s base and superstructure, unleashing wholesale transformation and bringing in people who are black in the majority into the country’s economic activity. It gives hope to see the Department of Tourism in South Africa paying attention to the value of the township economy.

11.2.3 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Industry

Many types of disruptive events, including terrorist attacks such as 9/11, natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods), epidemic outbreaks such as Ebola, SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV, swine flu, and others, have had an impact on global tourism in the past (Wen et al., 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating global influence on practically every business, including tourism (Yeh, 2021). The virus spread to all continents through the movement of people (travel) via air transport and internally in communities through contact with the infected persons (Jaipuria et al., 2021). If not controlled, the virus would continue to spread infection at an exponential rate (Nicolaidis et al., 2020). Many nations have closed their borders totally or partially to restrict the spread of the virus and have cancelled all flights and events, including sports, pilgrimages, entertainment, conferences, and other gatherings. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicted that international tourists would drop by 1–3% in 2020 compared to 2019, rather than the expected growth of 3–4%. As a result, there has been a considerable slowdown in global tourism. Following the temporary lay-off of more than half of the tourism industry's personnel, Gössling et al. (2020) note a sharp decline in the number of international flights. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the tourism industry suffered a loss of up to US\$ 2.1 trillion and a loss of up to 75 million jobs in 2020 (WTTC, 2020).

A 50% decline in employment and income was evident in the travel industry, which includes airlines, accommodation, and restaurants. Job loss, salary cuts, scrapping off work benefits, and temporarily laying off workers were some of the strategies which tourism businesses adopted to remain afloat and reduce losses (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Riadil, 2020; Škare et al., 2021). Some businesses had to decide with clients to postpone their travel until a time when the situation had improved, all in trying to save the industry (Gursoy et al., 2021). In 2020, airline losses were predicted to reach US\$84 billion, more than three times the loss incurred during the Global Financial Crisis (The World Economic Forum, 2020). Because of the devastating effects of the pandemic, most airlines were grounded for some time (Jaipuria et al., 2021). Several accommodation establishments, such as hotels, had to close, while some were converted to quarantine centres (Hoang et al., 2021). Most of the travel and tourism businesses, including restaurateurs, hotels, recreation centres, and attractions, saw an increase in operational costs emanating from the need to comply with COVID-19 preventative measures set up by governments. These additional costs resulted from conforming to healthy practices such as ensuring hygiene, sanitation, and social distancing. As a result, maintaining profitability in the face of this crisis became difficult for tourism businesses.

11.2.4 Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory (ST) is a perspective of capitalism that emphasises the interdependent interactions between a firm and those (individuals and organisations) who have an interest in the affairs of the business (Dmytriiev et al., 2021). The Stakeholder Theory (ST) was adopted in this study as it highlights the significance of understanding the role of different stakeholders in the delivery of tourism products. The ST was developed by Freeman in 1984 and hinged on the principle that all stakeholders are important to the success of a business. Additionally, the ST advocates for every stakeholder to play a role in delivering quality services. This framework was fundamental to this study as it enhances understanding of the various stakeholders who affect or are affected by township tourism. The ST has been widely used in various fields, including social sciences, where different players are seen as critical to the success of developmental projects (Khazaei et al., 2015). Researchers such as Duarte-Alonso and Nyanjom (2017) agree that involving all stakeholder groups in tourism planning promotes sustainability. Community engagement and collaboration among all the stakeholders have long been seen as key planning principles for tourism development (Jamal & Getz, 1995). In times of crisis, such as when pandemics and disasters confront societies, stakeholder engagement and participation are critical to addressing the resulting challenges (Yeh, 2021).

11.3 Research Design and Methodology

11.3.1 The Study Area, Sample and Data Analysis

The research was carried out in Langa, one of the oldest townships in Cape Town, which is home to the predominant African population (Ebrahim & Muresherwa, 2021). Figure 11.1 illustrates the map of Langa (the study area) and the positions of other township areas around Cape Town. This township is situated on a big plot of land covering around 300 hectares and is approximately 10 km southeast of the city's central business district (Ndzumo et al., 2021). The region was founded in the 1920s as a dormitory township for Black migrant labourers, and its development represents the growth of Africans' presence in metropolitan centres throughout South Africa's history (Coetzer, 2009). It is possible to still see some of the early infrastructure works from the township's early days, such as various old churches, which are still standing today. As per the last population census in 2011, Langa recorded a total of 52,401 people constituting 17,402 households, making it a heavily populated area in South Africa (Stats South Africa, n.d.). Data from the recent census conducted in 2022 is yet to be published and is assumed to have increased with the annual population growth and immigration. Because of its development, particularly in terms of political and historical features, Langa Township became a fascinating case study to be explored in this study. The area encountered various



Fig. 11.1 Map showing study area – Langa Township. (Source: *Authors*)

difficulties in becoming an urban segregated residential township, including social conflict between municipal officials and community members (Ndzumo et al., 2021). The area has generated prospects for a unique “slum tourism” niche sector, which has resulted in several individuals travelling to the area for a unique township experience (Iqani, 2016). Some local people from Langa Township have seen opportunities offered by the area and have become entrepreneurs, running successful tourism businesses, thereby making “... a stable, lucrative, and steady income,” and as a result, money is being generated for the local economy (Iqani, 2016:71).

Focus group discussions with community tourism forum members from Langa Township were conducted on 10 November 2021. The focus group discussion method was chosen as it investigates in depth how the group members think and feel about a given topic. Before the focus group discussion, the Langa Township tourism forum chairperson invited all his members (over 25) to attend the meeting where aspects related to the study were discussed. Because of various challenges, including delayed transport to reach the meeting venue by some members, only a few arrived on time, while most only showed up when the meeting had concluded. Eventually, the researchers undertook structured and focused discussions with a small group of eight Langa Township tourism forum members. Aligning with Krueger and Casey (2002), who suggested that six to eight participants are sufficient for a focus group interview, the researchers were pleased to continue with the discussion with the eight forum members. These community tourism forum members included local community members who managed or owned a tourism business in Langa Township.

The focus group participants managed or owned businesses, including four tour guides, two tour operators and travel agencies, and two accommodation and restaurant owners. Their experiences and collective opinions regarding how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their businesses enabled discussions around the solutions and roadmap towards industry recovery. The discussion was moderated by a researcher who asked the questions and allowed the participants to respond, add or comment, support the presented ideas, or contradict what the other participants would have highlighted. The goal of the discussion was to gather useful insights into the study phenomenon (Collins & O'Brien, 2003). While conducting the focus group discussions, the researchers had a chance to observe and consider the participants' feelings, views, expressions, beliefs, and responses, which helped make sense of the collected data (Gundumogula, 2020). Thomas et al. (1995) note that in most cases, the data acquired through social interaction is richer than that obtained from a one-to-one interview. This is mainly because a social environment could encourage participation from those who could be hesitant to be interviewed alone or those who may believe they have nothing to say (Kitzinger, 1995). The data collection process was flexible and permitted free discussion and sharing of ideas (Gundumogula, 2020).

The focus group discussion explored domestic leisure tourism to draw lessons from which township businesses could learn, especially in times of crisis such as COVID-19. This was done within 1 hour and 15 minutes and was meant to collect in-depth information and viewpoints from the eight participants. With the group's consent, the discussion was recorded and transcribed. The emerging themes from the discussion were identified and coded for analysis using thematic analysis. The analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps which started with familiarisation with the collected data to the last step, where a write-up was undertaken. The other steps in Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for conducting a thematic analysis included generating codes, searching for themes, and reviewing the themes. Direct quotations were often used to capture or express the participants' personal experiences and opinions related to the study phenomena. During the discussions, the researchers asked questions that enabled probing for more information and mainly to clarify the provided responses. To gain more understanding of the data, it was necessary to read through the transcript and listen to the recording again to help ensure that the correct information was captured during transcription.

11.4 Results and Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings from a researcher-moderated focus group discussion. The findings are presented in three ways; firstly by highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected township tourism businesses. Secondly, the ways township tourism businesses and relevant tourism stakeholders can encourage local participation in tourism are presented. Thirdly, the themes surrounding factors restricting local participation in domestic leisure travel are presented.

11.4.1 Impact of the Pandemic on Township Tourism Businesses

The pandemic reduced tourist flows to many tourist destinations, affecting several businesses. The participants' effects were "reduction in employee wages," "furlough or redundancies," "cancellation of bookings" and "postponement of travel." For those who opted to postpone their travel, it was challenging to know when they would travel, noting that regulations and travel restrictions were changed at any time, making it even worse for businesses to plan. The participants of the focus group discussions expressed how the pandemic affected tourism in Langa Township, and this is illustrated in the following excerpts:

... biggest challenge is getting many cancellations from guests ... [Guesthouse Owner].

... we are in tough times, and nearly everyone feels the effect... the small businesses suffer the most. I had cancelled several tours and did not know when things would get better [Tour Operator].

In the last 18 months, the COVID-19 pandemic with the subsequent government lockdown restrictions have decimated Langa's tourism to the brink of collapse. ... due to inactivity, many Langa tourism companies were forced to close their businesses, resulting in many tour guides being unemployed. Langa and Soweto are the most visited townships in South Africa by foreign tourists, and tourism is the lifeblood of Langa. Langa's economics were and still are negatively impacted by the events of the past 18 months. With the government slowly opening the economy and the growing number of people vaccinated, foreign tourists' arrival numbers are on the up. [Travel Agent].

I had to lay off most all my staff temporarily... the bigger businesses could make better deals such as cutting pay and taking benefits off. For small and emerging businesses, this is difficult ...I work for one company [non-tourism] and had my salary reduced by 50%, which was better. Now, think about the small operators. Where do they get the money from? [Restaurant Owner].

Most of the tours run got cancelled, leaving the staff with nothing to do, so we had to amend contracts and eventually terminate them. These were not easy decisions noting that we had established good working relationships with our staff and the entire team. Debts were missed ... as we did not have money for that [Tour Operator].

Several businesses had to close since operational costs kept increasing, which did not favour businesses. The effect of COVID-19 especially forcing businesses to halt operations, has been widely reported in the literature since the beginning of the pandemic (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Rogerson, 2021; Rogerson et al., 2021). Business closure was a strategic response to try and keep costs down while devising more strategies to recover from the impacts of the pandemic (Kenny & Dutt, 2022). Some forum members knew of some businesses that had to close or scale down operations, which varied with the different levels of alert levels instituted by the government as the situation was closely monitored. Despite the challenges faced by

the tourism sector, there were signs of recovery emanating from the government's easing restrictions and vaccination efforts (Dzobo et al., 2021; Mutanga & Abayomi, 2022).

11.4.2 Impediments to Local Participation in Domestic Leisure Tourism

The adoption of domestic tourism as a strategy for industry recovery has been pursued by various countries (Li et al., 2010; Cakar, 2018; Arbulu et al., 2021; Makuzva & Mabaleka, 2021). The implementation of this strategy, particularly in developing contexts such as South Africa, is challenged for several reasons. The high unemployment rate, ineffective communication, rising inflation and limited disposable income are obstacles to implementing a practical domestic tourism approach (Rogerson, 2015; Ezeuduji & Dlomo, 2020; Makuzva & Mabaleka, 2021). The focus group discussion revealed a consensus that locals do not travel, the attitude of locals towards travel has been unpleasant, especially for tourism businesses whose survival is only when there is more travel which includes locals. When the participants were prompted to highlight the reasons why locals did not travel, "affordability," "no travel interest," "perception of costs," and "differing values" emerged as some of the reasons for the lack of travel by township residents. Ezeuduji and Dlomo's (2020) study revealed a general lack of travel interest among locals, mainly from affordability. The following excerpts from the interviews highlight the factors influencing participation in domestic tourism by residents of Langa Township:

...what I have noticed, even not only locals like [such as] domestic, many people of black South Africans, do not see any interest to go to Cape Point. They might want Robben Island, just mainly for the history of South Africa relating to Mandela. They do not see the value of going to Cape Point. And these tours are very costly... [Tour Operator].

... I think tourism needs to start changing the perception [changing people's perception that tourism is expensive]. I know it has become costly, but I think you need to put a value on it so that we make it more meaningful. Because there's a lot that I think people miss around it [Tour Operator].

Lack of understanding of the concept of tourism was also mentioned as a factor influencing locals' perception of tourism. This needs to be changed to ensure that local people see value in what their destination offers. Mobilising people to see value in visiting local leisure sites, including more local marketing of the city's attraction since the market is reachable, as seen in the following quotes:

Cape Town Tourism has the mandate to market Cape Town domestically ...they tend to go to Europe, Asia and all the other continents... that is where the money is ..., but COVID taught us something we need ... my business survives through domestic market... I think it's high time we change our business model to focus domestically because one of the greatest things about business is that it's always very good to have a tangible and reachable market. I can easily get on a flight and meet a group of Stokvel in Johannesburg and convince them

to come in the next season... we need to rely on our domestic market. The domestic market lacks money, but you can be flexible with the model (costing) [Travel Agent].

As seen in the above excerpt, pursuing a domestic market is possible when certain things are done, such as extensive domestic market marketing and offering discounts and promotions to induce demand for local attractions. These strategies have been undertaken in several countries before, during and in the post-pandemic era (Matsuura & Saito, 2022). More importantly, changing the perception that travel is for white people needs to be changed, according to one of the forum members:

... there's a huge Black culture that travelling is for White people ... that is one of the things that I'm trying to change – that narrative, perception. I've got friends that will blow R2000 [+USD\$122.00] easily on drinks [alcohol], R2000 on Friday, R2000 on Saturday, and R2000 on Sunday, it's easy ... But you need to be able to convince that person that the R6000 [+USD\$366.00] could have been spent wisely on local travel... I really dispute the affordability issue within the Black communities ... you will find many easily buy R800 [+USD\$52.00] worth of bottles of Whiskey. But will explain to you that they do not have the money ... it all points to value. Alcohol plays a huge role in all this. In fact, it's [alcohol] a very big competition, a lot of different things. [Tour Operator].

The participants stressed the need for a travel culture to be built among township residents. This can be achieved through the promotion of local travel and raising awareness about local leisure sites within their areas and city. This exercise requires unified efforts by all tourism stakeholders within the community to work towards a common goal. Based on the stakeholder theory, quality service and the success of the tourism industry are hinged on equal participation by all the key players (Freeman, 1984). Business owners can deliver guest lectures and talks at schools in townships, and in some instances, where possible, learners can be taken out to at least experience what their city offers. When the travel culture is cultivated from a younger age, it may help strengthen an understanding of the importance of travel and tourism, allowing them to see the value in travel. Brougère (2012) supports the idea of ensuring that children get to experience travel at younger ages by taking “edutainment” as this leads to better learning and appreciation of travel. Collaboration amongst businesses, mainly working towards the same goal of promoting domestic leisure travel, remains critical. Several authors (e.g. Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021; Muresherwa et al., 2022) also note the importance of business collaboration for achieving destination goals. Local tourism organisations may also assist with providing relevant support such as information dissemination, funding where possible and working closely with the various community stakeholders to propel domestic tourism.

Thus, several factors contribute to locals not participating in domestic leisure travel, including economic conditions and leisure time (Li et al., 2016). In addition, a low travel attitude and motivation is evident in different groups of people in South Africa (Ezeuduji & Dlomo, 2020). The current study revealed that township residents' lack of a “travel culture” could result from a “lack of understanding of tourism” concepts. While some attribute it to a lack of finance (e.g. Li et al., 2016), the

study participants disputed this notion indicating that value is not placed on leisure travel “I dispute the affordability issue within the Black communities...” A change in “people’s perception,” “education and awareness” would remedy this.

11.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is without a doubt that the tourism sector was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in numerous businesses closing down. Regrettably, the lockdown plan had to be implemented internationally to ensure public safety, especially in preventing the spread of the virus. Domestic leisure travel has been seen as a feasible strategy for the industry’s recovery. However, for its implementation to be effective, it requires careful planning and support from various industry stakeholders.

The study adds value to the understudied phenomenon of the contribution of domestic leisure tourism in helping marginalised communities to participate in domestic travel. The perspectives of township tourism business operators in domestic travel participation have been revealed. The anticipated role of government in minimising the severity of the impact of the pandemic on township tourism business operators has been discussed. Thus, the government’s involvement in promoting and encouraging local participation in domestic leisure travel remains critical. Township residents’ mobilisation through local travel campaigns, awareness geared towards changing people’s perception and offering discounts were among the strategies suggested to enhance domestic leisure participation.

This study provides destination tourism marketers with information that may assist in decision-making, particularly on how to better service the leisure travel needs of previously neglected groups of people. Furthermore, tourism planners and government agencies could benefit from the study as it highlights some insights on strategies that could work to encourage more participation in local tourism. Future studies could explore what the residents themselves think is restricting their participation in domestic leisure and what they think could be done to address this. In addition, a follow-up study could be undertaken in the post-pandemic era to ascertain if the identified factors hindering township residents’ participation in domestic travel re-emerge. The findings can then be compared with the current studies and strategies for more local participation.

Considering the study findings, the recommendations such as marketing township tourism as a niche; adopting pricing strategies (e.g. discriminatory pricing strategy) that make leisure attractions in Cape Town more affordable; more public-private awareness campaigns aimed at changing residents’ perceptions about tourism as well as government to prioritise financial support for the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) operating within the township are proposed.

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Chapter 12

Redefining the Idea of Equal Distribution of the Benefits of Tourism in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Kevin Phun and Segun Obadire

Abstract Equal distribution of benefits in tourism has always been a complicated matter, compounded by the fact that communities are never homogenous and tourism communities vary in type. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of tourism, including how tourism's benefits are perceived and distributed. The pandemic has shifted the focus in tourism from ensuring maximum revenues and high tourist arrivals to managing negative impacts associated with over-tourism and relooking at the notion of quality. Most literature on income distribution and sustainable development need to be understood holistically. This study conducted a secondary data analysis of the literature on tourism between 2020 and 2021. It used document analysis of survey reports from South Africa's National Department of Tourism, Statistics SA, and other relevant sources. It explored how researchers perceive COVID-19 and equal distribution of tourism benefits, considering sustainability perspectives. The study revealed that the tourism sector's resilience, adaptivity, flexibility, collaboration and co-creation are the premise for survival. It recommends that the private sector utilise different resources to help local communities address poverty, which must be understood as a multi-dimensional problem and not just an economic one.

Keywords Tourism · Equal distribution · Sustainable tourism · Local community · COVID-19

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12.1 Introduction

Equal distribution of benefits is a vague concept which mainly reflects economic benefits (Atuguba, 2013; Björk, 2007; Arts & Gelissen, 2001). This concept somehow limits the idea of tourism's many benefits and potentially makes sustainable tourism practitioners unaware of the possible non-economic benefits that tourism can generate for local communities. The quest for *equality* and non-discrimination in the *distribution* of development *benefits will* remain an ideal that *is never* realised (Atuguba, 2013). Many benefits brought by tourism cannot easily be shared equitably because they are not tangible (Björk, 2007), and the emphasis on equal sharing may cause us to lose focus on the more significant, more important task. Bridging the gap between the rich and poor, providing opportunities for poverty alleviation among the local communities and provision of skills acquisition programmes could be more important than benefits sharing for economic reasons alone (Nummela et al. 2020). Travels was disrupted by COVID-19 and this changed the way many communities do tourism (WHO, 2020). As a result, there is a need to relook at how and where tourism's benefits can come from, which makes it imperative beyond direct economic impacts. Less emphasis on equal sharing of benefits perhaps can contribute to peace, justice and equality issues in tourism communities (Arts & Gelissen, 2001).

In this study, we show that there is scope for stakeholders to contribute towards sustainable tourism. Dabphet (2012) asserts that diverse groups of stakeholders should be consulted when implementing sustainable tourism development principles; hence, it is important to consider that the issues of equity, justice and ethics which have remained unexplored concerning community-based tourism in the Republic of South Africa's context, are tackled. This study has the potential to generate insights which broaden our understanding of the benefits of tourism in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

12.2 Literature Review

COVID-19, which started as an epidemic in the Wuhan region in China, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020; CDC, 2019; Gallegos, 2020; Ramzy & McNeil, 2020). Illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was later termed COVID-19 by the WHO, the acronym derived from 'coronavirus disease 2019' (Obadire et al., 2020; Schiavone et al., 2020). A study by Škare et al. (2021) gave a vivid picture of the extent of the devastation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic on the travel and tourism industry, which the havoc meted was unparalleled to any of the previous pandemic worldwide. Depending on the dynamics of future pandemics (from April 2020 to December 2021), the travel tourism industry worldwide was expected to drop on average by 5% in the total GDP contribution (Škare

et al., 2021). Jobs in the travel tourism industry decreased by 3%. The study also shows that the estimated inbound tourist spending decreased by 5%. Total capital investments fell due to pandemics by 6% (Škare et al., 2021). Due to challenges related to lockdown, this has led to changes in how work is conducted, also affecting customers' loss of income within small business enterprises (Bressan et al., 2021). Attributions of this identified in other sectors are a shrinking budget base and dwindling cash flow (Škare et al., 2021). Due to this shrinkage, internal resources and capabilities are affected. The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly affected global travel and tourism (Deb & Nafi, 2020).

An adverse impact of the pandemic hard hit the aviation sector on various airport companies in South Africa and the region because of a series of travel restrictions placed on countries due to the lockdown (Dube, 2021). To reduce the spread of the pandemic, all countries imposed lockdowns and restricted domestic and international travel (Deb & Nafi, 2020). Meanwhile, tourism is related to human movement, which is adversely troubled by travel restrictions because of the pandemic (Manolova et al., 2020). Tourists could not access countries and local tourist destinations (Deb & Nafi, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has also taken a toll on financing options available to enterprise development, limiting the funding and financing options available to entrepreneurs in the tourism sector (Brown et al., 2020). In some countries, women-owned businesses have a reduced chance of business recovery and are most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Manolova et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the socio-economic well-being of tourism employees (Dube, 2021). Many tourism employees were not paid as most companies adopted a leave programme and reduced working days, while others closed altogether, resulting in job losses (Suau-Sanchez et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). These further aggravated the poor conditions of local tourism operators. A study by Jung et al. (2021) lamented the impact of COVID-19 on job security and turnover for hotel employees, many of whom were forced to live below the poverty line. Resource components such as strategic, physical, financial, human and organisational resources are constantly redirected or reprioritised because of the pandemic (Jung et al., 2021).

Given the current social distancing measures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for an innovative approach to tourism business engagement going forward (D'Agostino et al., 2020). The idea of building resilient small businesses becomes an important focus. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundation for this is policies that encourage localised flows of product offerings while prioritising labour and diversification (Korsgaard et al., 2020). The focus should also be on equipping entrepreneurs within the COVID-19 era with the requisite coping skills and competencies (Doern et al., 2019). The pandemic has widened the inequality gap between the haves and the have-nots in the tourism industry. Those with enormous resources can afford to close their businesses for extended periods, unlike those with small tourism businesses who only depend on daily customer patronage and cannot survive without their businesses. For example, in an examination of Black American entrepreneurship, Gold (2016) and Dangi and Petrick (2021) revealed that race-based disadvantages included 'low level of earning, lack of

wealth, poor education, lack of experience in a family business, and difficulty in getting a loan (Gold, 2016: 1702; Walker et al. 2020). Rather than always aiming for equal distribution of benefits in tourism, the goal should be broader engagement with tourism stakeholders through the distribution of a wider variety of benefits. This study attempts to create a broader definition of the benefits of tourism to broaden our understanding of benefits beyond economic terms. According to Dabphet (2012), supporting tourism stakeholders is essential for tourism development, successful operation and long-term sustainability. Tourism stakeholders include different types of groups depending on their geographical locations. Perceptions and understanding of how benefits are shared cannot be assumed to be the same everywhere.

Snyman and Bricker (2021) note that revenue sharing or the sharing of economic benefits is not very straightforward and should reflect the costs experienced by local communities from tourism. This resonates with calls to move away from mainly focusing on economic benefits and the concept of equal sharing. Dabphet (2012) states that not all stakeholders have the same interest in sustainable tourism development; while some may be active, others may not. Hence, there is a need for broadening the engagement of tourism stakeholders rather than being overly concerned about how the benefits are to be shared equally, mainly when there is a growing awareness that tourism's benefits often come in different shapes and forms. According to Heslinga et al. (2019), in protected areas, benefit-sharing is 'the process of making informed and fair trade-offs between social, economic, and ecological costs and benefits within and between stakeholder groups'. This means that the idea of equal sharing is not straightforward. The aim could be effective sharing and not so much equal sharing. A study on the ethic of care by Dangi and Petrick (2021) shows that tourism made a remarkable contribution to enhancing community pride and respect for diverse cultural groups and their heritage which fosters community cohesion, one of the criteria outlined for community-based tourism (CBT) success (Mielke, 2012).

Some stakeholders are more important than others in determining the success of sustainable tourism development than striving to achieve equality in the distribution of benefits (Cooper et al., 2006). Striving to ensure that benefits are equally shared may also lead us to neglect those who often and usually contribute the least to tourism's growth but who may pay a heavy price when tourism grows, such as the vulnerable and the poor. Tourism stakeholders vary in size, power, number, control, and involvement, meaning that trying to ensure equal distribution of benefits will be difficult and risk, missing out on more pertinent issues. The perception of tourism is unique and can be assessed through many domains, such as transportation, lodging, land use, environment, social structure and entertainment exercises (Hayllar et al., 2011, cited in Afthanorhan et al., 2017). Wanner and Pröbstl-Haider (2019) concur that regulatory constraints, lack of information and low levels of awareness or knowledge of planning, amongst other factors, are to be considered a hindrance to local people benefitting from tourism. These factors potentially also ensure that the idea of equal sharing of benefits is not feasible. Rural tourism encompasses a wide range of activities, such as farm tourism/agritourism, food and wine tourism,

adventure tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, nature tourism and ecotourism (Karali et al., 2021). In many counties, numerous communities and family-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the rural sector contribute significantly to tourism revenues and employment (Jamal & Dredge, 2014). Placing too much focus on ensuring that benefits are equally distributed may prevent us from seeing the long-term or the bigger picture of inclusive tourism. Snyman and Bricker (2021) highlight that revenue sharing is tangible and intangible benefits, noting how it is only one way of sharing benefits from tourism and protected areas. It is also important to note that focusing on broadening the idea of benefits rather than mainly looking at revenues as benefits can help alleviate the impact of costs associated with tourism on stakeholders, such as increased local prices and loss of access to land, human-wildlife conflict and other related costs.

Muganda et al. (2012) note that in Tanzania, little is known about local communities' involvement in the sharing of tourism benefits and the extent to which tourism has contributed to improving local people's livelihoods. Expanding the involvement of local stakeholders is imperative to achieve a greater variety of tourism products and services. Dujmovic and Vitasovic (2014), cited in Nguyen (2021), argue that it is essential to develop new tourism products and destinations and provide tourists with more sources of inspirational experience. Borges et al. (2011) assert that by ensuring all stakeholders are involved from the beginning and throughout, more holistic decision-making can be achieved, and enhanced ownership from all parties is possible. Identifying different types of non-economic benefits of tourism could also help tourism communities become more resilient to external shocks. There seems to be an increase in the possibility of contributing to sustainable tourism by local stakeholders. Dabphet (2012) asserts that diverse stakeholders should be consulted when implementing sustainable tourism development principles. This makes a case for focusing less on achieving equal distribution of benefits and more on what benefits can be created and who can benefit even more critical.

Aas et al. (2005) assert that tourism stakeholders include any individuals or groups involved in, interested in or affected (positively or negatively) by tourism. Effective stakeholder engagement must, therefore, minimise potential conflicts between tourists and the host community by involving the latter in shaping how tourism develops. The tourism sector was hard hit during the lockdown and travel restrictions in most countries. It is high time stakeholders in the tourism sector develop innovative ways for businesses to thrive in the face of the pandemic. Local community stakeholders play essential roles as the preservers of the cultures and traditions in tourism sites worldwide. Hence, their roles should be given the necessary recognition like the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics, which Fennell (2014) says has no inclusivity and does not protect the welfare of those who, by their involvement as workers, entertainers, and competitors, is an integral part of the tourism industry's operations. Bianchi (2003) asserts that the involvement of residents in decision-making is key to sustainable tourism development and would also create increased acceptance and legitimacy of tourism as an economic development policy.

Similarly, Wanner and Pröbstl-Haider (2019) state that stakeholder involvement increases equity in decision-making, incorporates marginalised groups, helps us understand the diverse range of (potentially conflicting) interests and navigates specific issues regionally. The same authors also noted that the benefits of participation are felt most strongly if stakeholders are genuinely incorporated into decision-making and results (ibid). Muganda et al. (2012) further assert that obtaining socio-cultural and environmental returns from tourism requires the private sector's willingness to get into partnerships with the local community so that such business opportunities can be a way local communities can lift themselves out of poverty.

12.3 Theoretical Framework

In answering the research question on the equal distribution of tourism benefits in the pandemic era, an interpretive research philosophy using a qualitative research approach was utilised in this study (Ryan, 2018). The rationale stems from the praise of this philosophy and approach to understanding the complexity that accompanies human experience (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021). Such a philosophy and approach enable a subjective understanding of the meaning of social action and potential response sense-making (Jamal & Dredge, 2014). In previous studies, such a philosophy and approach have been utilised to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic within the human resource profession (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021). The dynamic capabilities perspective theory (Chesbrough & Rosenbloom, 2002; Rasmouna & Alwehabie, 2020) posits that dynamic capabilities exist as those competencies that assist the firm in responding to the rapid changes happening within the environmental context (Samsudin & Ismail, 2019). Given the environmental uncertainty, dynamic capabilities allow one firm to perform better than the other (Abbadly et al., 2021). Dynamic capabilities can assist in forming a competitive advantage (Rasmouna & Alwehabie, 2020). Dynamic capability activities are framed as sensing and seizing opportunities, including reconfiguring internal opportunities (Semke & Tiberius, 2020). The thinking is that small business owners will do everything to perform better despite challenges. The current challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic will merely be a stepping stone to rising above such a challenge. The stepping stone will come from the identified activities from the extant literature (Semke & Tiberius, 2020). To achieve this, the role of resources is critical together with an organisational culture (Glyptis et al., 2021). The dynamic capabilities approach also addresses relevant firm capabilities to adapt to fast change in an environment that threatens a firm's competitiveness and survival. Despite these conceptual similarities, their relationship remains opaque (Semke & Tiberius, 2020; Rasmouna & Alwehabie, 2020).

The participatory tourism development model, which integrates sustainable, equal distribution, has been described as citizen participation in the redistribution of power that enables have-not citizens excluded from the political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2021). It

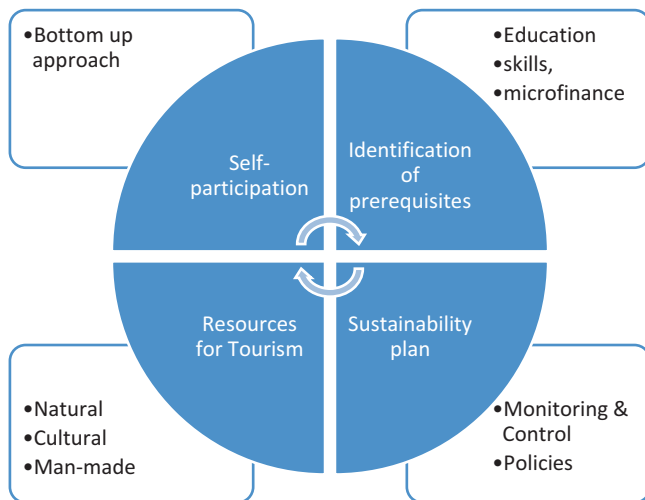


Fig. 12.1 Participatory tourism development model (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2021)

is a strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programmes are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parcelled out. Thus, the participatory tourism development model can induce significant social reform, which enables tourism stakeholders to enjoy the benefits of an affluent society.

‘CBT is a form of tourism that arose to offset the negative impacts of conventional tourism’ (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2017: 16; Mielke, 2012) such as leakages and loss of local control of natural resources. CBT ‘is increasingly being promoted as a means of reducing poverty and fostering local community development’ (Runyowa, 2017: 2). It has been found that CBT can work with mainstream tourism to strengthen links between tourism and local people (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2021). Figure 12.1 shows the concept of participatory and sustainable tourism that may enhance the equal distribution of tourism benefits (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2021). At the model’s core is the interdependency of processes involving stakeholders from start to finish. It allows the local community to take ownership of their tourism businesses rather than the ones prescribed by outsiders. It recommends local initiation and upskilling of human resources to build capacity, increase sustainability and conservation of the processes through monitoring and evaluation.

12.4 Materials and Methods

This chapter draws heavily from a secondary and extensive desktop literature review of the state of COVID-19 and the equal distribution of benefits of tourism development research in South Africa. The information and data from secondary sources

were analysed to identify emerging research trends, patterns, gaps and opportunities within the sector. The analysis is situated within the sustainable development theoretical framework. This study conducted a secondary data analysis of the literature on the equal distribution of tourism development from 2020 to 2021. The study used document analysis of survey reports from South Africa's National Department of Tourism, Statistics South Africa, and other relevant articles in the Google Scholar database. Sixty journal articles and documents with direct references to the paper's title were selected from hundreds of related articles (Table 12.1). The selected articles were further analysed using thematic content analysis to rank and review the identified themes. These themes were the most frequently mentioned in the reviewed articles. Emerging themes are discussed in the results and discussion section below. It explored how researchers perceive the COVID-19 pandemic and equal distribution of tourism benefits, considering sustainability perspectives. Ethical clearance was granted by the institutions with which the authors are affiliated (Patten et al., 2018).

Table 12.1 Review of journal articles on equal distribution of tourism benefits and COVID-19 between 2020 and 2021

Themes	Source of article	Reviewed articles	Samples of paper
COVID-19 as an induced sustainable tourism challenge	Google Scholar (26,500), National Department of Tourism (3), Statistics South Africa (4)	10	Dube (2021), Rahman et al. (2021)
Challenges confronting equal tourism distribution, social and economic development	Google Scholar (19,900), Statistics South Africa (2)	8	Loureiro et al. (2020)
Equal sharing of tourism's benefits versus broader engagement for inclusive growth	Google Scholar (21,000), Statistics South Africa (1)	10	Lo and Janta (2020), Dangi and Petrick (2021)
Alternative tourism business in the era of COVID-19	Google Scholar (26,500), Statistics South Africa (2)	7	Davchev (2020), Medeiros et al. (2021)
Prevailing opportunities towards achieving inclusive growth through sustainable tourism in the era of COVID-19	Google Scholar (26,000), Statistics South Africa (2)	11	Dangi and Petrick (2021), Ye et al. (2021)
Interest in sustainable tourism	Google Scholar (26,000), Statistics South Africa (1)	5	León-Gómez et al. (2021)
Unequal importance and locals' perceptions	Google Scholar (26,100), Statistics South Africa (3)	6	Andries et al. (2021)
Revenue sharing in the tourism business	Google Scholar (26,600), National Department of Tourism (1), Statistics South Africa (2)	3	Akbar and Yang (2021)
		60	

12.5 Results and Discussion

The findings in this study are presented based on the identified eight themes, which are compressed into five. The results in the study are critically discussed from various perspectives from previous authors, with inferences from other relevant documents as well.

12.5.1 *COVID-19 as an Induced Sustainable Tourism Challenge*

Findings from the reviewed articles (67%) indicate that COVID-19 has adversely affected the tourism sector, which was almost halted due to several travel restrictions imposed by different states. Most of the literature reviewed (75%) confirmed that social distancing and other COVID-19 protocols prevented people from visiting tourist destinations where we usually have large crowds. It was reported that, in South Africa, the Kruger National Park (KNP) was closed to visitors at some point (SANPARKS, 2021), while hotels and recreational centres were put on lock and key. This was discussed by Dube (2021) that the chaos brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the tourism market, wreaking havoc on tourism company stocks. Most authors agree that human activities in agriculture, manufacturing, consumer, tourism, entertainment and education usually occur face to face and sometimes in a virtual environment (Obadire et al., 2020). One author highlighted that tourists' travel risk and management perceptions are crucial in their decision to travel during the ongoing uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic (Rahman et al., 2021). This study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic had ruined all the previous narratives on development. Governments worldwide have imposed lockdowns at an enormous scale in human history to control the spread of the pandemic (Obadire et al., 2020); this was supposed to be a temporary measure, according to some authors.

However, unfortunately, the lockdown became prolonged, negatively impacting tourism businesses worldwide. As Rahman et al. (2021) report, the consequences of the pandemic could change many aspects of human life and business, including tourism management, as almost half of the global population adopted restrictions on movement at an unprecedented scale. According to Dube (2021), it is essential to look at how restrictions by COVID-19 could be reviewed in favour of tourism businesses in South Africa. Many reviewed articles show that COVID-19 has brought about devastating health challenges to the local populace, thereby exacerbating the economic downturn, and the survival of ordinary tourism businesses was in jeopardy.

12.5.2 Challenges Confronting Equal Tourism Distribution and Social and Economic Development

The study revealed various challenges faced in equal tourism benefits distribution in South Africa, some of which emanate from the pandemic while others are because of existing disparities between the haves and the have-nots in the tourism sector. Some of the reviewed articles (18%) believe that local tourism players usually cannot meet specific policy requirements and standards due to a lack of access to required resources. This view was corroborated by Jamal and Dredge (2014), who state that the controlling and integrating forces in international tourism are primarily the large multinational ‘First World’ companies that control airlines and hotel chains that facilitate and manipulate the movement of large numbers of travellers, hence ‘mass tourism’. However, it is unclear to what extent particular developmental vehicles, such as tourism, are effective in addressing these issues, especially as many of the problems facing developing countries may be the outcome rather than the cause of underdevelopment (Jamal & Dredge, 2014). There are success stories of sustainable livelihoods and ecological conservation, such as in rural Botswana (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010) and Brazil (Pegas & Stronza, 2010).

On the other hand, critiques of the political economy of tourism and the neoliberal agenda suggest that pro-poor tourism initiatives should also be cautiously approached (Jamal & Dredge, 2014). Nearly 38% of the reviewed articles emphasised that cultural empowerment under conditions of oppression is not entirely precluded when state and tourism interests intervene. However, there is hope that tourism can foster rather than hinder cultural well-being, self-determination, self-reliance, a sense of pride and respect, local control and sustainable livelihoods (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2010; Jamal & Dredge, 2014). Some authors (46%) mentioned that the local community around tourism destinations are the custodians of indigenous knowledge concerning the site. Often, these people are marginalised while the sites are being defiled or polluted. Hence they sometimes result in violence. A conflict of this nature is not supposed to erupt if proper stakeholder engagement processes are in place (Loureiro et al., 2020).

12.5.3 Equal Sharing of Tourism’s Benefits Versus Broader Engagement for Inclusive Growth

Some of the articles reviewed in the study confirm that broader engagement amongst tourism stakeholders has multiple benefits; according to Lo and Janta (2020), residents in a CBT project lost several valuable natural resources, like land, to outside investors, with many guest houses owned by outsider investors. This justifies calls to move away from focusing only on moving equal benefits to ensure that engagements or involvement in tourism is widened. Broadening the engagement of stakeholders gives ethical tourism a more robust framework, while focusing less on equal

sharing of benefits and more on seeing how tourism's benefits can be more widely shared can also help enhance the notion of ethical tourism. The study by Gebara (2013) as shown that effective implementation of local participation would be a recipe for success in empowering local stakeholders.

It was shown from this study that community-based participatory tourism development would increase equity in tourism benefit distribution among the stakeholders. Findings from this study agree with previous authors (Jamal & Dredge, 2014; Dixey, 2009) on tourism's contributions to community development. It revealed a diverse range of forms and approaches to community-based tourism, as well as a wide variety of planning and community engagement tools. According to Jamal and Dredge (2014), development agendas have shifted to incorporate pro-poor initiatives as well as identifying 'triple bottom line' (environmental, economic and social) goals that comport with community development agendas. This study emphasises the importance of networking and training opportunities to empower small business owners in required skills such as microfinance, computer literacy, strategy and management in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The priority here could be alerting the small business owners to opportunities that may exist within their local context. Empowering small business owners is a welcome move from a dependency approach that seeks to ascribe responsibility to the government to investigate more significant benefits for the entire community (Dangi & Petrick, 2021).

12.5.4 Alternative Tourism Business in the Era of the Pandemic

Some of the reviewed articles emphasise the need to focus on innovative tourism business to transform some of the disruption brought about by the pandemic into a positive addition in the sector, such as looking for a modern way to express oneself, a function of the advancement in the new technology or the next touristic phenomenon (Davchev, 2020). A recent analysis of redefining and reorienting tourism offers new insights for rethinking tourism by providing alternative tourism businesses (Medeiros et al., 2021). Redefining tourism will include making people and the environment the priority during this period of health crisis rather than focusing on economic benefits only. Some authors in the review mentioned new product offerings like food tourism, slow food movements, fair trade tourism and organic farm tourism that offer additional opportunities for sustaining rural SMEs and agricultural communities (Fountain, 2021). Alternative tourism businesses were suggested by a few authors (12%), including virtual tourism on digital platforms (Lu et al., 2022). Although these types of tourism are still in the infant stages, they could be exclusive to well-established tourism practitioners. Some of the new technology and infrastructure may be out of reach to local tourism practitioners who are unfamiliar with the hi-technological requirements of virtual tourism and they may end up being excluded from the business by the rich tourism business companies

(Lu et al., 2022; Mura et al., 2017). It is clear from this study that a tourism management strategy has been developed to allow for inclusive local community participation despite the pandemic.

Collaborative networks and linkages between SMEs and communities, as well as between key stakeholders, including policymakers and funding organisations, are vital to practical community-based tourism in rural areas (see Albrecht, 2011; Jamal & Dredge, 2014). Such efforts are essential at this moment when possibilities for transformative change are made possible through the pandemic's disruption to business as usual (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Medeiros et al., 2021).

12.5.5 Prevailing Opportunities Towards Achieving Inclusive Growth Through Sustainable Tourism in the Era of COVID-19

Study findings revealed that the role of government is a critical success factor in stimulating rural tourism and poverty alleviation in both informal and formal sectors. Like any other African country, South Africa has made policy commitments to harness tourism for poverty reduction in rural areas (Dixey, 2009; Jamal & Dredge, 2014). It has been argued that qualitative changes, as opposed to quantitative changes in community conditions, should be emphasised when discussing development (Jamal & Dredge, 2014; Himberg, 2006). Nearly 58% of the reviewed studies indicated that project activities designed for community development should focus on ways of life rather than livelihoods, and the decision on the kind of development needs by the local people should not take place without the participation of the local people themselves. Those developmental needs should “draw upon their values, beliefs, traditions, and customs to guide the process of change (Jamal & Dredge, 2014). These are essential factors that will enrich the tourist experience in the area. Participation of the local community right from the planning stages will be inclusive of increasing direct engagement with tourists, thereby enhancing equal distribution of benefits for local tourism stakeholders.

The ability of rural tourism to contribute to community development goals and enable sustainable livelihoods across the developed and developing context continues to be challenged by declining agricultural incomes. Rural tourism is often affected adversely by global free trade policies, lack of marketing and business planning skills and lack of integrated approaches to policy-making, planning, development and marketing of rural tourism products and attractions (Ye et al., 2021). Some authors argue that the close interdependence of various parts of the community ecosystem has made early involvement of the community in local tourism planning a step in the right direction. Stakeholder engagement should leverage the large community of practice to provide solutions in favour of the local people who are in the business. The design of various training modules should include indigenous knowledge system experts led by the local people. According to most articles (65%),

governance has an essential role in addressing issues of justice, ethics and equity which need further research about sustainable tourism practices, including CBT (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Dangi, 2016; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Mielke, 2012).

12.6 Conclusion

The notion of equal benefits is often not easy to conceptualise clearly across different communities. The focus on ensuring that tourism's benefits be equally shared may well prevent tourism stakeholders from focusing on meaningful and necessary engagement and that shift in priorities is crucial for all stakeholders to assimilate sustainable tourism practices into business operations. Equal distribution of benefits should also be about non-economic benefits, as tourism can enhance local people's lives in many ways. Creating a conducive environment for stakeholder engagement to improve quality through providing adequate training for local tourism practitioners is also imperative. The idea of benefits being primarily economic can be widened to identify ways of improving the distribution of benefits, particularly by improving the engagement of the stakeholders. There could be some window of opportunity created by the pandemic to improve the ways certain stakeholder groups engage in tourism so that the benefits obtained can better meet local people's specific needs, thereby helping to address sustainable development objectives.

12.7 Recommendations

The study sought to redefine the equal distribution of benefits in tourism by looking more into sustainable development by providing inclusive tourism practices among practitioners. The recommendations could only be suggestive rather than prescriptive since tourism operations differ in various geographical, sociocultural, and economic contexts (Dangi & Petrick, 2021). It should be noted that specific industries are thriving even amid the pandemic of COVID-19. Stakeholders in the tourism sector should find innovative ways for business continuity during a pandemic such as COVID -19. Sustainable tourism development models require more proactive, inclusive, ethical tourism development. Dangi and Petrick (2021) observed that as much tourism helps promote cultural preservation and community pride and promotes a sense of mutual respect and understanding among visitors and stakeholders. Some local community practitioners felt they were not receiving the full benefits of tourism. Rather than looking at equal beneficitation in terms of monetary benefits, the government and established tourism companies should provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with local providers and find ways of improving the quality of local tourism products. However, we cannot rule out the provision of financial incentives for locals from tourism-related businesses, which could facilitate tourism business ownership by providing a conducive environment for easy access to funds

and infrastructure by the government and private establishments. There is a need to understand the constraints and limitations communities face in better tourism planning to prevent standardised strategies from being deployed so that sustainable development can happen for all stakeholders. Some of the standards raised due to the COVID-19 pandemic should be reviewed in line with the current situation in the local community. There is a need for community-industry partnerships in the tourism sector development for an inclusive strategy which increases equal beneficitation among locals on established tourism companies. Promoting tourism entrepreneurship and professional competency for the inclusive strategy for local community members will bring much-desired harmony to the sector.

Dangi and Petrick (2021) state that the road to sustainable tourism development has not been straightforward, including conceptual, implementation and governance challenges. Identifying innovative solutions to address the different costs faced by local tourism communities is imperative. Creating creative ways and means of how tourism could enable those with fewer resources to overcome situations they find themselves in could also help. Thus, enabling local communities to be able to partner with private sector entities to allow meaningful collaborations to be made possible, especially those with marginalised groups, is essential. Collaborations with private sectors, government departments and NGOs to organise capacity development training targeting all economically disadvantaged groups without discrimination could further enhance trust among locals and benefit all (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2017). Studies have shown that SMEs are the mainstay of any economy. Therefore, government interventions and monitoring processes should be developed in consultation with local stakeholders. The local indigenous knowledge and tradition, if well managed, will enrich the tourism destinations and improve the standard of living of the communities in the area.

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Part IV
Tourism Recovery and Resilience
in Zimbabwe and South Africa

Chapter 13

Examining COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience of Cape Town as a Tourist Destination



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Abstract Cape Town is one of the prime tourist destinations in Africa and a must-visit for many tourists worldwide, given the diversity of its product offering. The sheer size of the tourism industry is vast and diverse as its product offering. Regardless of the attractiveness of its product offering, Cape Town was equally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the contribution of Cape Town to the African and regional tourism economy, there is a need to understand its recovery and resilience to understand the challenges and opportunities emerging from the experiences of the pandemic. The study examines the impact of COVID-19 on Cape Town as a tourist destination and its recovery and resilience to the pandemic. The study uses archival data from Wesgro, the official tourism, trade and investment promotion agency for Cape Town and the Western Cape. The study found that though there had been a significant increase in tourist arrivals to Cape Town, the number did not reach the 2019 levels. The number of visitors to Cape Town attractions had grown slightly to more than 50% of the figures obtained in 2019. This points to the resilience of the tourism sector in Cape Town. However, the strong recovery comes with challenges that must be dealt with, such as staffing, training and resourcing, which the sector must address.

Keywords Tourism resilience · Tourism recovery · Challenges · Tourism markets

13.1 Background and Introduction

Tourism is a key industry with a significant global influence on economic development and growth (Thwala, 2022). Before the COVID-19 crisis, tourism accounted for 10.3% of the world's GDP in 2019 and created 330 million new jobs globally

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(Hervie et al., 2021). Before the COVID-19 outbreak in South Africa, the industry's growth was evident as the sector directly contributed R127.9 billion to the national GDP. However, this changed due to COVID-19 (Dube, 2021); there was a significant decrease in tourist numbers and a limited contribution to job opportunities as the industry shrank to levels never seen in recent history.

South Africa went into lockdown in March 2020. As a result, international arrivals were reduced to minimal levels (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021; El-Said & Aziz, 2022). Since then, there has been a slow recovery in tourist arrivals (Arbulú et al., 2021). The travel restrictions governments imposed worldwide disturbed the tourism industry's supply and demand (Dube et al., 2021a, b). Bartik et al. (2020) added that the ban on non-essential travel and closure of all tourism sectors such as attractions, accommodation, casinos, restaurants, car rentals, museums and the aviation industry negatively affected the tourism industry.

The impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions was mostly felt by the tourism communities, including rural and urban cities (Ranscombe, 2020; Phillipson et al., 2020). This is particularly so for those cities whose economies depend on tourism for their livelihood security. According to Rogerson and Rogerson (2020), the pandemic had a particularly destructive impact on eight metropolitans in South Africa. It is not difficult to understand why this has been the case, given that many depend on tourism as a critical socio-economic activity. Cape Town is one of the tourism hubs in the country's continent and the world (Dube et al., 2020).

Cape Town tourism was particularly vulnerable given that it was just recovering from the Day Zero drought that had ravaged the city for years, undermining the sustainability and profitability of many tourism enterprises with far-reaching implications for regional and national tourism fortunes (Dube et al., 2020). Therefore, it is critical to understand how a destination like Cape Town was affected by the pandemic and evaluate its resilience capacity and recovery. To that end, this study seeks to examine COVID-19 impact and recovery on one of the citadels of tourism in Africa, Cape Town. Central to this study is understanding how the pandemic affected the travel and tourism sector and seeing how it is emerging from the ashes of drought back to back with the pandemic.

13.2 Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has rearranged the global tourism industry with extensive implications for local communities and tourism businesses and their contribution to national and regional development and employment in the affected communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Although the pandemic has affected all economic sectors, the tourism industry was the worst affected as it was crippled by travel bans and blockages of people moving across territories which act as a feeder for the tourism sector (Martín-González et al., 2021). Other measures, such as suspension of mass events and lockdowns, were put in place to prevent people from gathering in specific areas (Del Chiappa et al., 2021). Tourism establishments such as hotels,

restaurants and tourist attractions were also partly or wholly closed. Such restrictive actions affected 90% of the world's population (Gössling et al., 2020), brought tourism activities to a standstill and drastically decreased the consistent growth of the travel industry (Niewiadomski, 2020).

A study by Dube (2021) observed that the pandemic's impact on the tourism industry has been overwhelming in the South African tourism market. It was further noted that international tourists' arrivals dropped by -86% year on year, adversely impacting accommodation bookings and air reservations. Due to the outbreak, destinations and communities such as Cape Town that rely heavily on international arrivals were the most susceptible to the effects of the regulations (Scholtz & De Ridder, 2021). Booyens et al. (2022) revealed that tourism establishments that were doing well, with high-occupancy rates and were profitable before COVID-19 restrictions, all reported financial losses because of the pandemic. For instance, some existing bookings were cancelled, visitor flows were clogged and operations stopped. This left business owners with the challenge of paying staff and bills, with some having to dip into their savings, negotiate pay cuts for others, and retrench workers, and for many, closing their businesses was the only way out (Cheer, 2020; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022).

A study by Booyens et al. (2022) revealed that among the tourism enterprises in Cape Town, only 32% were able to generate alternative income during the lockdown. Such enterprises employed small adaptive strategies as an alternative measure with the hope of saving their businesses. The recovery of tourism in Cape Town and South Africa is thus crucial because of the sector's economic significance and contribution to employment opportunities (Glocker & Haxton, 2020).

Even though travel and tourism activities were viewed as substantial contributors to the spread of the virus (Sigala, 2020), strong exponents of the industry upheld that tourism is significant for economic recovery owing to the resilience that it has presented in the past crises and disasters (Sharma et al., 2021). It is important to note that before the pandemic, tourism was one of the leading global economic sectors (Benghadbane & Khreis, 2019). Resilience was applauded as one of the critical strategies for potential tourism development to ensure survivability and sustainability in the sector (Dube, 2021). Kato (2018) indicated that the resilience theory helps to comprehend how tourism systems (organisations, communities and destinations) respond to exogenous shocks and disasters. Resilience relates to the ability of tourism destinations and organisations to return to a desirable state after exogenous shocks and adapt to the new normal (Jaaron et al., 2021). Resilience concentrates on 'the existence, development and engagement of community resources by community members in order to thrive in an environment exemplified by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise' (Magis, 2010:402).

According to Scholtz and De Ridder (2021), innovative policies, practices and guidelines concerning resilience and preparedness for imminent moments of the outbreak are needed. Arbulú et al. (2021) highlighted that domestic tourism is the key driver of the tourism sector's resilience globally, accounting for 73% of total travel and tourism spending in 2017. Martín-González et al. (2021) also added that in the context of South Africa, tourism was slowly recovering, pushed by domestic

tourism. A recent study (Musavengane et al., 2021) done at a private game park in Zimbabwe revealed that, as part of the tourism recovery strategy post-Covid, the park considered lowering its prices to accommodate more local people. Woyo (2021) alluded that revising the pricing framework and offering discounts and incentives to the domestic market is critical in attracting domestic tourists with little income to finance leisure travel. Through this response, the park offered special rates for groups and families of fewer than 30 people per visit. This was consistent with past studies (Woyo & Slabbert, 2020), which also revealed that the pricing framework for Zimbabwean tourism needs to be revised because, with higher prices, the effectiveness of domestic tourism as a post-pandemic recovery strategy is delicate. In support of this, Woyo (2021) argued that restarting tourism with higher prices for a domestic market with limited income is tricky.

Musavengane et al. (2021) also highlighted that the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) is on a drive to market Zimbabwe to its local people, using famous personalities as another recovery strategy. This can be applied in Cape Town as a tourist destination to boost domestic tourism. Famous personalities are also referred to as influencers, for instance, social media influencers (SMIs) (Thwala, 2022). SMIs are becoming notable stakeholders and are increasingly working with brands and destinations to promote domestic tourism marketing campaigns (Zhou et al., 2020). They generate electronic word of mouth (eWOM) to announce and recommend certain brands, products and destinations to consumers (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Predominantly, celebrities are primarily used as influencers since they have optimistic impressions of consumers' attitudes towards the brand, purchase intentions and eWOM intention (Lee & Kim, 2020). Subsequently, another useful post-Covid recovery strategy employed by the ZTA was an initiative to promote domestic tourism, named the initiative *ZimBho*, which is described as '*#ZimBho. we especially connect with our motherland, and we pride ourselves in it, #iZimYami and we will explore*' (Musavengane et al., 2021). This strategy has also been applied in iconic tourist destinations such as Cape Town through the *#CapeTownTourism* initiative/drive. This could help the tourism industry to develop from the negative impacts of COVID-19 and enhance post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience (Van der Merwe et al., 2021).

In South Africa, the National Department of Tourism (NDT) (2020) reported that they envisage reaching a target of 21 million tourists by 2030. The NDT highlighted that in 2020, as a recovery strategy, they recognised three countries as the next frontier travel growth markets: Nigeria, India and China. China was identified as a critical market for South Africa.

Moreover, a partnership was formed, which led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between South African Tourism and Tencent (a Chinese IT company). This partnership aims to promote South Africa as a preferred tourist destination in China. This will be used as a recovery strategy for SA, which will enable NDT to reach their targeted number of tourists post-COVID and further assist them in accessing multiple segments of Chinese travellers (NDT, 2020). Such recovery will also benefit Cape Town as a tourist destination.

Woyo and Nyamandi (2022) asserted that the tourism industry is expected to be more transformative, rationalised and collaborative despite these setbacks and shocks. For these aspects to be successful, tourism organisations must ‘be able to maintain confidence and physical security for their customers and employees’ (Rogerson & Baum, 2020). Verma and Gustafsson (2020) added that COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the operative environment for tourism and hospitality organisations, and they are now compelled to operate in newer and more resilient ways concerning changing priorities and responses. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) highlighted that since tourism is an information-intensive industry, it is important to understand changes in technologies and consumer behaviour that influence the distribution and accessibility of travel-related information to be able to utilise information in the innovation and development of responsive tourism policy and products that support post-crisis tourism recovery and marketing strategies (Matiza & Slabbert, 2022).

Yung et al. (2021) maintain that in a post-COVID-19 world, innovative technology is increasingly important to engage online visitors through web-mediated virtual information, providing remote experiences of destinations, garnering interest and inducing positive reactions towards tourism attractions. Sobaih et al. (2021) asserted that innovative organisations and those capable of adapting to changes demonstrated to be more resilient to crisis. To be innovative in the tourism industry, tour operators, travel agents, conference centres and hotels can record their features on video and make them available online for viewing by potential consumers; this is more relevant now during COVID-19. Tourism studies are interested in understanding how all these factors play out in tourism. How destinations were going to be altered by the pandemic is a matter of grave interest among tourism stakeholders and academics. This study, therefore, offers some insights into this matter.

13.3 Study Area

The study focused on examining the recovery and resilience of Cape Town to the COVID-19 pandemic. Cape Town is an iconic tourist destination famous for its various attractions, attracting millions annually. Some iconic tourist attractions include Table Mountain, V & A Waterfront, Chapman’s Peak Drive, Robben Island and its numerous Blue Flag beaches. Further afar is Cape Point, part of the Table Mountain National Park’s park, which includes the Boulders and the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway (Dube et al., 2021a, b). Cape Town is arguably the most visited tourist destination in sub-Saharan Africa. Cape Town offers diverse tourism products ranging from nature-based to leisure activities. It also has a vibrant nightlife, especially along Long Street.

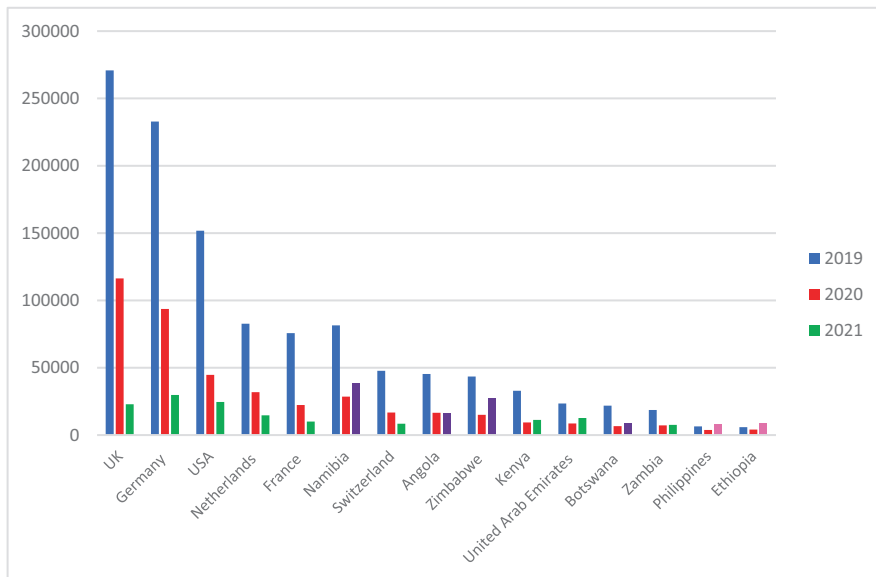
13.4 Methodology

The study largely depends on archival data, secondary data analysis and field observations made from 2020 to August 2022. The secondary data utilises quarterly and annual reports from Wesgro. Wesgro is charged with the promotion of investment and tourism in the Western Cape and Cape Town. It publishes timely data on the economic performance of Western Cape and Cape Town. The reports are important sources of information on the province's economic activities. The data was collected from primary data sources such as the South African national parks, South African national botanical gardens, V & A Waterfront and other attractions based on actual data. The usage of secondary data in tourism studies of this nature is acceptable, given that tourism entities continuously generate data from airline ticket bookings and engine searches. Data analyses followed content analysis of archived documents principally generated from tourism enterprise reports. To facilitate the data analysis process, relevant material that responds to the research objectives was screened through an in-depth iterative process. During the process, both qualitative and quantitative material was considered, and quantitative data went through additional analysis using Microsoft Excel ToolPak to ease reading trends.

13.5 Results and Discussion

The study examined recovery in tourist arrivals from Cape Town's leading 15 tourist source regions. The study found that prior to COVID-19, the leading tourism market for Cape Town at the international level was the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States and the Netherlands, which constituted the four leading source markets (Fig. 13.1). The region's top three tourism markets are Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe. The pandemic had a devastating impact on all the source markets. There is evidence that in as much as tourism is recovering, there is a much stronger recovery from the regional tourism market than from long-haul, long distances traditional source markets such as the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States in 2021 post the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine. The study confirms and is in tandem with the notion that the pandemic has forced short travels as travellers behave differently (Anwari et al., 2021; Guillen-Royo, 2022). This could also be attributed to various factors, including vaccine apartheid (Dube, 2022). The numerous travel warnings issued by Schengen, United Kingdom and the United States in 2021 adversely affected arrivals which limited and disrupted the recovery of the tourism market. Constant closure of the borders also adversely affected the recovery process in Cape Town.

On the other hand, there has been a strong recovery of the regional tourism market, with the arrivals in Namibia, Zimbabwe, the United Arab Emirates, the Philippines and Ethiopia surpassing figures obtained in 2020. The strongest rebound and recovery was witnessed in Ethiopia at 152%, the Philippines at 117%, Zimbabwe



Source: Data from OAG

Fig. 13.1 Top 15 source markets for Cape Town. (Source: Data from OAG)

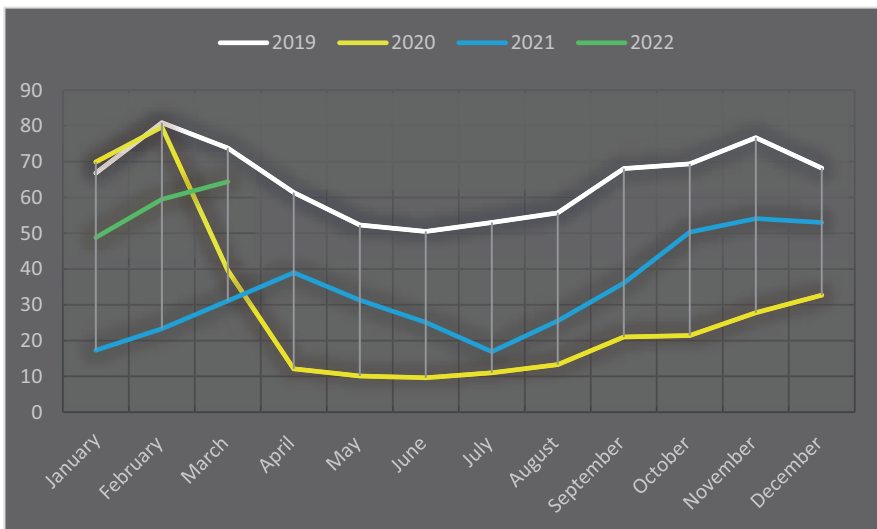
at 62% and the United Arab Emirates at 54% as of 2021. Interestingly, the recovery from the Philippines and Ethiopia tourism resulted in arrivals surpassing the figures obtained prior to the impact of COVID-19. It is unclear how the war in Ethiopia could have contributed to this picture. Further studies are needed to probe these patterns.

The robust recovery in the regional market in the neighbouring countries points to the importance of the regional market to tourism in the country and the city. Equally important, it also confirms the trend observed during the recovery period from COVID-19, where several tourists travel locally and shorter distances than before (Wachyuni & Kusumaningrum, 2020; Alessandretti, 2022). This trend is expected to be maintained as long as the uncertainties from COVID-19 remain. Previous studies show that long-haul travel during COVID-19 is particularly sensitive and vulnerable to pandemic-associated disruptions (Williams et al., 2022). The regional market shows that it is much more resilient to the swings of the tourism industry. With the increase in anti-foreigner sentiments targeted mainly at Zimbabwe nationals in South Africa, this picture might be altered as tourists are sensitive to conflict-ridden environments. Managing the anti-foreigner sentiments will be critical in helping the recovery of regional tourism. If the anti-foreigner sentiments are not addressed, it can also affect the arrival of international tourists into the country.

13.5.1 Nature-Based Tourism Recovery and Resilience

The study found that during the peak tourism season in Western Cape and Cape Town, hotel occupancies averaged 74% in 2019 before the pandemic (Fig. 13.2). This is the period when the hotel sector makes most of its profit to offset the low season, which usually occurs during the winter season in the whole of South Africa, but the rainfall season in Cape Town often occurs around June, July and August. The pandemic led to a plunge in arrivals and occupancies, with levels falling to about 10%, with lows witnessed between April and August 2020, when the country experienced its harshest lockdown.

Following the relaxation of travel restrictions in August 2020, there was hope for recovery, with occupancies reaching an average peak of around 35% at the close of 2020. The lockdowns were instituted during the festive season of 2020 when the country was forced into an adjusted level 3 out of 5, which came into effect on 28 December. The move pushed back recovery efforts with 2021 starting with low occupancies of around 20%. Unstable recovery continued, and after the below 40-year-olds were allowed to vaccinate in 2021, recovery has been on a steady increase, with 2021 closing with occupancies above 50%. The 50% mark was reached in October 2021 as more and more people gained travel confidence driven by the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out and increased confidence in health and safety measures that saw many places such as World Travel and Tourism Council safe destinations (Dube, 2021). Cape Town destinations led in this regard as the city



Source: Data from Wesgro

Fig. 13.2 Western Cape hotel occupancy first quarter trend 2019–2022 impact and recovery from COVID-19. (Data from Wesgro)

sought to project itself as a leading safe destination in Africa. This allowed them to operate and make some profits. The pandemic significantly impacted the occupancy, with an occupancy rate of 60% during COVID-19 in December 2019.

The recovery kept an exponential growth, with occupancy rates reaching nearly 65%, nearing levels that were witnessed before the pandemic. This demonstrates the resilience of the hospitality industry in Western Cape and Cape Town, which accounts for a significant number of hotel rooms in the province.

In as much as there is some evidence of recovery, the study found that if one considers key hotel indicators, there are still challenges in various segments of hotel accommodation, as shown in Table 13.1. Regarding occupancy, Northern Cape Town has surpassed the 2020 occupancy and moved into positive territories. On the other hand, the four-star and three-star hotel accommodations seem to be fairing well compared to the five-star accommodation. This could be because the five-star hotel accommodation is still awaiting the recovery of the international market, which is still under significant strain as of August 2022. Northern Cape Town, three stars and four stars performed better than the five-star hotels if one considered the average daily rate and revenue available room. The slow recovery of the business travel market could be another factor affecting the high-end market. Therefore, upmarket hotels need to reconsider their pricing and marketing to attract more clients to their businesses.

The better performance of three-star and four-star hotels could also be a factor in the shortage of disposable income. Lack of disposable income could be pushing more people who usually would use the five stars to lower-star hotels given the rising inflation globally and the rise of the cost of living, which could be blamed for reducing the purchasing power of many across the world.

The pandemic has greatly impacted the sports world (Martín-González et al., 2021). As previously indicated, Cape Town was one of the COVID-19 hotspot areas declared by the government. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, sports event tourism was considered one of the fastest-growing global tourism sub-sectors and a tool for stimulating local economies (Chang et al., 2020). Moreover, hosting

Table 13.1 Impact of COVID-19 on hotel performance in Cape Town from 2020 to 2021

Cape Town region	Occupancy rate (Occ)		Average daily rate (ADR)		Revenue per available room (RevPAR)		Per cent change from 2020		
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	Occ	ADR	RevPAR
Cape Town	31.9	35.9	1399.81	1844.85	446.60	661.94	-11	-24	-33
Cape Town 5 stars	29	40.0	2243.01	3372.19	649.59	1349.89	-28	-34	-52
Cape Town 4 stars	36.6	35.9	1010.71	1388.38	369.56	497.88	-2	-27	-26
Cape Town 3 stars	29.3	34.2	867.28	1084.93	254.21	371.41	-14	-20	-32
Northern Cape Town	41.4	36.7	843.25	969.90	349.09	356.15	13	-13	-2

Adapted from Wesgro

international and local sporting events has advantages such as driving tourism activities, generating profits for the host destination and benefitting tourism service providers, including restaurants, accommodation facilities and entertainment services (Leruksa et al., 2019). However, due to COVID-19, several sporting events, both on a national and international scale, such as the Olympics in Japan and the Comrades Marathon in South Africa, were cancelled as they were believed as ‘superspreader’ events (Martín-González et al., 2021).

13.5.2 Sports Tourism Recovery in Cape Town

According to Nyikana and Tichaawa (2018), sport event tourism in South Africa has been identified as a unique niche product. Bama and Tichaawa (2015) highlighted that the country is recognised as a remarkable global competitor in the sport tourism industry and is also an attractive destination for hosting sports events. These events are also effective tools for the country’s promotion, positioning and branding, and they also recover tourism’s geographical and seasonal benefits while encouraging domestic travel (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021).

Research shows that sporting events attract tourists and spectators (Swart & Turco, 2020). These tourists/attendees make noticeable contributions to local economies where the event takes place by spending money before, during and after the event (Scholtz, 2019). South Africa hosts more sports events, including ‘the Two Oceans Marathon, the Comrades Marathon, the Midmar Swimming Mile, the annual Cape Town Cycle Tour and the Premier Soccer League and the Durban July others’ (Knott & Hemmonsbey, 2015). The Comrades Marathon is a world-renowned ultramarathon that takes place annually, and it has been continued every year, except during the Second World War (1941–1945) (Scholtz, 2019).

Earlier studies have shown that these ultramarathon sports events, such as the Two Oceans and Comrades Marathon are economically significant, given their contributions to the economy (Scholtz, 2019). For instance, the 94th edition of the Comrades Marathon attracted more than 21,000 runners globally and generated over R700 million. The author further stated that this revenue contribution could have been more in 2020 if it was not cancelled. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, both marathons were cancelled in 2020, the first year since the Second World War that the race was cancelled. As a result, a virtual marathon was organised in June 2020. The virtual race was extended to all participants globally, including past legends of the world’s greatest ultramarathon (Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). Lepule (2020) mentioned that hybrid sports events allow both participants and attendees to participate in a virtual world from any location while still offering a certain level of realism that makes them credible; this can be used to complement traditional sports events in the future (Helsen et al., 2021).

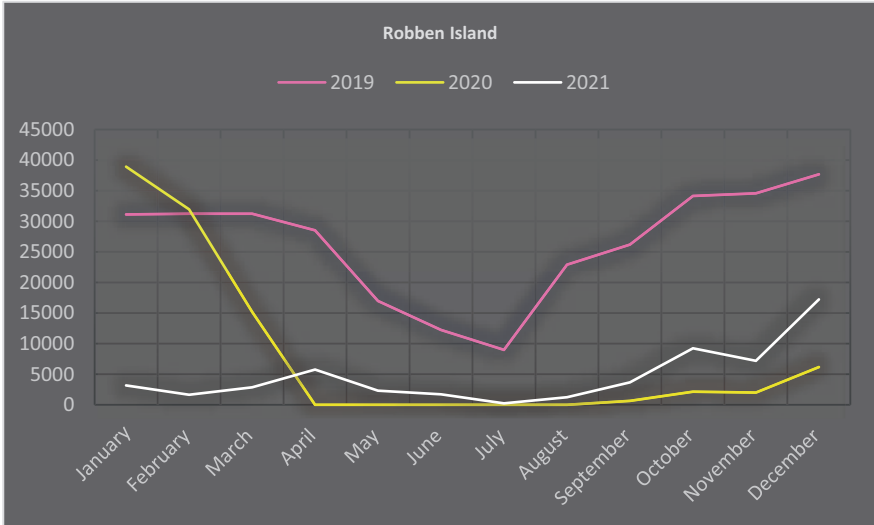
Current research (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021) revealed that sports event tourism in South Africa is starting to show signs of recovery with an increase in visitor arrivals from African countries and domestic travel (Martín-González et al., 2021). The

authors further mentioned that although the sub-sector has suffered substantial negative impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, sport event tourism is known for its resilience and ability to overcome crises while creating employment and assisting with the recovery process for economies. Thus, it is essential to note that despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the marathon event race will survive and recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021). It is also extensively acknowledged in the literature that sporting events in South Africa make a significant economic boost to the local economy through 'revenue contributions, creation of infrastructure, investment, marketing, curbing seasonality in tourism, enhancing community image, job creation, poverty alleviation and health and fitness' (Scholtz, 2019; Weed, 2020). Similarly, sports events can potentially attract investors for business ventures at the hosting destinations (Lovegrove et al., 2016). Thus, it is apparent that sports event tourism is a crucial component of South Africa's growth strategy and will remain so even after the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have collapsed (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021).

13.6 COVID-19 Recovery of Tourism at Key Selected Attractions in Cape Town

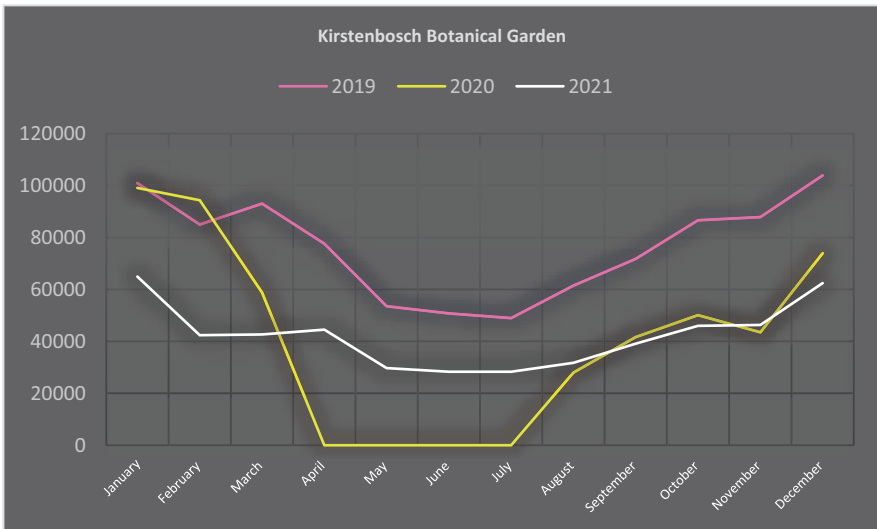
Some destinations in Cape Town were adversely affected by the pandemic as key attractions such as Robben Island shut their doors at the peak of the pandemic infections between March, with this World Heritage Site recording no arrivals between April and August 2020 (Fig. 13.3). Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden was also closed to the public, recording no visitors during the same period (Fig. 13.4). The recovery started in September 2020, albeit in minimal numbers, as visiting quotas were put in place to limit the number of visitors. The period was also characterised by inter-provincial travel severely impacting people's movement. The recovery tended to mirror the opening and closing of travelling spaces for tourists. At the end of 2021, the recovery had paced up to slightly below 50% of figures over the same period (December) in 2019.

The Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, a key tourist attraction in Cape Town, was also negatively affected by the COVID-19 impacts. The tourist attraction was closed between April and July 2020 (Fig. 13.4). This was due to the travel ban and restriction level 5 at that time, which meant no travelling was allowed except for essential service providers. When travel restrictions were later eased around August, a considerable number of people that were battling lockdown fatigue thronged nature tourist destinations. This marked the recovery of tourism at that destination. The year 2021 started with a peak of about 65,000 tourists, against close to 100,000 tourists in 2019 and 2020 during the normal period. At the close of 2021, the botanical garden was still battling to reach the levels seen in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. It was shy of about 41,000 tourists. This could be attributed to the slow recovery of the international tourism market. Nonetheless, significant recovery was realised when the destination was closed down, which also highlighted the destination's resilience.



Source: Data from Wesgro

Fig. 13.3 Impact and recovery from COVID-19 at Robben Island World Heritage Site. (Source: Data from Wesgro)



Source: Data from Wesgro

Fig. 13.4 Impact and recovery from COVID-19 at Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden. (Source: Data from Wesgro)

13.7 Discussion

The study examined recovery in tourist arrivals from Cape Town's leading 15 tourist source regions. The study found that before COVID-19, the leading tourism market for Cape Town at the international level was the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States and the Netherlands. The top three tourism markets at the regional level are Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe. The study also found that during the peak tourism season in Cape Town, the occupancy rate averaged 74% in 2019 before the pandemic. The study established that the pandemic severely impacted most key attractions in Cape Town, such as Robben Island and Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, recording zero arrivals between April and August 2020 due to the COVID-19 measures. The recovery for these attractions started in September 2020, even though it was in very small numbers.

There is evidence of a much more robust recovery from the regional tourism market than from long-haul, long distances traditional source markets in 2021 after the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccines. This could be attributed to factors such as vaccine apartheid. The strong recovery in the regional market in the neighbouring countries points to the importance of the regional market to tourism in the country and the city. Equally important, it also confirms the trend observed during the recovery period from COVID-19, where more tourists are travelling domestically than before. This trend is expected to be maintained as long as the uncertainties from COVID-19 remain. Previous studies show that long-haul travel during COVID-19 is particularly sensitive and vulnerable to pandemic-associated disruptions (Williams et al., 2022).

A previous study done in Spain revealed that domestic tourism has the potential to provide relief for the tourism industry. Thus, a deep awareness of the attributes of domestic travellers and the impulsiveness of their demand could be more valuable tools for a tourist destination such as Cape Town. The absence of domestic tourism makes a destination more vulnerable to drop in international tourism. Thus, measures to promote domestic tourism should be given greater weight and considered within the broader context of destination resilience (Arbulú et al., 2021). Another study done in Ghana revealed that COVID-19 stemmed in a great loss for the accommodation sector. The room occupancy rate was recorded to have dropped from 83% in February 2020 to 15.7% in April 2020, leading to new recovery measures. It was found that some organisations considered immediate recovery plans such as customer communication (e.g. reminding existing customers about their operations), using rigorous advertisements and promotions to attract new customers, making door-to-door sales and diversifying their operations to reduce risk (Dayour et al., 2021).

Another study done in Zimbabwe discovered three themes: Firstly, making tourism products and services more affordable by revising the pricing policy of Zimbabwe as a post-pandemic tourism recovery strategy and creating a resilient destination. Secondly, an immediate need for inclusively promoting tourism. And thirdly, the adoption of technologies, such as information and communication

technologies (ICT) and virtual reality (VR). The adoption of technology in the study explains supply views in circumstances where tourists cannot fly. Suppliers of tourism products can sell a virtual reality experience where people across the world can experience Victoria Falls or Great Zimbabwe through a simulated environment. This can potentially revolutionise the tourism industry, especially now that most people worldwide are still sceptical about travelling (Woyo, 2021). The use and adoption of digital platforms are recommended in the tourism industry to continue their struggle for survival (Sharma et al., 2021).

Moreover, in the South African context, Bama and Nyikana (2021) highlighted that domestic tourism is vital in South Africa, particularly the visiting friends and relatives, leisure and business. The study findings show that most participants (80%) were already saying good things about South Africa as a tourist destination on their social media platforms. In addition, they indicated a strong willingness (91.3%) to promote the country as a tourist destination. This meant it would assist the overall tourism recovery beyond the COVID-19 restrictions. The study suggested strategies to entice travelling (such as reduced rates) and emphasised that more precautionary measures should be set in the industry to assure tourists of their safety, boosting the chances of tourists wanting to go on trips like before.

13.8 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found that in as much as Cape Town was adversely affected by COVID-19, evidence suggests that the destination is resilient with a strong capacity for recovery. This could be attributed to several factors, including good tourism infrastructure and products that appeal to domestic, regional and international tourism markets. There is no doubt that the recovery offers some insights into what could happen in future pandemics. There will be a rolled-out recovery supported strongly by the domestic and regional tourism market. Therefore, the sector must have a tourism product that appeals first and foremost to these primary markets but, most importantly, also talks to the international market. Understanding this means that the marketing positioning must be sensitive to who and what constitutes the domestic and regional tourism market so that prices and products suit and appeal to this critical market.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to appreciate the role of the regional and domestic markets in the tourism recovery of the country (Musavengane et al., 2021). This requires a rethink of how international policy and relations, particularly with neighbouring countries, play into the recovery of the domestic tourism market. The anti-immigrant sentiments pose a direct threat to tourism performance in the country, and there is an urgent need to holistically address the issue to stabilise the situation for the benefit of the tourism industry. There are still many uncertainties about how the COVID-19 pandemic will play out or further disrupt the tourism sector, but the failure of service airlines poses another threat to Cape Town's supply chain. The sharp increase in air tickets on the Johannesburg Cape Town route, which is the

busiest route, does not auger well for tourism recovery in Cape Town. Other threats include the Ukraine–Russia war and the threat of climate change. Rethinking recovery should consider all these aspects with the hope of coming up with potential remedies.

The robust growth in tourism recovery is a cause for celebration but equally concerning as there are key questions that need to be answered; among them are how prepared has been the tourism business to the sudden and largely unanticipated levels of recovery. Given that most staff were laid off at the height of the pandemic and others passed on, how this recovery took shape is a matter of interest and research. At the height of the pandemic, most tourism staff were traumatised by how this affects service delivery during the recovery phase warrants greater attention. With lean staff post-COVID-19, one is eager to know how the recovery affected the workload of the largely skeletal staff that remained in hotels, and the impacts of this on staff well-being is an issue of concern.

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Chapter 14

Inclusive, Participatory Approaches to Tourism Rebuilding and Recovery of Coastal Tourism Destinations from the Impacts of COVID-19: The Case of iSimangaliso Wetland Park



Antonia Thandi Nzama 

Abstract The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the exogenous shocks that has tested the resilience of tourism destinations globally, particularly those countries that depend on tourism for their livelihoods. The question is how tourism destinations can adapt and increase their resilience to exogenous shocks to regain tourism as their primary source of livelihood. Using iSimangaliso Wetland Park (IWP) as a case study, this study sought to establish (1) the adaptive capacity of coastal tourism destinations when reacting to exogenous shocks such as COVID-19; (2) initiatives taken towards rebuilding and recovery from COVID-19; and (3) the role of inclusive, participatory approaches to tourism rebuilding and recovery in response to future exogenous shocks. An exploratory research design was adopted using IWP as a case study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. Questionnaires with open-ended questions were used to collect data. Content analysis was used to analyse and organise qualitative information. The findings indicated that most businesses within IWP had a low adaptive capacity to exogenous shock due to their sizes and character and were struggling to recover. Inclusive, participatory approaches play a significant role in implementing recovery plans.

Keywords Tourism recovery plan · Inclusive · Participatory approach · Exogenous shocks · Tourism rebuilding · World heritage site · Coastal tourism destination

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14.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the exogenous shocks that has destabilised and tested the resilience of economies within tourism destinations globally, particularly those that depend on tourism for their livelihoods (Zielinski & Botero, 2020; Islamaj et al., 2021; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). The tourism sector is one of the sectors that was badly shaken by COVID-19, resulting in economic difficulties exacerbated by restrictions on movement under various phases of lockdown (Dube, 2022). The restrictions led to the halting of some of the operations, loss of revenue, loss of jobs, closure of business and general loss of livelihoods (Gössling et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2020; Soluk et al., 2021; Ivanov, 2020; Mohamed et al., 2020). This disruption of economic activities at tourist destinations reflects an exogenous shock with a potentially devastating effect, particularly on tourism-dependent businesses (Soluk et al., 2021).

Uncertainty about the end of exogenous shocks such as the spread of COVID-19 makes the situation more complicated, adding to the significance of developing adaptation strategies while simultaneously finding approaches to sustaining the tourism sector within the new normal conditions and beyond (Deb & Nafi, 2020). History has shown that the tourism industry is highly vulnerable to exogenous shocks, which have become regular occurrences (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). In the past, the tourism industry survived shocks and crises such as cyclones, bushfires, earthquakes, and terrorist attacks and showed signs of being resilient to the shocks by developing recovery strategies and bouncing back (Novelli et al., 2018; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). After the disruptions caused by the exogenous shocks, tourism destinations must be prepared to initiate strategies to rebuild the industry (Yeh, 2020).

Also equally important is the significance of enhancing their adaptive capacity and ability to increase their resilience to exogenous shocks if they are to regain tourism as their primary source of livelihood (Yustisia et al., 2021). Regarding IWP, which is one of the coastal tourism destinations, this study examines (1) the adaptive capacity of coastal tourism destinations when reacting to exogenous shocks such as COVID-19, (2) the initiatives taken towards rebuilding and recovery from COVID-19 and (3) the role of inclusive, participatory approaches to tourism rebuilding and recovery in responding to future exogenous shocks.

14.2 Literature Review

COVID-19 affected all countries and industries globally, but the tourism industry was affected the most due to its dependence on tourists travelling. As such, not a single country was left unscathed by the COVID-19 crisis (UNWTO, 2020a; Gössling et al., 2020; United Nations, 2021). Travelling remains the springboard for the tourism industry. Therefore, COVID-19 restrictions severely affected the functioning and operations throughout the value chain of the tourism industry. The

World Health Organization (WHO) warned countries to avoid “knee-jerk responses” to COVID-19 (Mureithi & Bischof, 2021). The reason for this warning was that these responses to COVID-19 would worsen inequalities, especially in low-income communities, due to further loss of jobs and livelihoods (Mohamed et al., 2020). It has been argued that COVID-19 was a major catastrophe, an eccentric exogenous shock for developed economies, and an adversity for developing countries (United Nations, 2021; Miklian & Hoelscher, 2021). COVID-19, like many other exogenous shocks, tested tourism destinations’ capacity to adapt to the new circumstances.

14.2.1 Adaptive Capacity of Tourism Destinations to React to Exogenous Shocks

Exogenous shocks of various forms, severity, and intensity, as witnessed in different parts of the world, seem to take longer periods and increasingly take centre stage in interconnected global systems (Miklian & Hoelscher, 2022). Exogenous shocks cause significant disruptions to economic systems (Hudecheck et al., 2020). Ritchie and Jiang (2019) acknowledge that in tourism exogenous shocks are a fact of life and are regular occurrences beyond our control. Exogenous shocks and circumstances surrounding these shocks have been defined in many ways, particularly in management research (Soluk et al., 2021).

What is common in these definitions is that shocks appear suddenly, are unpredictable and are unexpected events not initiated by a given market, community or country; they carry a significant negative impact on the market, community or country, and they generate crises that are more severe and long-lasting (Miklian & Hoelscher, 2021). Ritchie and Jiang (2019) contend that three critical ways make COVID-19 an exogenous shock to be different. The first one is COVID-19, an economic shock that led to a 20–30% travel decline in international tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2020a, b). The second one is that as COVID-19 intensified, there was an evident reduction in economic growth estimated to be two times as witnessed during regular shocks. The third one is that COVID-19 has the potential to trigger structural changes in certain sectors of the tourism industry. Faced with COVID-19, tourism destinations need to find ways of bouncing back by adapting to new circumstances, which have become the new normal.

Research on adaptive capacity has focused mainly on firms, and there is a dearth of information on tourism destinations. Tourism destinations are characterised by various businesses supporting the tourism industry. These include small family-owned and large businesses such as international chain hotels. The adaptive capacity of tourism destinations, therefore, reflects a collective capacity of businesses which individually and collectively respond and adapt to exogenous shocks. During exogenous shocks such as COVID-19, the adaptive capacity and macroeconomic processes can be tested in a way that often typifies “reorientation” (Miklian & Holsier, 2022). Morgan et al. (2020) contends that when crises occur, prevailing

business models often become ineffective, which has a detrimental effect on small businesses.

Adaptive capacity research has been approached from different perspectives. Reference has been made to the ability of organisations to self-adapt, economic and non-economic resources such as the cognitive abilities of organisations' human resources as contributing to a firm's ability to cope and adapt to exogenous shocks (Soluk et al., 2021; Newey & Zahra, 2009; Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005). Reference has also been made to the role played by the size and characteristics in how the shock is experienced. There is an indication of a correlation between the size of the business and the ability to survive shocks. Smaller businesses tend to be more vulnerable to shocks than larger ones with more resources and capacity to control external factors (Marshall et al., 2015). The adaptive capacity of smaller businesses is lower, and they have difficulty in recovering and negotiating disruptive shocks compared to larger businesses (Bartik et al., 2020; Prasad et al., 2015)

14.2.2 Tourism Rebuilding and Recovery from the Impacts of COVID-19

The second objective of this study was to establish if any initiatives were in place towards rebuilding and recovery from COVID-19. The findings indicate that, like many countries worldwide, IWP also joined forces in focusing on rebuilding tourism for the future. Tourism recovery plans, adaptation strategies and frameworks have been developed, some of which even promote "putting people first and travel tomorrow" (Deb & Nafi, 2020). UNWTO (2020a) recommended guidelines for responsible tourism recovery plans, including people, planet and prosperity (public health, social inclusion), biodiversity conservation, climate action, circular economy, governance, and finance.

Rebuilding and recovery of the tourism industry after the severe negative impacts of COVID-19 turned out to be a priority across the globe. Governments hurriedly embarked on developing a variety of tourism rebuilding and recovery plans. These plans and subsequent processes cannot be undertaken in isolation and in a fragmented way since all people from all nations individually and collectively experienced the negative impacts of tourism directly or indirectly. The ongoing crisis can potentially cause fundamental modifications in many tourism segments in the value chain as organisations embark on rebuilding and tourism recovery processes (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019; Dolnicar & Zare, 2020). Tourism recovery plans of many countries included changing the focus from international to domestic tourism. Observations have indicated that domestic tourism has begun to reduce the impact of COVID-19, especially on jobs and businesses in some tourism destinations. It is anticipated that the improvement in the tourism sector's performance will only be witnessed when international travel resumes. The resumption of international tourism will be an outcome of cooperation from governments across the globe with a focus on

ensuring the safety of travellers when that COVID-19 restrictions are uplifted (Pangestu, 2021; Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020; UNWTO International, 2020).

Calls have emerged from the global community that the tourism industry needs to be rescued from the negative impacts of COVID-19. Responses from this call included the “One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector,” which was integrated into the UNWTO Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism released by the Global Tourism Crisis Committee on 28 May 2020. One of the objectives of the Global Guidelines is to support the tourism sector to ensure that after the devastating impacts of COVID-19, it comes back resilient and more sustainable (UNWTO, 2020a, b). The “One Planet Vision” promotes tourism recovery and rebuilding from the ruins of COVID-19, which is responsible and sustainable. The focus of this vision is not only on enhancing the resilience of the tourism industry but also on ensuring that the needs of local communities and the planet are taken care of. The vision also aims to encourage the participation of governments across the globe, the private sector and community leaders to engage and reflect on the tools and initiatives, challenges and opportunities for embracing responsible and sustainable recovery and rebuilding of the tourism sector.

Although governments have made various efforts globally to reopen the tourism industry, most international, regional and local businesses continue to struggle, which points to the significance of implementing the recovery plans in line with global imperatives that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In driving responsible and sustainable recovery and rebuilding of the tourism sector, governments and the private sector are now embarking on future generations should be at the centre of the programmes. This implies long-term and holistic thinking concerning the world’s challenges and thus connects with the need to transition to a more sustainable tourism model based on social inclusion and the restoration and protection of the environment (UNWTO, 2021).

The South African government responded to COVID-19 by developing its own tourism recovery plans, which were in line with the events globally but also considered its own circumstances. This recovery plan proposes a series of measures to rebuild the tourism industry to support the value chain across five sub-sectors, namely, travel distribution and intermediaries, transport and related services, accommodation, entertainment and related services, and support and indirect services (South Africa: Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021). The South African Recovery Plan focuses on (a) protecting and rejuvenating supply, (b) reigniting demand through robust domestic marketing and (c) strengthening enabling capabilities.

The South Africa Tourism Sector Recovery Plan indicates that domestic tourism will initially focus on local experiences, specifically day trips, weekend recreation activities, and business travel. During this early phase, attention will also be given to tourist attractions and experiences, which will assist in boosting the confidence of visitors in local offerings. The government’s risk-adjusted approach was aimed at ensuring a balance between the demand meeting supply and the proper management of the rate of transmission of COVID-19.

The Recovery Plan also indicates that several general business continuities and tourism-specific measures already support interventions, including the R200

million Tourism Relief Fund, the waiver on Tourism Grading fees, and the Tourist Guide Relief package to the tune of R30 million. The government also created an R200 billion COVID-19 facility working with the South African Reserve Bank and commercial banks. This facility can be accessed by businesses in different sectors of the South African economy, including the tourism sector.

14.2.3 Inclusive Participatory Approaches to Tourism Rebuilding and Recovery

In line with the guidelines for a responsible tourism recovery proposed by UNWTO, inclusive multistakeholder participatory approaches in rebuilding and recovering the tourism industry can be one of the solutions. Guterres (2021a) cautions that everything done during and post-COVID-19 should be directed at building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies more resilient to pandemics, natural disasters, and many other shocks that threaten to disrupt globally interconnected systems. This pronouncement indicates that there should be an increase in the number of role players participating in the process that leads to developing recovery plans. Inclusive, participatory approaches are key to the tourism sector's sustainable rebuilding and recovery processes.

Studies suggest that inclusive multistakeholder participatory approaches should include different sectors of society, wide-ranging ways of gathering resources, and the expert skills of various role players. Also of significance is the inclusion of various innovative government interventions that collectively address the challenges of common concern (Jansen & Kalas, 2020; Favretto et al., 2021). Studies have also indicated that inclusive, participatory approaches have the potential to generate benefits, which include addressing the immediate and shared needs of communities, creating opportunities for learning and understanding the value of transparency in approaching situations from different angles, and expansion of the scope for participation to include all social groups including typically marginalised segments of society. Inclusive, participatory approaches should also make strides towards striking a balance in capturing various voices of various stakeholders at different levels of seniority and geographic scales (Favretto et al., 2021; Falayi et al., 2020; Zagt, 2020).

In this context, inclusive multistakeholder participatory approaches refer to the all-inclusive endeavours that consciously and deliberately create opportunities for the participation of various stakeholders and sectors of society, including members of the local community, particularly the previously disadvantaged and marginalised segments of the society in the decision-making processes. The COVID-19 crisis has been a huge exogenous shock to individual community members, some of whom depended totally on tourism, and has severely affected their lives and livelihoods. As the pandemic continues to evolve, communities that depend on tourism for their livelihoods continue to be stripped of their livelihoods. Therefore, it is imperative

and critical that they be involved in attempts and processes to rehabilitate and rebuild the tourism industry with an understanding that a return to business as usual is unlikely in the near future.

Implementation of inclusive multistakeholder participatory approaches presents several challenges, especially when there is an urgent need to develop recovery plans to rebuild the tourism industry and ensure that it bounces back from the negative impacts of COVID-19. Studies pointed to the barriers to the implementation. Based on the studies by Ayivor et al. (2020), Favretto et al. (2021), Favretto et al. (2020), Williams et al. (2020), Cockburn et al. (2020), Hedden-Dunkhorst and Schmitt (2020), Njoroge et al. (2020), Musakwa et al. (2020), Omoding et al. (2020) and Kusters et al. (2020), there are suggestions and important lessons that can be learned from the analysis of collaboration and multistakeholder engagement in governance and management across Africa. These lessons are presented below:

1. Co-design, co-production and knowledge exchange. This includes an approach that is a transparent and solid structure which allows for the co-production of knowledge and sharing of resources, paving the way for the buy-in by the broader community.
2. Building on existing structures. This refers to using the platforms, systems and networks that already exist and which the community is familiar with. These structures provide a foundation for collaborations, stimulate participation and a sense of ownership by local communities, as well practical lessons to reflect on regarding the roles and responsibilities of civil society.
3. It acknowledges the role of history and context, which shapes relations and power dynamics among those who determine the participation roles and modalities.
4. Identifying a convener that can be a neutral intermediary and function as a knowledge broker. This position is vital as it helps balance power dynamics between stakeholders by guiding information aggregation, supporting collaboration, and facilitating wider participation of different community sectors.
5. They ensure that all participating stakeholders' interactions are transparent, honest and open across all decision-making processes. Also of significance is the creation of realistic expectations on livelihood, as this helps build trust among stakeholders. Transparency and trust ensure inclusivity and allows indigenous and local knowledge to be successfully incorporated into the decision-making processes.
6. Widening the scope of participants to encourage inclusive stakeholder engagements.
7. Using emerging creative tools and approaches to understand the complexities of multi-scale and multi-actor stakeholder engagements, such as facilitating the sharing of perspectives and perceptions among stakeholders and signifying what is most important to them.
8. Building capacity to support sustained stakeholder engagement and enhance the willingness of diverse stakeholders to share knowledge and participate in activities aimed at addressing the common needs of the community. Formal and

informal opportunities should be created to build relationships supporting productive engagement.

9. Building the type of knowledge that is inclusive and common to all role players, collating all sources and systems of knowledge across practice and local-level realities, and creating an enabling interaction and collective actions among actors in smaller pockets within a landscape which can help to build common knowledge and relational agency. This process requires time and skilful facilitation and meditation that includes and empowers traditionally marginalised voices and all knowledge holders. Applying these lessons could assist in implementing the inclusive multistakeholder participatory approaches to tourism rebuilding and recovery.

14.3 Overview of the Study Area

IWP is one of the coastal destinations on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. That gained popularity when it was inscribed by UNESCO in the list of World Heritage Sites in 1999, making it South Africa's first World Heritage Site. As set out by the World Heritage Convention, the mandate of IWP is threefold: (1) conservation and protection of the Park's world heritage values, (2) ecotourism development and (3) empowerment of communities living in and around the Park. IWP is an entity of the national government of South Africa which is expected to contribute to the government's endeavours of addressing the three social ills: poverty, unemployment and inequality. Tourism is, therefore, one of the key pillars for ensuring that IWP can contribute to eradicating these three social ills and the general socio-economic empowerment of local communities that reside within and adjacent to the Park. IWP, like many tourism destinations, was not left unscathed by the negative impacts of COVID-19. Local communities within and adjacent to the IWP that depend on tourism for their livelihoods were left in a dire situation.

14.4 Research Methods

This section presents the research methodology that was used when conducting this study. An exploratory research design was adopted using IWP as a case study. Since COVID-19 is an emerging phenomenon, case-based exploratory research designs are most appropriate (De Massis 2022; Soluk et al., 2021). Jiang and Ritchie (2017) also contend that tourism organisations respond to and recover from a crisis differently; therefore, they should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 17 respondents consisting of five members of the Provincial Team responsible for developing the tourism recovery plan, ten SMMEs which included four guest houses, 3 B&Bs and 3 self-catering units, ten members of the local

community who are knowledgeable about tourism and two senior officials at IWP who participate in decision-making processes. All members of the Provincial Team and IWP officials were Black, and only 2% of them were females.

The majority of SMMEs were blacks (92%), and 8% were white. Females owned only 9% of SMMEs. The purpose of the inclusion of these respondents was to get different perspectives that will lead to the understanding of the adaptive capacity and the nature of the tourism recovery and rebuilding plan that had been developed, as well as their thoughts regarding ways of increasing the resilience of IWP to exogenous shocks like COVID-19 in future. Questionnaires with open-ended questions were used to collect data from the respondents, allowing them to express themselves openly on the issues related to the purpose of the study. Secondary data were obtained from literature and archival data readily available on this subject. Data obtained were coded and classified into themes and sub-themes such that they may be compared and triangulated. Content analysis was used to analyse and organise qualitative information in a manner that fulfilled the purpose of the study.

14.5 Discussion of Findings

Like many coastal tourism destinations, the main tourist attractions at IWP are the ocean and wildlife, which are the magnets for both domestic and international tourists. Due to its heavy dependence on tourism, IWP is one of the coastal tourism destinations that was economically crippled by COVID-19. IWP is characterised by a variety of businesses that support the tourism industry. Most of these businesses fall within the accommodation sector, for example, guesthouses, B&BS, self-catering establishments, etc. These businesses are mainly classified as SMMEs because of their size and character. Due to its mandate, IWP has to work with these SMMEs and local communities residing within and adjacent to the Park to find solutions to the devastation of COVID-19.

14.5.1 Adaptive Capacity of IWP to Exogenous Shocks

Respondents indicated their businesses were thriving before COVID-19 but were now either on the brink of collapsing or were already closed. They expressed satisfaction that IWP can create opportunities for SMMEs and local communities to participate in discussions leading to tourism rebuilding and recovery. Most of these SMMEs are small, with less than ten employees. To ensure inclusivity, IWP created a list of all SMMEs included in the composite list of stakeholders invited to participate in the processes that led to the development of the tourism recovery plan. Invitations were extended to all community members interested in tourism rebuilding and recovery to ensure inclusivity. Local communities are aware that their livelihoods are at risk; therefore, their participation in developing recovery plans is

crucial. In line with the first objective, the findings indicated that the majority (88%) of businesses within IWP had a low adaptive capacity to exogenous shock due to their sizes and character and were struggling to recover. The respondents indicated that they could not self-adapt without external interventions such as government support. Both economic and non-economic resources were seen as contributing to the low adaptive capacity of the IWP tourism destination. However, information shared regularly by the officials became a significant link for SMMEs and local communities to act and react to the impacts of COVID-19. The findings are in line with Bartik et al. (2020) and Prasad et al. (2015), which confirm that the adaptive capacity of smaller businesses is lower, and they have difficulty recovering and negotiating disruptive shocks compared to larger businesses.

14.5.2 Participation in the Development of the Tourism Recovery Plan

For this study, it was important to get information from officials that participated in developing the provincial tourism recovery plan, which informed the design of the local recovery plan. Like all other destinations, IWP had to participate in the initiatives that were aimed at responding to the impacts of COVID-19. IWP officials worked closely with Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, the marketing wing of the KwaZulu-Natal province. This provincial team which included various stakeholders within the tourism sector was responsible for developing and implementing the tourism recovery plan. The key elements of this recovery plan included:

1. Identify short, medium and long-term strategies to employ in winning back tourism into KwaZulu-Natal (both leisure and business tourism).
2. Identification of key players that will be critical in the recovery.
3. Putting together activities to be employed in order to turn around the tide.
4. In line with the National Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, the key focus for the first half of the recovery plan was to regain the domestic market. For business tourism, the focus was on regaining the confidence of the conference organisers and reminding them of the merit of the province in hosting meetings and conferences.
5. Working closely with heads of the South African Tourism Hub and tour operators to gauge the response and recovery in KwaZulu-Natal key markets.
6. Identifying Joint Marketing Agents (JMAs).
7. Engaging travel trade and inbound operators; and
8. Increasing exposure through social media platforms keeps the destination on the radar.

One of the objectives of this study was to establish the role of inclusive, participatory approaches to tourism rebuilding and recovery in response to future exogenous shocks. The findings indicated that inclusive, participatory approaches play a

significant role in implementing recovery plans. By sharing information and learning from their reaction to COVID-19, the inclusion of all stakeholders at all levels of society can potentially increase the resilience of this tourism destination to future exogenous shocks. Information, supporting collaboration, and facilitating wider participation. These findings align with Omoding et al. (2020) and Kusters et al. (2020), who emphasise the significance of transparency and openness in all stakeholder interactions, and across all decision-making processes, which results in realistic expectations and trust among stakeholders.

14.5.3 The Role of the Government in Minimising the Impacts of COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, governments across the globe intervened swiftly and imposed travel bans and restrictions which, unfortunately, resulted in the destruction of some businesses (Sigala, 2020). The effect of these interventions made it clear that there are gaps in government's preparedness to respond to exogenous shocks in general and COVID-19 in particular. The majority of the respondents pointed to the need for intervention by the government in supporting the implementation of the tourism recovery plan. One of the respondents pointed out that "COVID- 19 has resulted in the loss of income and collapse of our businesses, and I believe that the government's support is necessary for us to recover." Although the government has taken some strides to support the tourism sector by minimising the impacts of COVID-19, almost 90% of businesses in IWP are still struggling, which indicates that more still needs to be done. One of the owners of the guest houses mentioned that "I had to retrench all employees, even though domestic tourism is beginning to pick up, I am still not able to afford salaries of employees." Governments globally have a big responsibility to find ways that will lead to the survival of the tourism industry through the legislation and policies that regulate the operations of this ailing industry (Hall et al., 2020). Based on this understanding, there is an expectation that these governments should restore the functioning and operations and recover the tourism industry at local, regional and international levels. Governments need to learn from the COVID-19 crisis to develop policies that would allow for quicker and more targeted responses to exogenous shocks in future and also lead to the building of stronger, more resilient tourism economies.

These government policies will form the bases for the structure and operations of the tourism industry at a local, national and global level. The COVID-19 crisis has indicated that actions taken by one government do not affect citizens of that country only but have far-reaching implications for travellers and businesses in other countries, as the global tourism system needs to develop collaborative systems across borders to stimulate the safe resumption of travel, restore traveller and business confidence, stimulate demand and accelerate tourism recovery at all levels.

In response to COVID-19 and future exogenous shocks to the tourism industry policies, governments across the globe should be guided by certain priorities, which include the following:

- Stimulating travelling while creating opportunities for restoring traveller confidence
- Contributing to the adaptation and survival of tourism businesses; supporting tourism businesses to adapt and survive
- Promoting domestic tourism and supporting the safe return of international tourism
- Limiting uncertainty from travellers by providing clear information to travellers and businesses that will limit uncertainty
- Evolving response measures to maintain capacity in the sector and address gaps in support
- Strengthening collaboration and cooperation within and between countries
- Capitalising on technology to link with other countries; digitalisation
- Promoting the transformation of the global systems to build stronger, more sustainable, resilient tourism economies

The findings also indicate that policies should be flexible and enable the tourism economy to survive and thrive alongside COVID-19. The effect of this pandemic has become a new normal in the short to long term. While one of the respondents indicated that he is “ready get back his business and operate alongside COVID-19, the situation which has become a new normal,” governments are focusing on addressing longer-term implications of the crisis they should also not lose sight of the lessons learned and responses to various exogenous shocks. Lessons that have been learned should inform decisions on future responses to exogenous shocks. COVID-19 has made it evident that governments at all levels across the globe should be agile and prepared to urgently find ways of responding to shocks in a coordinated way that has a minimum impact on businesses and livelihoods. Governments also need to be aware of the significance of the approaches that are integrated with the tourism policy and which are well-targeted and accessible to support vulnerable tourism businesses. Governments at all levels should also be aware of the urgent need to work with the private sector so that as a collective they are better prepared and have the capacity to react and reactivate tourism and adapt quickly to new situations. Due to the connectedness of the global society, governments also need to strengthen multilateral cooperation to ensure that countries are able to work together in providing sector-specific support that would address specific needs within the tourism industry, for example tourism workers, businesses in the travel and hospitality sectors, tour operators, etc.

COVID-19 has made it clear that there is an urgent need to strengthen the resilience of the tourism economy so that they are better prepared for future shocks, address structural weaknesses, and encourage the digital, low-carbon transformations that will be essential to shift to stronger, fairer and more sustainable models of tourism development.

14.6 Conclusion

Exogenous shocks such as COVID-19 present challenges and opportunities to rethink how future tourism models would respond to pandemics and natural disasters. This means the focus should be on initiatives and measures in place to shape the tourism industry of the future. These measures should consider strengthening the adaptive capacity of coastal tourism destinations whose livelihoods depend entirely on tourism to recover from exogenous shocks. The understanding is that decisions taken now have to capture environmental, economic and social objectives to shape the future's tourism industry that is more resilient and sustainable. Tourism destinations and businesses need to strengthen their capacities to develop recovery plans and always be alert and ready to reinvent themselves and bounce back from exogenous shocks. The process of developing the recovery plans should ensure that it is inclusive and consider international coordination systems that are ready to respond to future shocks.

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Chapter 15

Incentive Travel Recovery: A Systematic Literature Review



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Abstract Incentive travel research is considered to be less popular when compared with other business events or MICE sub-sectors. Although scholars investigated the impact of COVID-19 on MICE tourism, research related to the impact of COVID-19 on incentive travel recovery is yet to be conducted. Following a systematic literature review, this chapter compares the themes related to incentive travel recovery published by previous research scholars related to different dimensions of the incentive travel industry. Results indicated only three similar themes, namely, *digital transformation*, *talent management* and *regulatory*, emanating from the selected journal articles and web-based publications. Academic researchers favour areas related to *digital transformation*, the *economic impact and financial incentives* and *marketing strategies* when investigating the impact of COVID-19 on the MICE sector. The incentive travel industry prioritised discussions on *risk and safety management*, the *value chain* and *destination selection and choice*. Future research can explore the specific incentive travel market reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on digital transformation, economic impact and marketing strategies. These new insights can direct how incentive travel planners and scholars apply their resources in developing incentive travel recovery strategies and policies.

Keywords Incentive travel · Destinations · Market reactions · Incentive programme design · Incentive travel recovery · COVID-19

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15.1 Introduction and Background

Since the early 1990s, incentive travel has been consistently one of the fastest-growing segments in the global tourism industry (Alfandi & Alkawsawneh, 2014; Sheldon, 1994) and more specifically in business tourism, which also resonates as meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) tourism or business events (Swart & Roodt, 2020). Incentive travel is "... a modern management tool used to accomplish uncommon business goals by awarding participants an extraordinary travel experience upon attainment of their share of uncommon goals" (Ricci & Holland, 1992, p. 288). Furthermore, incentive travel is referred to as "... travel by employees, dealers or agents, often with spouses, paid by a firm as a reward for achieving sales or other targets, for outstanding performance, or as a stimulus to future attainment" (Engelbrecht, 2019, p.62). While the preferred definition used by the Society of Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) relates to "... a global management tool that is used as an exceptional travel experience to motivate and/or recognise participants for increased level of performance in support of organisational goals" (Lassila, 2002; p 13 as cited in Kononenko, 2014, p.9). From these definitions, it is evident that not much research has been conducted on the topic recently and that the aim of incentive travel emanates around rewarding good work performance by employees from organisations. Traditionally, incentive programmes included travel experiences, merchandise and any in-kind rewards. However, SITE Global (2021) identified five new types of incentive travel programmes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These programmes include (i) the classic incentive with no meeting component, (ii) a classic incentive programme with a meeting component, (iii) a meeting with a motivational component, for example, a gala dinner, (iv) virtual rewards, and (v) hybrid rewards programmes. It is within this context that the impact of COVID-19 on the incentive travel market will be investigated. Especially as incentive travel is one of the most important forms of travel which boosts employee engagement and performance. Over the years, incentive travel has gained significant momentum and established a better support group among travel organisations (Tiwari et al., 2022).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic incentive, an estimated 98 million tourists participated in incentive travel globally (Zaman et al., 2021). This accounted for UD\$75 billion in direct spending, with 7% of the value of business events (SITEAfrica, 2021). Within the first year of the pandemic, live incentives declined by 80% and 40% in 2021 (Cenedese et al., 2022). Although post-pandemic recovery is only expected in 2023, an estimated 82% of the global incentive travel industry is planning in-person travel incentives for 2022 (SITEGlobal, 2021).

Global industries using incentive travel services include automotive sales and distribution, finance and insurance, information and communication technology, and pharmaceuticals and healthcare (EIC, 2018). Within the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, business travel and tourism were severely affected by the outbreak and spreading of COVID-19 due to the lockdown restrictions and industry shutdowns (SITE Africa, 2020). Despite all the efforts by scholars to investigate the

impact of COVID-19 on the tourism and business tourism industry (Aburumman, 2020; Bartis et al., 2021; Disimulacion, 2021; Rittichainuwat et al., 2020; Weru, 2021), studies seem to be silent on the investigation of the specific recovery of the incentive travel industry. With the help of a systematic literature review, previous studies on incentive travel have been critically reviewed using a qualitative research approach. These studies were published in different indexed journals and databases, such as Scopus and Web of Science, and had high impact factors. Furthermore, each related paper to incentive travel recovery is being reviewed by following the six steps process of a systematic literature review (as illustrated in Fig. 15.1). This chapter aims to compare the themes related to incentive travel recovery published by the incentive travel industry with scholarly work in journal indexes.

The remainder of the chapter outlines the selected qualitative research design and the six-step systematic literature review. Three tables with summaries of the discussions and themes emanating from selected journal articles and web-based publications are outlined in the presentation and discussion of findings section. Finally, the conclusion makes recommendations for future research on the impact of COVID-19 on incentive travel.

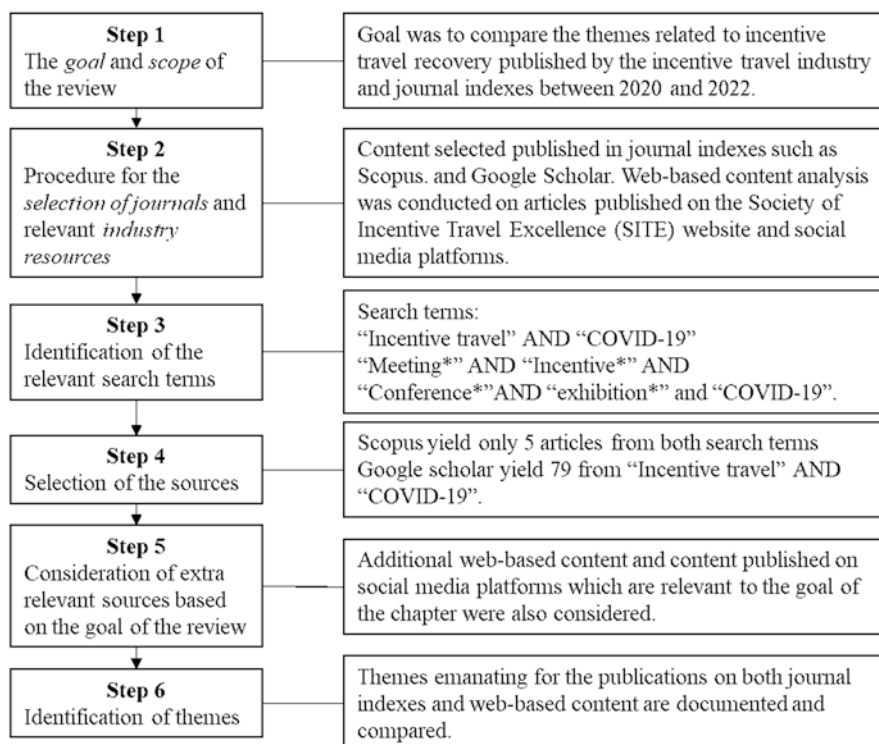


Fig. 15.1 Six-step process for systemic literature review. (Source: Author's compilation)

15.2 Research Design

As this study aims to find related themes following a systematic literature review, a constructivist approach is in the qualitative research tradition (Creswell, 2014; Snyder, 2019). Both qualitative and quantitative data from industry and academic publications were reviewed to compare how the incentive travel industry responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. Industry reports from SITE were consulted to assist the researchers in collecting, interpreting and reporting on information to provide meaning related to the recovery of the incentive travel market (Nhamo et al., 2020). Furthermore, for performing the systematic review of literature, authors followed the proposed guidelines by previous research (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Wong et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2014; Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009; Snyder, 2019) given integrative, systematic and meta-analysis reviews. An adapted six-step systematic literature review approach was followed to select and review the available literature with the help of above-said methods. These six steps were followed to meet the specific search word criteria in journal indexes such as Scopus and Google Scholar (Aguinis et al., 2018) from 2020 to 2022, as illustrated in Fig. 15.1. Considering the most recent and relevant studies related to incentive travel recovery, we have selected the sample period between 2020 and 2022. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic is also one of the reasons for selecting this stipulated time.

After the *goal* and *scope* consideration in step 1, the procedures for selecting *relevant journals* and *industry resources* were decided in step 2. The search terms “Incentive travel” and “COVID-19” were used to identify relevant articles from Scopus and Google Scholar. Only one article was identified by Scopus related to the resilience to crises of Thai MICE stakeholders (Rittichainuwat et al., 2020). Due to the limited response on Scopus, it was decided to widen the search to “Meeting*” and “Incentive*” and “Conference*” and “exhibition*” and “COVID-19”, as incentive travel is related to MICE tourism. The search yielded an additional five articles related to challenges and alignment options for German MICE destinations (Schabbing, 2022), online MICE technology (Yao et al., 2021), MICE tourism policy and strategy response (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021), the economic impact of COVID-19 on business events (Bartis et al., 2021), and the impact of COVID-19 and survival strategy in the UAE business tourism market (Aburumman, 2020). Google Scholar yielded 79 responses following the search using the “Incentive travel” and “COVID-19” search terms. Besides the already identified articles through the Scopus search, only an article on the opportunities and challenges from a Philippine MICE Tourism perspective (Disimulacion, 2021) was deemed to have meant the chapter’s goal. Other articles related to an “incentive to travel” (Bakhtiyorovna, 2021; Boto-Garcia & Leoni, 2021) or an “incentive for travel” (Klímová et al., 2022; Rawal et al., 2020), were also considered for inclusion as these articles supported the aim of the chapter. The extended search using the search terms “Meeting*” and “Incentive*” and “Conference*” and “exhibition*” and “COVID-19” yielded 1270 publications. An additional four publications were found

to support the goal of the chapter, namely, the nature related to the MICE sector in South Africa due to COVID-19 (Lekgua & Tichaawa, 2022), destination image (Weru, 2021), the navigation of business events recovery (Swart, 2020), and the uncertain future of MICE in Malaysia as a result of COVID-19 (Ho & Ming Sia, 2020). The rest of the reviewed publications were not considered as they did not support the research goals to explore incentive travel. Some URL links to publications provided error messages, or the publications were not in English. The identification of the search terms (step 3) and the selection of sources (step 4) was concluded, resulting in 11 usable articles available to conduct the comparison with articles published on the SITE website and social media platforms. After reviewing publications by the SITE Global commission research in collaboration with the Financial & Insurance Conference Professionals (FICP) and the Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) who report on the Incentive Travel Industry Index (ITII) (SITEGlobal, 2021), justification for the trustworthiness and content validity of the selected publications in this paper, was achieved.

Step 5 mainly focused on web-based content analysis to select relevant articles published on the SITE website and social media platforms to review the emerging themes between 2020 and 2022 (McMillan, 2000). These publications are related to the regulatory and strategic frameworks for the reopening of the sector (SITEAfrica, 2020), market reactions to COVID-19 (Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021b), destination selection and response (Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021c; Simmons, 2021), incentive programme design (Anon, 2022b; Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021a), market surveys (Anon, 2022a, b), changes in the incentive workforce (Anon, 2022c), priorities for incentive companies post-COVID-19 (SITEGlobal, 2021), incentive psychology post-COVID-19 (Jackson, 2021a), and future of incentive travel post-COVID-19 (Breust, 2020; Iannarone, 2021; Jackson, 2021b). A total of 13 relevant web-based publications were identified.

The final step involves capturing themes emanating from the publications on journal indexes and web-based content for analyses and comparison. A thematic data analysis provides a richer representation of the database on the value of the analyses (Braun et al., 2017).

15.3 Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Results highlight the discrepancies and similarities in themes published in academic journals and industry articles as compared and contrasted in Tables 15.1 and 15.2. Although 13 articles were selected for the systematic literature, none of the articles only focused on incentive travel and the impact of COVID-19. Incentive travel was investigated in conjunction with either MICE tourism, business events or business tourism. Table 15.1 provides an overview of the publications and discussions from the selected journal articles.

Emanating from the discussions of the selected journals, reference is made to incentives as part of the MICE or business events domain. Therefore, the selected

Table 15.1 Discussions from journal articles

Author	Discussion	Methodology	Destination
Rittichainuwat et al. (2020)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. Incentive travel buyers participated in the study and mentioned that incentive travellers were diverted to resorts and cultural centres in North Thailand, unaffected by COVID-19 areas. Destinations like Chiangmai and Phuket were considered alternative destinations as MICE organisers and managers were unlikely to postpone or cancel the planned conventions. During this time of crisis, MICE supplies regarded financial incentives as critical in the management of costs and the survival of their businesses. The cultivation of Buddhism and Thainess is embedded in their resilience and value for money philosophies.	Mixed method (qualitative and quantitative design)	Thailand
Schabbing (2022)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. Reference is made to the challenges Germany's MICE destinations have to increase their competitiveness through their City infrastructure and to reposition in the MICE market.	Not mentioned	Germany
Yao et al. (2021)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. The psychology of the behavioural intention to adopt the technology by online MICE attendees was investigated.	Quantitative method	China
Lekgau and Tichaawa (2021)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. The temporary relief funds (TERS), which were meant to be of financial assistance to the sector, were highlighted as a challenge due to late and non-payments. In building resilience, the sector adopted the hosting of virtual and hybrid events, which often required the realignment of key organisational policies. SITE has been acknowledged as one of the South African MICE sectors represented associations. Incentives have been identified to support the regional spread of inclusive growth.	Qualitative method	South Africa

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Author	Discussion	Methodology	Destination
Bartis et al. (2021)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. The economic impact of the lockdown restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic provides context to the challenges experienced by the MICE sector. Furthermore, adopting the sector to hybrid and virtual events highlights the need to upskill staff to master new technologies and innovation. Reference is made to SITE as the professional and global trade association to represent the interest of the incentive travel industry. The Business Events Coordinating Forum (BECF) coordinates efforts to secure MICE tourism in South Africa.	Qualitative method	South Africa
Aburumman (2020)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. MICE companies experienced material losses due to closed borders and travel restrictions. The survival and resilience of MICE companies can be supported by applying the 5P (product, price, place, promotion and people) marketing strategy. Reference is made to the promotion of incentives as one of the 5Ps in the marketing mix model.	Qualitative and quantitative methods	UAE
Disimulacion (2021)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. Inadequate MICE infrastructure, unreliable Internet connectivity and untargeted marketing campaigns are highlighted as barriers to a post-COVID-19 MICE tourism landscape. Opportunities stem from authentic product offerings, talent and collaboration to revive MICE tourism. Recommendations are made to reach more respondents by expanding the study to hybrid and virtual platforms used by incentive travel markets and trade exhibitions.	Qualitative descriptive approach	Philippines
Lekgua and Tichaawa (2022)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. The article's focus resonates with how venues adopted the hosting of the virtual event and the associated cost and skills requirements. Hybrid and virtual events are regarded as temporary solutions until the lockdown restrictions are lifted, and in-person events are allowed.	Qualitative method	South Africa
Weru (2021)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. Actionable positioning strategies are proposed to support the destination's MICE tourism competitiveness and image.	Quantitative method	Nairobi, Kenya

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Author	Discussion	Methodology	Destination
Swart (2020)	Incentives are discussed together with business events. An investigation into the development of COVID-19 protocols and guidelines for navigating the recovery of business events is outlined. Response by global organisations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), and associations in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia are reported. Business event-affiliated associations such as the International Association of Conference Centres (IACC), Events Industry Council (EIC), UFI (representing the global industry for the exhibition industry) and the Event Safety Council (ESC) in South Africa all published protocols and reopening guidelines. The inconsistencies in the application of protocols and regulations across countries have created instability in the sector and highlighted the volatility of business events.	Qualitative method (web-based content analyses)	Global Sector
Ho and Ming Sia (2020)	Incentives are discussed together with conferences, meetings and exhibitions. Changes in the MICE landscape as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are investigated. The Malaysian government introduced tax incentives to motivate the digital transformation of their businesses through technology innovation. Tax relief incentives were also pledged to small and medium-sized tourism businesses to sustain themselves during the time of the pandemic. The Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) launched different campaigns, such as “Let’s Meet Tomorrow,” to prepare for the reopening of events.	Not mentioned	Malaysia

themes from this literature are used to identify relevant themes for the thematic comparison with web-based publications later in the chapter. Seven themes were identified and categorised, namely (i) *destination management* (Rittichaiuwat et al., 2020; Schabbing, 2022), (ii) *economic impact and financial incentives* (Aburumman, 2020; Bartis et al., 2021; Ho & Ming Sia, 2020; Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021; Rittichaiuwat et al., 2020), (iii) *resilience* (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021; Rittichaiuwat et al., 2020), (iv) *marketing strategies* (Aburumman, 2020; Disimulacion, 2021; Ho & Ming Sia, 2020; Schabbing, 2022; Weru, 2021), (v) *digital transformation*, including hybrid- and virtual events (Bartis et al., 2021; Disimulacion, 2021; Ho & Ming Sia, 2020; Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021; Lekgua & Tichaawa, 2022; Yao et al., 2021), (vi) *talent management* (Bartis et al., 2021; Disimulacion, 2021; Lekgua & Tichaawa, 2022), and (vii) *regulatory* focusing on

Table 15.2 Discussions from web-based incentive travel publications

Author	Discussion	Destination
SITEAfrica (2020)	Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa attracted 2% of the global MICE tourism market. This report was drafted in response to the lockdown restrictions announced across an array of African countries. Three focus areas frame (i) the regulatory context for the reopening of business events on the continent, (ii) the proposal of a collaborative framework across borders and tourism supply chains, and (iii) a strategic framework for airlift reopening and new routes. Strong leadership in policy decisions was highlighted as an opportunity for regional tourism growth.	African continent
Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin (2021b)	In 2021, North American countries remained the most prominent incentive travel market globally, followed by European countries. Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland and Spain were among the top five incentive travel countries. It was reported that only 3% of incentive businesses closed, while businesses had to be proactive in their survival strategies by reducing company hours/benefits and salaries, reducing budgets, staff suspension or layoff, and depending on government support. Training and developing new skills were a top priority for incentive travel businesses. Flexible workplaces, digital and virtual marketing, risk management and sustainable travel were the important business outlooks post the COVID-19 pandemic.	Europe and North America
Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin (2021c)	Changes in incentive destination choices between 2019 and 2020 were compared. In 2019, the three biggest considerations when incentive buyers selected a destination were safety, appeal and infrastructure. Fundamental deciding factors in 2020 were health and safety, overall safety, domestic locations and distance from the origin-destination. Although European buyers favoured the United States as an incentive travel destination in 2019, countries such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi or Oceania were preferred in 2020. Over the 2 years, North American buyers had an overall sentiment to stay local.	Europe and North America
Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin (2021a)	At the beginning of 2021, risk management and programme inclusions were identified as two trends in incentive programme design post-COVID-19. Top risk mitigation strategies included new sanitation measures, social distancing, and health and security concerns management. Furthermore, non-contact services and hands-free technology were new additions to risk management. Both European and North American buyers reported changes in incentive programme inclusions. European buyers favour luxury travel, wellness and corporate social responsibility (CSR) as priorities. Free time, personalised programmes, wellness and luxury travel were prominent amongst North American buyers.	Europe and North America
Simmons (2021)	COVID-19 has caused a transformational shift in operations affecting businesses, consumers and governments. Response and perseverance against the pandemic include a “GoSafe” certification programme to adhere to safety protocols. UAE was a global leader in immunisation against COVID-19 and regular PCT tests of staff working in hotels and exhibitions.	Abu Dhabi (UAE)

(continued)

Table 15.2 (continued)

Author	Discussion	Destination
Anon (2022b)	In April 2022, incentive planners reported an increase of 34% in the booking of new events when compared with October 2021. Although the US market still favours domestic travel, there is a growing appetite for longer-haul travel, to countries like the Caribbean, Mexico, and Europe, in the near future. Most incentive planners (40%+) indicated that they would not consider travelling to Eastern Europe due to the war in Ukraine. Destination appeal for participants is the top priority for incentive planners, followed by venue availability, budget, travel access and the company's health and safety policy. Fully vaccinated (31%), negative PCT test (28%) and on-site testing (11%) indicate a steep decline in incentive travel requirements for participants. Despite the concern for an increase in travel cost (71%), it is also evident that more winners will want to travel (68%), with more incentive planners (52%) indicating that they will not offer alternative rewards to travel programmes.	North America
Anon (2022a)	The revival of incentive travel in 2022 is characterised by flexibility, health and safety protocols, budget increases, leadership approval, and the vaccine mandate's impact. Most incentive planners (86.5%) have incentives planned for the year, while 50% intend to travel internationally.	Not mentioned
Anon (2022c)	Incentive programmes are more important to a business than before and are a vital part of the employee benefits package. It is expected that incentive budgets will increase by 34%. New focus on the purpose of the incentive program, personalised experiences, and fully engaging and motivating the remote workforce. Incentive travel is a top motivator together with the destination choice, although there is still a concern about the compulsory vaccine mandate. Incentive programmes need to consider employee wellness, lifestyles and workstyles.	Not mentioned
SITEGlobal (2021)	After a year of global incentive travel observations, the white paper provided perspectives on the time frame for the resumption of incentive travel experiences, the design of the incentive travel programme, the incentive travel value chain, the importance of incentive travel for recognition and rewards, new types of incentive travel programmes, incentive travel programme cancellations, and the viability of emerging incentive travel destinations.	Global
Jackson (2021a)	How teams are motivated and engaged has not changed. Jobs have changed, and job security is a concern. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is still relevant regarding communication with the workforce.	Not mentioned
Jackson (2021b)	Corporate buyers are concerned about the safety and risk of incentive travel to their workforce. Value systems have changed, where incentive travellers are more sensitive to their surroundings and their impact on the world. There is a greater need for more free time and personal space.	Not mentioned

(continued)

Table 15.2 (continued)

Author	Discussion	Destination
Breust (2020)	In mid-2020, the author responded to industry questions related to the need for incentives, the use of technology to stimulate connections and the activities of the incentive programme, the fear people had for social contact and how the incentive planner can protect the budget of their programmes.	Not mentioned
Iannarone (2021)	Collaboration, digital transformation, creativity, goal reviews, transparency and integrity are characteristics that incentive businesses showcased to survive the pandemic. Post the COVID-19 pandemic, more businesses are investing in travel experiences and recognition of their clients and employees, but health and safety protocols need to be in place. Emerging trends include the need to research the perception of incentive programmes, consideration of the airlift and flexible cancellation terms, flexible reward programmes and hybrid options.	North America

policies and protocols (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021; Swart, 2020). Although reference is made to policy and strategy response in the management of the impact of COVID-19 in MICE tourism by Lekgau and Tichaawa (2021) and Weru (2021), the specific policy implications and strategic responses do not provide clear guidelines for incentive travel.

Publications on destinations from the Middle East and Africa resulted in the highest number of publications representing South Africa (three articles), Kenya (one article) and UAE (one article). Asia was represented with one publication each from Thailand, Malaysia, China and the Philippines. Europe was represented by one article on Germany, and one provided a global perspective. Qualitative research methods were deemed the most popular, as five articles opted to select this method, while mixed methods, quantitative methods and methods not mentioned were recorded in two articles each.

Articles selected from the SITE website only related to the incentive travel industry, as summarised in Table 15.2.

Publications from the incentive travel industry focus on content related to (i) *the regulatory and strategic frameworks for the reopening of the sector* (SITEAfrica, 2020), (ii) *market reactions to COVID-19* (Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021b), (iii) *destination selection and choice* (Anon, 2022a, b; Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021c; Simmons, 2021; SITEGlobal, 2021), (iv) *incentive programme design*, focusing on luxury, wellness and personalisation (Anon, 2022a; Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021a; Jackson, 2021b; SITEGlobal, 2021), (v) *collaboration* (Iannarone, 2021; SITEAfrica, 2020), (vi) *value chain*, including infrastructure, venue availability and airlift (Anon, 2022b; Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021c; Iannarone, 2021; SITEAfrica, 2021; SITEGlobal, 2021), (vi) *budgets* (Anon, 2022a, b, c; Breust, 2020), (vii) *talent management* (Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021b; Jackson, 2021a), (viii) *digital transformation* (Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021a, b), and finally *risk and safety management*, also related to the vaccine mandate (Anon, 2022a, b; Breust, 2020; Gráinne Ni Ghiollagáin, 2021a, b, c; Iannarone, 2021; Jackson, 2021b; Simmons, 2021).

Table 15.3 Comparison of themes

Identified themes	Journal articles	Web-based publications
Destination management	2 citations	
Economic impact and financial incentives	5 citations	
Resilience	2 citations	
Marketing strategies	5 citations	
<i>Digital transformation</i>	6 citations	2 citations
<i>Talent management</i>	3 citations	2 citations
<i>Regulatory</i>	2 citations	2 citations
Market reactions		2 citations
Destination selection and choice		5 citations
Incentive programme design		4 citations
Collaboration		2 citations
Value chain		5 citations
Budgets		4 citations
Risk and safety management		9 citations

Incentive travel industry publications focused the most on North America (five mentions), followed by Europe (three mentions), while Africa, the UAE and “global” have all one mention. Five publications did not specify the specific continent or country.

To compare the similar themes from the journal articles and web-based publications, the results are indicated in Table 15.3.

Similar themes include content related to *digital transformation*, *talent management* and *regulations*. The incentive travel industry specifically investigated the market reactions, destination selection and choice, incentive programme design, collaboration, the value chain, budgets and risk and safety management. Furthermore, *risk and safety management* is deemed the most important theme in incentive travel discussions, followed by the *value chain*, destination selection, and *choice*. Academic research highlighted *digital transformation* as the most popular area of investigation, followed by the *economic impact*, *financial incentives*, and *marketing strategies* when conducting research on COVID-19 on MICE or business tourism in general.

15.4 Conclusion

The purpose of the chapter was to compare the themes related to incentive travel recovery published by the incentive travel industry with scholarly work in journal indexes. Only three similar themes were identified following a systematic literature review. MICE and business event research were deemed popular in Africa and favour qualitative research methods, while most web-based industry publications

focused on North America. Future research can explore the specific incentive travel market reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic, destination selection and response to incentive travel recovery, and the designing of incentive travel programmes, as there is a lack of scientific evidence to support these themes. These new insights on the need of the incentive travel industry can direct how destination management companies, incentive travel planners and operators, and scholars apply their resources in developing incentive travel recovery strategies and policies. However, little attention has been paid to incentive travel recovery in the previous research, which has focused on other segments of the MICE industry like meetings, conferences and exhibitions. Over the past, travel organisations have focused more on incentive tours for specific reasons. Hence, the present research attempts to explore hidden dimensions of incentive travel from both academic and industry perspectives. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic also plays a significant role in exploring incentive travel after the pandemic. Future research needs to focus on each segment of the MICE industry, including incentive travel equally.

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Chapter 16

Exploring COVID-19 Recovery Mechanisms of the Accommodation Sector in South Africa



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Abstract The COVID-19 pandemic has been disastrous to all sectors of the economy, and the accommodation industry has been the most affected. This chapter explores accommodation occupancy during the COVID-19 era, interrogates the recovery strategies adopted, and suggests other recovery mechanisms and strategies for quicker and complete recovery of the tourism accommodation industry. The study follows a qualitative research design approach. Annual Integrated reports from Sun International hotels and City Lodge and Hotels group were analysed. The study found that South Africa's accommodation industry adopted various recovery mechanisms, such as encouraging employees and tourists to go for the COVID-19 vaccine, which stimulated mobility and sociability, sanitisation at accommodation sites, social distancing, and wearing of masks and probing the government to open the industry fully to COVID-19 alert level 1. The South African accommodation industry did not implement other robust marketing strategies that bolster domestic tourism, nor did it implement the Safari service quality model (SAFSERV) and management strategies. It is recommended that South Africa's accommodation industry recovery path should adopt robust strategies to expedite full recovery from COVID-19, such as adopting the SAFSERV model and different marketing strategies. A fusion of health-related mechanisms, COVID-19 cure, and marketing management strategies is recommended to expedite full recovery by the tourism accommodation industry.

Keywords Hotels · Marketing · Recovery strategies · SAFSERV · Service quality

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16.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought enormous untold economic suffering globally amongst various economic sectors (Ozdemir et al., 2021). One such economic sector adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the accommodation sector (UNWTO, 2020). This was evidenced by the low figures in tourism accommodation, low occupancy levels, and low revenue generated by the tourism accommodation industry globally (UNWTO, 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry has been enormous (Nhamo et al., 2020; Legrand, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020). Examples of such adverse effects have been the initial ‘lockdown’ in England, beginning on 23 March 2020, which witnessed flights being grounded and tourism and hospitality businesses closed. There was a loss of revenue from hotels, guest houses, and lodges (Wang et al., 2021).

According to Sucheran (2021), guest house operations in South Africa were severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a severe drop in revenue and a significant threat to job security. Despite implementing various response measures and strategies, guest houses were somewhat concerned about the future of their businesses due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. Travel restrictions exposed the vulnerability of the accommodation industry (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020). According to Gössling et al. (2020), travel bans, border closures, event cancellations, quarantine requirements, and fear of spread posed severe threats to the tourism and hospitality sectors regarding job losses, revenue loss, and closure of businesses. Gallen (2020:7) sowed doubt about whether there would be any possibilities of full recovery in hotels and guest houses before the end of 2021. Musavengane and Leonard (2022) believe that COVID-19 had a significant impact on the accommodation industry through reduced employment opportunities and potential closures of guest houses in Southern Africa. The international tourists’ arrivals in South Africa plunged to –86% year on year, thus adversely impacting hotel bookings and air reservations being the worst affected (Stats SA, 2021a, b; Dube, 2021).

According to United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2020), the international share of guests at accommodations between January and July 2022 reported the following recovery trends: the United Kingdom 25%, Poland 13%, and Hungary 25%. Sweden recorded 10%, France 17%, and Portugal 36%. Iceland reported 54%, Spain 29%, and Greece 54%. The trends report improvement in Europe from the year 2020, when the world was hardest hit by COVID-19.

According to UNWTO (2020), Africa’s accommodation recovery figures regarding the international share at accommodation sites, reflect as follows; Morocco 43%, Tunisia 32%, Botswana 50%, Namibia 60%. Mozambique recorded 39%, Zimbabwe 45%, and Angola 10%. Congo reported 50%, Eswatini 44%, and Algeria 20%. Higher percentages are recorded in the second quarter of 2020 than in 2020.

According to Melnychenko et al. (2022), the tourism and hospitality industry tried mitigation mechanisms to recover from the pandemic in Europe. In Europe, it

has been proven that digital technologies and data play important roles in combating the COVID-19 pandemic and tourism recovery. The main tools of digitalisation in all tourism subsectors, including the accommodation sector that help make travel safe and healthy, are digital COVID certificates, mobile applications, and websites that propose information about the epidemiological situation, restrictions, and requirements for travellers. Fast service has been enabled through online booking and payment for accommodation and other services. Robotisation is the new era for dealing with COVID-19. Disinfection of robots to enable them to function well has been the new norm. Robots' provision of room service and robot services for tourists have been enhanced. Tkachenko et al. (2021) recommend the promotion and development of the digital transformation of tourism services in different tourism subsectors, such as the accommodation industry in post-COVID-19. Melnychenko et al. (2022) recommend collaboration between destination management organisations and tourism enterprises such as hotels, guesthouses, and lodges for recovery. The implementation of innovation and digital technologies in tourism services by stakeholders, such as hoteliers and guest house consumption, is also recommended for quick recovery (Melnychenko et al., 2022).

There is lack of diversification and innovation in accommodation and guest houses regarding coming up with new products and services (Sucheran 2021). Sucheran (2021) comments adoption of closing of floors of some hotel floors, such as what happened during previous pandemics in Europe. Guest houses and other accommodation establishments must be proactive in restructuring and developing a more diversified business model by deconstructing and reconstructing existing products and adopting innovative and creative approaches to generate new business opportunities (Musavengane & Leonard, 2022).

This study edifies existing body of knowledge which was annihilated by scholars such as Nhamo et al. (2020), Rogerson and Rogerson (2020), Dube et al. (2021) and Bama and Nyikana (2021), which mainly concentrates on the broader tourism and destination and not specifically tourism accommodation recovery strategies in South Africa, as detailed in this study. This will benefit academics, the owners of tourism destinations, hoteliers, lodge owners, and tourism managers.

This study will explore accommodation occupancy during COVID-19 era, interrogate the recovery strategies adopted, and suggest other recovery mechanisms and strategies for quicker and complete recovery of the tourism accommodation industry. This study also seeks to establish the negative impact of COVID-19 on tourism and contributes significantly to providing missing and valuable literature on recovery strategies that can be utilised by the tourism accommodation sector, thus closing a gap in the literature. The methodology utilised was a critical document review using PRISMA (Moher, 2013) as the analysis tool. The lifting of restrictions improved movement and tourism accommodation occupancy. The accommodation industry has practised some recovery strategies such as Sun International hotel, Tsogo Sun, City Lodge Hotel Group (CLHG) (Nhamo et al., 2020; Slabbert et al., 2022). The accommodation sector has not implemented some meaningful strategies, including failure to recognise and enforce the SAFSERV model (Chihwai et al., 2019), which assists in expediting tourism recovery. That shows a gap in

knowledge whereby researchers need to explore how the South African accommodation recovery path could adopt other strategies to enhance quicker and complete recovery from COVID-19, such as adopting the SAFSERV model and different marketing strategies discussed below. A fusion of health-related mechanisms, COVID-19 cure, and marketing management strategies is recommended to quicken full recovery by the tourism accommodation industry.

SAFSERV has 121 research hypotheses based on the 121 items used to assess service quality in tourism (Chihwai, 2019). The 121 items belonging to the 21 dimensions were used for SAFSERV analysis. Each of the 121 null hypotheses was tested using P-values obtained from the two-sample paired t-test (Hair et al., 2010) at the 5% significance level. The null and alternative hypotheses and the decision rule are as follows: null hypothesis – there is no statistically significant difference between perceived and expected value concerning the item used to assess service quality; alternative hypothesis – there is a statistically significant difference between perceived and expected value regarding the item used to assess service quality; decision rule – at the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected if the P-value obtained from the two-sample paired t-test is less than 0.05. At the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected if the P-value obtained from the two-sample paired t-test is greater than or equal to 0.05. Gap scores and P-values obtained from the two-sample paired test showed that the 21 dimensions, which have 121 items falling under them, resulted in 9 of the 121 research hypotheses not being rejected at the 5% significance level. However, 112 of the 121 research hypotheses had to be rejected at the 5% significance level. The nine research hypotheses could not be rejected at the 5% significance level (Chihwai et al., 2019). The findings of the SAFSERV model were that the SAFSERV model is the most robust instrument in measuring tourists' satisfaction than other models. SAFSERV was empirically proven as better than the generic Service quality model (SERVQUAL) propounded by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1990), which is used to measure customer satisfaction in all tertiary settings. It was also empirically proven that SAFSERV is more robust than the service performance model (SERVPERF) (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) and the ecotourism service quality model (ECOSERV) postulated by Khan (2003), hotel service quality (HOLSERV) developed by Wong et al. (1999) and Knutson et al. (1990), and dining service quality model developed by Stevens et al. (1995). SAFSERV is a useful asset for managing tourism enterprises and can be used as a toolkit for managing, marketing, and enhancing tourism organisations and their activities (Chihwai, 2019, 2020, 2021).

There is insufficient literature to suggest quick and complete recovery mechanisms and strategies for COVID-19 effects on tourism accommodation. According to Rodríguez-Antón and Alonso-Almeida (2020), the real impact of hotels during pandemics and the strategies hotels have employed are not scrutinised by researchers. Instead, researchers only look at the bigger picture, like how the destination was affected and the strategy employed by the destination (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). This area has not been given much attention yet by the hotel industry and researchers (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). This study contributes

towards closing that knowledge gap by suggesting effective recovery strategies promoting quick recovery in the accommodation industry.

This chapter consists of five segments: Section 16.1 deals with the aims and objectives of the study, the introduction and background to the study, and gaps identified in the literature. Section 16.2 deals with literature review in which related literature with contesting views is articulated. The section also links to the research objectives. Section 16.3 deals with materials and methods utilised in this study. Section 16.4 deals with the results of the study, discussions, findings, and recommendations.

16.2 Literature Review

16.2.1 *Effect of COVID-19 on Tourism*

According to Ozdemir et al. (2021), COVID-19 severely impacted the hospitality industry in the USA. Their study showed that daily room occupancy, average daily rate (ADR), and revenue per average room (RevPAR) plummeted to about 74%, 47%, and 86%, respectively, in 2020. Severe impact was felt more in luxury hotels than in economy-scale hotels because the well-to-do were unwilling to risk travelling. Equally, chain-managed hotels were the most affected compared to franchise and independent hotels (Ozdemir et al., 2021). The year 2020 was the most devastating on both occupancy rates and revenue generation in US hotels, with revenue losses of up to \$30 billion between March 2020 and May 2020 (Ozdemir et al., 2021).

According to Khan et al. (2021), COVID-19 severely impacted hospitality employees' mental health. The fear of hospitality employees losing their jobs and salary reduction created a sense of insecurity and mental disturbance. Results from the 372 respondents of hospitality industry revealed that perceived job insecurity mediates the relationship between fear of economic crisis, non-employability, and mental health. The contingency of fear of COVID-19 strengthens the indirect association of fear of financial crisis on mental health through perceived job insecurity.

16.2.2 *Mitigation and Recovery Strategies Used in Tourism*

The pandemic affected tourism accommodation differently and various mitigation measures were implemented. According to Rodríguez-Antón and Alonso-Almeida (2020), the actual effect of COVID-19 on hotel recovery strategies has not been fully explored. Many studies emphasise tourism destinations and recovery strategies, but only few concentrate on hotels and their strategy. A comprehensive analysis of the effect of COVID-19 and reactive measures employed by Spain's hospitality industry is a classic success story (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020).

Globally, different countries offered different stimulus packages to recover from the devastation of the pandemic. Brunei Darusallam is an example of an Asian country whose tourism business benefited from the government stimulus packages which included a 6 months repayment loan deferment. Beneficiaries of such stimulus packages in the tourism sector hospitality, event management, restaurant or cafe, and air transport sectors.

According to UNWTO (2020), the following stimulus packages could assist in tourism recovery worldwide: financial assistance on investment and operations, review of taxes, charges, and regulations affecting travel and tourism, and ease of travel restrictions. Additionally, digitisation promotes skills and jobs, sustainable environment stimulus and recovery packages, market analysis, and customer confidence; stimulates demand; and boosts marketing, events, and meetings. UNWTO (2021) also encouraged investing in partnerships and mainstream tourism in national, regional, and international recovery programmes, and development assistance were encouraged.

At the global level, two measures were implemented to deal with COVID-19 and reduce the damage to the tourism sector. The first initiative was a G20 meeting that was held on 24 April 2020 as a follow-up to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) that had been held on 23 April 2020. The first measure was for each state's coordinated recovery plan using economic support for the tourism sector. The second strategy was sanitary protection. The European Council approved, on 23 April 2020, an initial budget of 540,000 million euros to help countries finance their plans to avoid mass layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the WTTC, the tourism sector developed several protocols to bring back safe tourism worldwide. By the end of May 2020, the protocols were already published and were being followed (WTTC, 2020).

16.2.3 Mitigation and Recovery Strategies Used in the Accommodation Sector

For hotel industry contextualisation, Hu et al. (2020) proposed reinforcing the health and safety of their employees because such employees never associate themselves with the pandemic. Chang et al. (2020) suggest post-COVID-19 strategies be adopted to boost tourism. They suggested the following public and private policy considerations: significant contingent planning to accommodate travel plans and restrictions, personal protection equipment, and medical and health care requirements. Furthermore, hosting significant events will also boost tourism. Implementation of short-, medium-, and long-haul domestic and international travel by air and sea may also need consideration. Public versus private transportation areas also need improvement. Hotel accommodation needs scrutiny at the policy level in the government to get national budget support in times of such disasters. Alternative forms of payment and pre-payment should be devised and be convenient. Significant changes in the tourism and transport industries need consideration. Potential structural changes are some of the suggestions.

In Spain, hotels put several measures in place in 2020 to curb COVID-19. Melia Hotels International introduced security for employees and clients. A sense of security builds trust between the tourist and the hotel. Spain hotels also reduced customer and employee contact by embracing technology. The hotels also optimised operational processes through simplification and digitisation and adapting brands to new customer needs (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020).

In Cyprus, support for affected businesses to maintain jobs, support for the tourism sector, and deferral VAT payments would be due in 2 months. Several accommodation facilities were forced to instantly stop their operations and/or significantly downsize them (Eluwole et al., 2022). According to Vrikis (2020), the government supported the Small Businesses Scheme for businesses employing up to 5 persons, provided that they will maintain their employees at work, but have suffered at least a 25% reduction in their turnover. The Scheme provided that the government would refund 70% of each employee's salary.

In Portugal, a 9.2 billion package supports workers and provides liquidity for companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Portugal's government support package for the country's crushed tourism sector included delayed loan repayment schedules, debt-to-equity instruments, and grants (Goncalves, 2021).

The above health-related recovery mechanisms adopted by Spain's leading hotel industry would be an essential benchmark for the South African tourism accommodation industry. Whilst some have already been implemented, there is a need to form a hybrid approach using all of the above measures and come up with a solution. With COVID-19 still prevalent and possibilities of new variants emerging, constant and continuous measurements should be taken as discussed above and recommended below.

In Rwanda, IMF approved SDR80.1 million (about US\$109.4 million) under the Rapid Credit Facility. The money would alleviate COVID-19 pressures on tourism, trade, and foreign exchange reserves and provide resources for health expenditure, households, and firms affected by the crisis. That incentive improved the occupancy rate and revenue generation in the accommodation sector (Rwegina, 2020).

According to Dube and Nhamo (2020) findings, in Southern Africa, to recover from the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, there were measures to be put in place. Such rejuvenating packages would include measures such as loan payback delays and delays in payment of levies, taxes, and surcharges. Furthermore, there was the postponement of tax collection. Deferment of income tax, corporate tax, and discounts on jet fuel and air tickets all accounted for efforts to revitalise and stabilise the tourism industry.

Africa has also improved its tourism recovery prospects by following mitigation and recovery levels 1 to 5, such as the rest of the world (Matiza, 2022). Borders were opened to ensure that movement and socialising (Rogerson and Rogerson) take place in level 1 in all African nations. Hotel occupancy has also improved due to this movement from South Africa to Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe to South Africa. According to Afronews (2021), in Zimbabwe, Rainbow Tourism Group (RTG) reported improved occupancy levels in the first six months of 2021 at 4 per cent growth compared to 2020 figures in its hotels. Africa Sun's occupancy grew by 2 per

cent form 22 per cent to 24 per cent compared to the previous year. The 24 per cent growth in occupancy recorded by African Sun was lower than the 49 per cent the group recorded in 2019. The RTG revenue grew to \$706 million in the period under review, a 53 per cent rise from \$462 million in the prior-comparable period in 2020. RTG's revenue per available room (RevPar) grew by 31 per cent in the first half to \$2014, while the average daily rate (ADR) grew by 24 per cent to \$8395. At \$1.15 billion, African Sun's revenue was significantly better than the first six months of 2020, which managed a 20 per cent growth to \$954 million, mainly attributable to marginal growth in occupancy and firm average daily rate (Afronews, 2022).

Equally, Tourism South Africa (2022) reports that South Africa witnessed much mobility from these three Sub-Saharan countries, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Mozambique, accounting for 73.2 per cent of African tourist arrivals in level 1 after borders were opened. According to BusinessTech (2021), in South Africa, City Lodge Hotel Group reported that COVID-19 bolstered the infusion of new technologies and applications into hotel operations resulting in improved room occupancy. Tech features that might have been introduced as extra conveniences are now becoming necessities in a period where no physical contact was not promoted. According to Tourism South Africa (2022), tourism spending has recovered immensely, exhibiting more than 216.0 per cent growth in the second quarter of 2021 and in 2022, and stands at ZAR11.1 billion. The average spending by foreign tourists now stands at R9,400. Length of stay at hotels increased by over 5.4%, recording 12.7 nights. Bed nights amount to 15.3 million, which is more than 170.5 per cent over the second quarter of 2021 (Tourism South Africa, 2022).

This section dealt with the literature related to pandemics and the COVID-19 pandemic, its effects on people's livelihoods, and its effects on the different types of economy, including tourism. The following section deals with materials and methods whereby the research design as well as major data sources is discussed.

16.3 Materials and Methods

According to Dube et al. (2021), given the context and nature of an in-depth study of a phenomenon, where much data are available through reports, authoritative statements, and the internet, qualitative data analysis and critical document review are recommended. Bowen (2009) supports critical document analysis as having been tried and tested impeccable traditional data analysis techniques from massive rich sources in agreement with the authors above sentiment.

According to Jones-Hugh (2010) and Webber et al. (2017), the use of archival data in social research provides a plethora of pros than cons, as further elucidated and supported by Welch (2000), who advances the notion that the usage of archival content or material necessitates longitudinal data, developing new theories on business functioning whilst enhancing the constructs of reliability and validity of

findings thereof. Twenty-nine documents were analysed, comprising three annual reports from Sun International hotels, Tsogo Sun hotels, City Lodge and Hotels Group (CLHG), monthly tourism accommodation statistics, and gross domestic product contribution from December 2019 to May 2022 from Statistics South Africa. Statistics South Africa is relevant as a source because it is the basis upon which the study depends with its statistics on low accommodation occupancy and low income in the tourism accommodation industry, which we use as a springboard to look for recovery strategies both during and post-COVID-19 era. Statistics South Africa statistics reflect the effect of mitigation and recovery strategies that the government of South Africa employed. Applying Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) as an analysis tool, papers were searched on Google Scholar databases and were collected. Keywords used for searching included COVID-19, recovery strategies, tourism recovery strategies, hotels recovery strategies, South Africa, service quality, and tourism. All six significant steps were applied when applying PRISMA. Relevant articles were those related to COVID-19 recovery strategies, which produced 58,700 papers.

Further refining of the search on COVID-19 recovery strategies in tourism accommodation strategies produced 24,000 articles whilst COVID-19 recovery strategies produced 16,600 articles. The papers were screened using the quality checklist, including relevant articles and excluding irrelevant papers. Articles with correct titles remained, whilst those with unrelated titles were excluded. Articles with clarity on introduction, background, relevant findings, and conclusions were included. Articles with relevant objectives of the study were included, whilst those without were excluded. Articles without rationale of the study were excluded, whilst those with the relevant rationale of the study were included and were eligible for further analysis and consideration. Articles with tools and methods of analysis were included, whilst those without were excluded. Articles with results, discussions, findings, and conclusions were included, whilst those without were excluded. Articles with titles corroborating with the study were included, whilst those not corroborating were excluded. Articles with full text were included, whilst those without full text were excluded. The language used in the chosen articles was English, whilst those in other languages were excluded.

The eligibility of the included papers was based on some of the 27 checklist papers, as one cannot apply all in one study based on the criticalness of the papers (Moher, 2013). Lastly, the critical review of the articles addressing the aims of the current study was applied. Ten articles related to the effects of COVID-19 on tourism, in general, were also read and analysed. Three Annual Integrated reports were scrutinised from Sun International hotels, Tsogo Sun group of hotels, and City Lodge and Hotels Group. These are one of the largest groups of hotels in South Africa.

Table 16.1 shows a list of some of the primary sources consulted. The list comprises publications links from Sun International hotels, Tsogo Sun and CLHG, and Statistics South Africa. The documents had critical information that assisted in bringing out information which was analysed in the study.

Table 16.1 List of major sources consulted

Year	Title
2021	Annual Integrated Reports; Sun International hotels Annual Integrated Report; Tsogo Sun hotels Annual Integrated Report; City Lodge Hotels Group
2019	Tourist accommodation, December 2019. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410December2019.pdf
2020	Tourist accommodation, January 2020. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410January2020.pdf
	Department of Tourism Annual Performance Plan 2020–2023 https://www.tourism.gov.za/AboutNDT/Publications/Annual%20Performance%20Plan%202020-23.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, March 2020. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410March2022.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, June 2020. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410June2020.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, September 2020. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410September2020.pdf
	Strategic plan 2020–21 to 2024–2025 https://www.tourism.gov.za/AboutNDT/Publications/Strategic%20Plan%20%202020-21%20to%20%202024-25.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, December 2020. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410December2020.pdf
2021	Tourist accommodation, January 2021. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410January2021.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, March 2021. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410April2021.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, June 2021. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410June2021.pdf
	Tourist accommodation, September 2021. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P6410&SCH=72889
	P6140 Tourist accommodation December 2021. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410December2021.pdf
2022	Tourist accommodation 2022.P6410 January 2022. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410January2022.pdf
	P6410. Tourist accommodation, March 2022. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P6410&SCH=73107
	P6410 Tourist accommodation, April 2022. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410/P6410April2022.pdf
	P6410 Tourist accommodation, May 2022. Pretoria: South Africa. https://statssa.gov.za/publications/P6410May2022.pdf

Source: Author Data from Statistics SA (2019, 2020a, b, c, 2021a, b, 2022), Annual Integrated Reports 2021

16.4 Results and Discussions

This section deals with results of the study, discussions of journal articles related to pandemics and COVID-19, monthly reports on COVID-19 effects on occupancy levels and revenue generation, and recovery strategies. Findings and recommendations are articulated. In South Africa, protocols on health-induced recovery strategy followed the world examples from China and Europe by implementing the five levels in response to COVID-19.

16.4.1 *Lockdown Levels and Mitigatory Recovery Measures*

Table 16.2 shows mitigatory recovery measures employed by the government of South Africa at each level to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and recover from the devastation of the pandemic. These levels have a direct impact on hotel occupancy and revenue generation in accommodation industry. These measures worked very well, especially in level 5 when there was a total lockdown. As lockdown measures eased in levels 4, 3, and 2, another further spread of the pandemic led to adjusted levels 3 and 4 before finally all harsh measures were removed in level 1, allowing free movement and businesses to open up. The constant appetite by governments worldwide to find a COVID-19 cure and its subsequent discovery leapfrogged the recovery zeal of the rest of the world, including South Africa. There was a reduction in deaths as the levels moved from level 5 to 1, a sign that shows the effectiveness of these health-related mitigation recovery measures to curb COVID-19 with a net positive effect on the tourism industry worldwide and in South Africa. Limited sociability and mobility greatly assisted in reducing the spread of COVID-19. The subsequent removal of such mobility and sociability aspects in level 1 opened the tourism business, particularly the tourism accommodation industry.

16.4.2 *Occupancy and Revenue Generation Analysis*

Figure 16.1 shows tourism occupancy and income generation from December 2019 to June 2022. The occupancy rate and income were high in December 2019. In the first two months of 2020, occupancy figures and revenue generation from tourism accommodation were still high in South Africa, despite China having announced COVID-19 presence. In March 2020, the level 5 hard lockdown affected people's mobility and sociability, affecting the occupancy and tourism accommodation revenue generation. The adverse effects deepened in April 2020, as illustrated above. The level 4 recovery strategy relieved the tourism accommodation industry in terms of occupancy and revenue generated. Whilst 2020 was the most brutal hit in terms of occupancy rate and tourism accommodation revenue generation, the year 2021

Table 16.2 Lockdown levels and mitigatory recovery measures are in place to curb COVID-19 in South Africa and to boost business

Level 5	<p>Full national lockdown</p> <p>Very restricted movement except for essential services</p> <p>Drastic measures are in place to contain the COVID-19 spread at all levels</p>
Level 4	<p>Partial lockdown</p> <p>Some activity allowed to resume subject to extreme precautions required to limit community transmission and outbreaks</p> <p>Essential services continued operating, and some other businesses opened, including those that sell baby clothes, bedding, winter clothing, and stationery. Hardware suppliers and vehicle maintenance businesses opened, and factories that supported these businesses started manufacturing</p> <p>Restaurants are allowed to sell food, but deliveries only</p> <p>A curfew was put in place. One could not leave home between 8 pm and 5 am unless one had an essential worker permit or needed urgent medical attention</p> <p>One could leave home to exercise, but only between 6 am and 9 am. However, one would stay within 5 km of their home and cannot exercise in groups</p> <p>Fabric face masks are mandatory. One had to wear one when leaving their home</p> <p>Tobacco products and alcohol were not allowed to be sold</p> <p>Domestic workers and childminders who live in private households could return to work</p> <p>Businesses that open must have strict social distancing and hygiene measures in place</p> <p>You may only travel between provinces for funerals or to return to work or home</p> <p>You may still not visit family or friends</p> <p>You can use public transport under strict conditions, such as trains and buses</p>
Level 3	<p>Partial lockdown</p> <p>Easing of some restrictions, including at work and social activities addressing high transmission risk</p> <p>All workers will be allowed to return to work at factories. All workplaces must have COVID-19 prevention measures in place</p> <p>Alcohol sales are permitted from Monday to Wednesday, between 8 am and 12 pm.</p> <p>People are allowed to buy alcohol to drink at home. Bars and shebeens will remain closed</p> <p>Restaurants will only be able to deliver orders</p> <p>More businesses are allowed to open, allowing more workers to return to work. These include employee sectors such as vehicle manufacturing, construction, clothing, real estate, and gardening</p> <p>Limited travel, including travel between provinces, is allowed in some circumstances</p> <p>Laundry and dry-cleaning services are permitted</p>
Level 2	<p>Partial lockdown</p> <p>Further easing of restrictions, but the maintenance of physical distancing and restrictions of some leisure and social activities to prevent a resurgence of the virus</p> <p>Manufacturing scaled up to 100 per cent employment</p> <p>All retail permitted</p> <p>Business travel allowed</p> <p>Accommodation is open for business travellers</p> <p>Restaurants are open for takeaways and delivery</p> <p>Interprovincial travel allowed</p>
Level 1	<p>No lockdown</p> <p>Most normal activities are resumed, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times</p> <p>No wearing of masks in open spaces and streets</p>

Source: Author data based on Government Communications and Information Systems (GCIS), South Africa, 2021

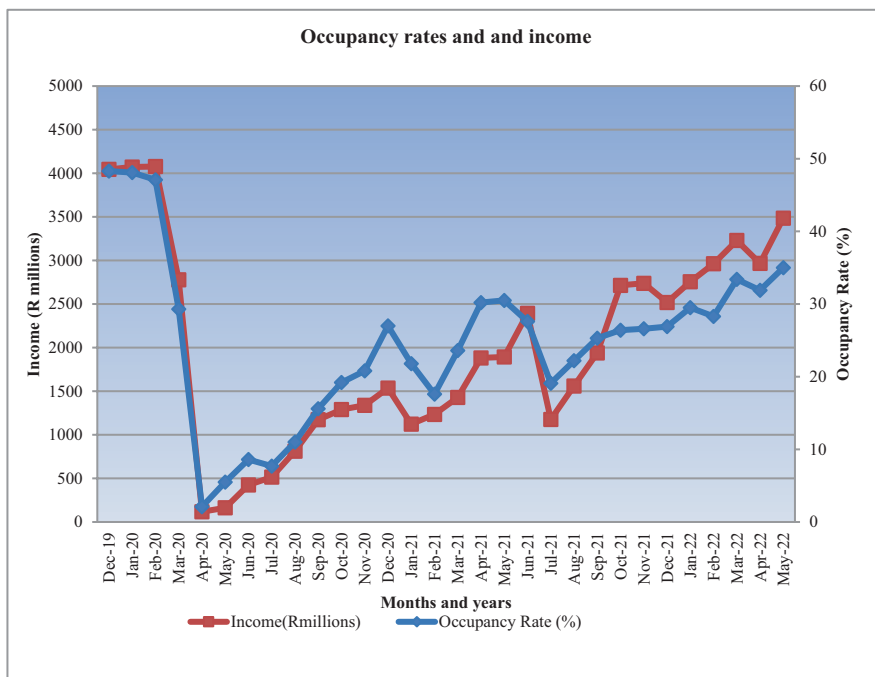


Fig. 16.1 Occupancy rate and income generation during COVID-19. (Source. Author data based on Statistics South Africa (2019, 2020a, b, c, 2021a, b, 2022))

showed that the recovery strategies employed by the government worked favourably for the first quarter to improve occupancy and revenue. As people relaxed and as restrictions loosened at the end of the first quarter of 2021, there were more deaths; therefore, stricter measures were put into place again, resulting in a drop in occupation rates and revenue generation as illustrated above. From August 2021, with the discovery of COVID-19 vaccines and ease of restrictions as part of the recovery strategy, occupancy rates and income generation began to rise again. In 2022, there was still a gradual increase in occupancy rate and revenue generation, although with the prevailing level 1 restriction. Much must be done to regain the pre-2019 and 2018 occupancy rates and income generation levels. That calls for more and better recovery strategies to be implemented and evaluated to check their effectiveness in due course. The slow pace to full recovery calls for quicker and more effective recovery strategies to bring glory to this once-flourishing tourism accommodation industry.

According to Tourism SA (2022), international tourist arrivals in South Africa were down by -48.2% in the second quarter of 2022 compared to the second quarter of 2019. Total tourist arrivals were recorded at 1.2 million, a giant leap compared to the 2021 second quarter. Recovery in 2022 is exhibited by international tourist arrivals of 1.2 million tourists, total foreign direct spend of R11.1 billion, length of

stay at 12.7 nights, total bed nights at 15.3 million, and geographic spread of 11.0% (Tourism South Africa, 2022).

The distribution of international tourist arrivals is also crucial to scrutinise in order to know which places are places are favourites and understand why the distribution pattern is that way so that better customised recovery strategies can be crafted by authorities in Tourism. African tourists seem to favour Gauteng as their best choice of destination, with a record of 385,258 tourists in the second quarter of 2022. Zimbabwe contributes 176,053 tourists, Mozambique 36,319, and Lesotho 43,671. Mpumalanga also seems to be a favourite destination among African countries contributing 210,502 tourist arrivals. Mozambique contributes 161,630 tourists, may be due to its proximity to the Mozambique-South Africa border. Zimbabwe contributed 12,652 tourists in the second quarter of 2022, while Swaziland also contributed 31,197 tourists due to the border proximity.

Africa contributed 162% growth in bed nights, length of accommodation, and accommodation occupancy in the second quarter of 2022. Tourists from Botswana contributed 827,566 bed nights in the second quarter of 2019, which dropped to 97,613 in the second quarter of 2021 and rose to 293,917 in the second quarter of 2022, resulting in 201% growth. Lesotho contributed to 7,060,380 bed nights in 2019, which declined to 1,301,472 in the second quarter of 2021 and increased to 3,335,322 in the second quarter of 2022, ultimately resulting in 156.3% growth percentage. Zimbabwe contributed 2,446,985 in the second quarter of 2019, which dropped to 639,841 in 2020 and rose to 2,503,842 in the second quarter of 2022, ultimately resulting in 291.3% growth (Tourism South Africa, 2022).

Whilst the total money the tourists spent in South Africa was pegged at R11.1 billion in 2022, the contribution from some African countries was as follows: Botswana was at R463,445,172 in 2019 second quarter, which went down to R43,719,645 in the second quarter 2021 and recovered to R215,967,458 in second quarter 2022, resulting in 394% growth. Tourists contributed R810,377,034 to Lesotho in the second quarter of 2019, which went down in the second quarter of 2021, recording R310,635,191. Tourists spending increased in the second quarter of 2022 to R517,837,061 recording 66.7% growth contribution (Tourism South Africa, 2022).

As recommended in this study, domestic tourism promotion is highly important due to its contribution to the economy without international tourists. According to Tourism South Africa (2022), in the second quarter of 2022, domestic tourism in South Africa accounted for 9.0 million trips, which is more than 139.6% growth, with domestic spending valued at R24.4 billion, resulting in more than 294 per cent growth. The average money spent per trip is valued at R2,710 per trip, which equates to more than 65.2 per cent. Bed nights amounted to 31.8 million, indicating more than 119.3 per cent growth. The length of stay is 3.5 nights indicating a -8.5%. Domestic tourism day trips in South Africa amount to 47.6 million more than 36.2 per cent growth, whilst day trip spending is valued at ZAR41.2 billion, indicating more than 67.2 per cent growth (Tourism South Africa, 2022).

16.4.3 Recovery Strategies Employed by Hotel Groups in South Africa

Table 16.3 shows annual integrated reports on recovery strategies from COVID-19 from Sun International hotels, City Lodge Hotel Group (CLHG), and Tsogo Sun hotels. They are one of the largest groups of hotels in South Africa. Across-the-board recovery strategies show adherence to health and safety protocols. Tsogo Sun seems to have had a very clearer and more robust strategy in this regard than the other two groups of hotels on paper, such as wearing masks and enforcing social distancing; providing medical screening questionnaires; temperature screening (over 37.5 °C undergo evaluation); hand sanitising at all entrances and exits; providing employees with personal protective equipment and maintaining intensified hygiene and cleanliness regimens; and implementing strict food handling procedures. This strategy ensured the trust of tourists in safety and attracted tourists and gained confidence from the government as quarantine centres. It brought more revenue ultimately. The hygiene construct in tourism is encapsulated in the SAFSERV model (Chihwai, 2019), in which hygiene plays a critical role in ascertaining tourist and customer satisfaction and can be used as a marketing and branding toolkit by managers and hoteliers (Chihwai, 2020). The importance of hygiene findings in attracting tourists also resonates with a study at Ujung National Park (Soehardi, 2021).

City Lodge Hotel group seems to have an edge-on technology over the other two groups on paper because the strategies are well spelt out on paper. Upgrading technology enabled CLHG to offer better services during COVID-19 in a contactless manner. Using the new CLHG Wi-Fi portal allows guests to connect with their reservation number, while visitors use a voucher system to get services. In addition, CLHG mobile app allows guests to book online, and guests can open their doors using their phone and operate the television and air conditioner using their phones, whilst in some instances, voice calls are still on trial. Contactless check-in was enhanced on the website and mobile app also. Technology and continuous improvement necessitate customer and tourist satisfaction. This finding resonates with Heizer's (2011) study that concludes that continuous improvement will provide the foundation for maximising the efficiency of competitive strategies by adding value, and it achieves best practice.

Sun International hotels leads on restructuring strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic to save money and remain viable. The restructuring at their various properties resulted in having only 30% capacity at every business unit. Salaries account for major expenses of the hospitality industry, so the strategy keeps the business operational. Any restructuring offers not only advantages to the businesses but also an opportunity to reorganise the services, units, and processes of their functions.

Sun International is more dominant in wellness programmes than the other two groups of hotels. Corporate Wellness programmes play a significant role in enhancing physical and mental well-being. That may also result in enhancing productivity at workplaces, as it did with Sun International hotels. This finding aligns with previous literature whereby corporate wellness is regarded as a means of achieving

Table 16.3 Recovery strategies employed by hotels in South Africa

Hotel	Strategies employed
Sun International	<p>Implemented salary adjustments to ensure all employees were remunerated when operations were closed (March to June 2020) and partially opened (July 2020)</p> <p>Developed a COVID-19 site on Sun Talk to monitor employees returning to work</p> <p>Developed and rolled out a COVID-19 training site on our Sun Talk communication platform for remote employee COVID-19 training</p> <p>The trainers were trained on a digital platform to be prepared for employees returning to work in accordance with COVID-19 protocols</p> <p>They were unable to launch their Sun Academy learning platform, but various videos were launched to address Covid-19 requirements</p> <p>Restructured and downsized operations</p> <p>Upscaled wellness programme to support employees during the pandemic</p> <p>The Sun Talk communication platform was used for remote employee training, including the train the trainer programme and COVID-19 protocol</p> <p>Continued to reinforce the CLEAR principles via the online platform (Sun Talk). Various podcasts and videos by exco members emphasised the importance of excellent customer service</p> <p>Focused on senior talent in the hotel group to manage and build their talent pipeline</p> <p>Closure of the Carousel and Naledi Sun properties due to non-viability in COVID-19 era</p> <p>The restructuring took place at several properties to 30% capacity – Sun City Resort, the Maslow Sandton, the Table Bay Hotel, the Boardwalk, and the Wild Coast Sun, Golden Valley, Windmill, Meropa and Flamingo, resulting in a reduction in headcount</p> <p>Changed operating hours, reduced tables, outsourced the food and beverage function, consolidated certain staff functions, and reviewed department staffing levels</p> <p>Gaming operations</p> <p>To sustain the group-wide gaming operations, the group consolidated several gaming positions to align with the proven business model at Maslow’s Time Square. Positions consolidated included the count and cash desk as well as the guest service attendant and gaming technical assistants, creating career prospects for employees in these entry-level positions</p> <p>The group moved MVG employees from the slots department into the marketing department</p>
City Lodge Hotel Group	<p>Cost containment was a key focus area in boosting both business and leisure</p> <p>New pricing strategy strikes a balance between affordability for guests and covering the group’s costs</p> <p>Public relations and social media channels for brand exposure</p> <p>Strict hygiene protocols and contactless solutions</p> <p>Introduced the BAR methodology, which ensures that they offer their rooms at the right price relative to supply and demand</p> <p>The most important marketing message is that their hotels are open, clean, and safe for both leisure and business travel, whether their guests are staying over or just visiting for the day</p> <p>Staying close to our corporate supporters and travel agents by maintaining mutually beneficial relationships that will help to raise our occupancies</p> <p>Protecting customers’ personal information</p> <p>Leveraging technology</p> <p>New Wi-Fi offering</p>

Table 16.3 (continued)

Hotel	Strategies employed
Tsogo Sun hotels	<p>Deactivate and reactivate hotels in a short space of time</p> <p>The group capitalised on any potential business while keeping costs to a minimum</p> <p>Close communication with their lenders, employees, trading partners, suppliers, tenants, and landlords in order to arrive at mutually sustainable operating solutions in these extraordinarily difficult times</p> <p>Restructuring</p> <p>Reduced salaries and wages</p> <p>Retrenchments</p> <p>Managing cash flow to reduce losses and ensuring they have adequate liquidity to fund operations for as long as it takes for the pandemic to pass</p> <p>SUN1 portfolio, which achieved some success in securing COVID-19 isolation business due to their smaller size, and the affordable price point allowed corporates to secure entire hotels for isolation and screening purposes</p> <p>Resort hotels also traded relatively better due to their more leisure-focused offering, benefiting from domestic clientele unable to travel overseas</p> <p>Phased reopening of hotels to actively manage the oversupply of hotel stock in the market</p> <p>Implement enhanced health and safety procedures to assist in alleviating our guests' fears about travel and staying at the hotels</p> <p>COVID-19 safety protocols practised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wearing masks and enforcing social distancing Providing medical screening questionnaires Temperature screening (evaluation for over 37.5 °C temperature) Hand sanitising at all entrances and exits Providing employees with personal protective equipment Maintaining intensified hygiene and cleanliness regimens Implementing strict food handling procedures

Source: Author data from Annual Integrated reports 2021

competitive advantage through people due to the probability of dysfunctional outcomes, namely exacerbating the health and well-being of the workforce, especially the mental health of workers.

Closure of some business units as one of the strategies to recover is clearly exemplified by Sun International hotels. The closure of the Carousel and Naledi Sun business units improved business performance during difficult. Closure of some business units rejuvenates the business. This finding is consistent with other findings, which state that refocusing imposes meaningful economic costs on companies.

Low salary adjustment was adopted by all three groups of hotels to cushion them against non-viability. Employees are more willing to work for less salary than be retrenched because that salary can change their lives. Companies can benefit immensely from such an initiative of suggesting low salary adjustments than being retrenched because it will reduce their huge salary bill and keep the business operational. The initiative assisted the three groups of hotels to remain afloat during the difficult times of COVID-19.

Table 16.3 shows that communication strategy is important for the accommodation industry's existence and business growth. Sun International hotel group embraced the strategy of reaching out to its employees through the Sun Talk communication platform for remote employee Covid-19 training. That improved employee skills in dealing with patrons during COVID-19. The same communication platform was employed for the train the trainer programme and Covid-19 protocol. Various podcasts and videos by executive committee members emphasised the importance of excellent customer service. Tsogo Sun utilised a communication strategy through close communication with lenders, employees, trading partners, suppliers, tenants, and landlords to amicably resolve their challenges during the COVID-19 era. City Lodge's communication strategy was the utilisation of public relations and media platforms for brand image. This communication strategy resonates with a part of the SAFSERV model (Chihwai, 2021), wherein communication plays a pivotal role in managing relations with employees, tourists and customers, and various other stakeholders, which are important ingredients for tourism accommodation success. A lot more could be adopted from the SAFSERV model under the communication dimension to ensure the sustainability of the tourism accommodation industry.

The accommodation sector has not implemented some of the meaningful strategies, including failure to recognise and enforce the SAFSERV model (Chihwai et al., 2019), which assists in expediting tourism recovery. South Africa's accommodation recovery path could adopt other strategies to enhance quicker and complete recovery from COVID-19, such as adopting the SAFSERV model and different marketing strategies discussed below. A fusion of health-related mechanisms, COVID-19 cure, and marketing management strategies is recommended to quicken full recovery by the tourism accommodation industry.

16.5 Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications of the Study

This study explored accommodation occupancy during COVID-19 era, interrogated the recovery strategies adopted by hotel groups, and suggested other recovery mechanisms and strategies for quicker and complete recovery of the tourism accommodation industry. The strategies adopted by the discussed groups of hotels were effective, but more could be done to improve the occupancy rate and generate more revenue. It is high time the accommodation sector probe government to move out of level 1 to normal life so that mobility and sociability become the bedrock of tourism and hospitality once again. The promotion of domestic tourism should be the new messaging in a continuously improving technological accommodation industry. The adoption of the Safari service quality (SAFSERV) model with its 21 dimensions and 121 items, is encouraged for better tourism recovery and performance. Furthermore, improvement of service quality, marketing of tourism products and services, proper

management should be robust strategies employed to improve business and ensure tourist satisfaction. The SAFSERV model should be the pillar of the marketing and management toolkit as well as the measuring scale for assessing quality service being offered to tourists to enhance occupancy rate and revenue generation, corporate image, and reputation.

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Chapter 17

A Resilient Tourism Future for Developing Countries: Conclusions and Recommendations



Olga L. Kupika and Kaitano Dube 

Abstract Resilience building is a panacea to promoting a safe and sustainable tourism economy in Southern Africa and beyond. This chapter highlights key findings from case studies across South Africa and Zimbabwe before, during and after the COVID-19 lockdown period (before 2020 and post-2021). The chapter presents the major findings and policy recommendations related to (i) the impacts of COVID-19 on tourist destinations, (ii) the management of COVID-19 in tourist destinations and (iii) tourism recovery and resilience in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The study found that COVID-19 led to a loss of revenue for state actors, private companies, tourism employees and host communities in South African and Zimbabwean destinations as a consequence of restrictive measures that were put in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The general picture is that COVID-19 has reconfigured the tourism sector from one largely dependent on international tourists to one on domestic tourists' drive. The recovery process has been quite complex and challenging given the direct and indirect challenges caused by COVID-19, which are compounded by the Russia–Ukraine war and climate change. Building a resilient tourism future is a complex matter that requires the country and the region to deal with traditional challenges of regional geopolitics, address challenges of safety and security, address the issue of road and air network connectivity and address the tourism product marketing mix to make it more diverse and inclusive. Given the challenge of climate change in the region, promoting resilience building within the sector will go a long way in addressing current sustainability challenges.

Keywords Tourism risks · Impacts · Protected area · Rural tourism · Recovery · SADC

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17.1 COVID-19 Occurrence, Context and Impact on Zimbabwe and South Africa

The study found that COVID-19 hurt tourism in Zimbabwe and South Africa as tourism destinations (van der Merwe et al., 2021; Booyens et al., 2022; Dube, 2021). The pandemic led to numerous challenges, which resulted in the region being closed to international travel over a prolonged period. The hard lockdowns imposed in March 2020 only started loosening in October 2020 marking international tourism recovery in the region. This adversely affected many regions that heavily rely on tourism for livelihood security, as reported in various chapters across the book. COVID-19 also starved the region of much-needed foreign currency, adversely affecting the countries' gross domestic product (GDP). This increased poverty, unemployment and security instability and perpetuated further inequalities (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the region was already battling other challenges of low economic growth, political instability and xenophobia. Zimbabwe was recovering from the devastating impacts of tropical cyclones, which had ravaged and crippled the eastern parts of the country alongside other countries which were hit hard by tropical cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019 (Dube et al., 2021). The drought in Cape Town had also imposed its toll on tourism in Cape Town tourism one of the regional tourism hubs, with its effects felt across South Africa and the southern Africa region (Smith & Fitchett, 2020; van Staden, 2020; Dube et al., 2022). COVID-19 could not have come at a worse time. At the time of the pandemic, the region was weak and vulnerable to respond to a threat of that magnitude.

17.2 COVID-19 Troubled Recovery for Zimbabwe and South Africa Critical Issues

In as much other regions in the world tried to stimulate the tourism and events sector from total collapse as a consequence of COVID-19 (Nhamo et al., 2020a, b; Okafor et al., 2022), the region had minimal capacity to respond with stimulus packages that could revive the sector threatening the sector with total collapse. Indeed, several enterprises temporarily shut down as a cost-containment measure to cut costs (Nyaruwata & Mbasera, 2021; Musavengane et al., 2021). However, this move did not spare the aviation industry, particularly in South Africa, a critical regional air network hub for tourism. With no government support, South Africa witnessed the collapse and incapacitation of Comair British Airways, SA Express, South African Airways (SAA) and Mango, dashing hopes for easy and fast recovery post the COVID-19 peak period (Dube, 2021).

British Airways operated Comair in South Africa was the most reliable airline and provided 40% of the passenger lift in South Africa and linked tourists to Zimbabwe's Harare and Victoria Falls, prime destinations. South African Airways

(SAA), which has for years been battling survival due to corruption and maladministration, was battling to survive after being placed under administration and had to suspend operations when it took off; its fleet was so thin it could not service most of the routes it was operating compounding connectivity and recovery efforts.

After the roll-out of the COVID-19 pandemic vaccine in early 2021, there was greater anticipation that tourism, recreation and aviation were going to recover and grow to end the misery of many that were reliant on tourism (Dube, 2022) whose livelihoods had been abruptly scuttled in early March 2020. As evidence shows, the vaccine roll-out in Zimbabwe and South Africa remained very low amid vaccine hesitancy driven by fake news and conspiracies, which resulted in a compromised recovery process. Figure 17.1 shows that Zimbabwe's vaccination rates remain very low compared to its tourism market and global vaccination rates. The low vaccination rates and the discovery of variants resulted in the region receiving backlash from the global village. The discovery of variants in the region by South African scientists often resulted in travel warnings issued by key tourism source regions, hampered the pace and rate of recovery from the pandemic.

Perhaps nothing prepared the region for what was to emerge from the dawn of 2022 in February. After a period of tension in Europe, a war broke out between Russia and Ukraine at the end of February 2022, which threw spanners on global tourism that was recovering. The war resulted in the tumbling of global markets,

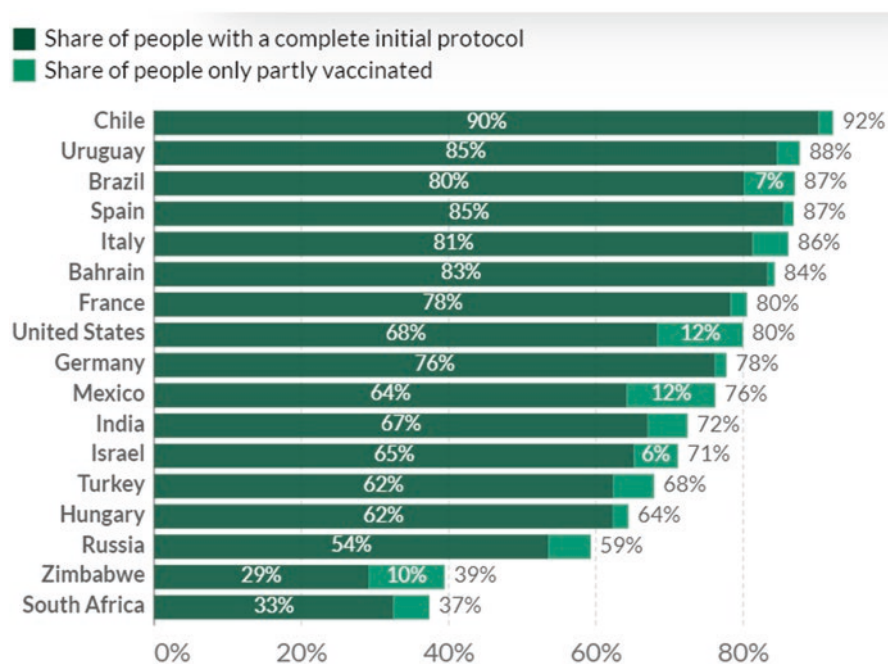


Fig. 17.1 Share of the vaccinated population as of 30 October 2022. (Source: Our World in Data (2022))

including the tourism stocks, which were trying to recover from the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pandey & Kumar, 2023).

The war also resulted in the disruption of the global fuel supply systems with a devastating impact on fuel prices in Zimbabwe, South Africa and the region. Fuel prices soared to their highest levels for road transport and air traffic, making travel expensive, adversely affecting tourist movement and raising tourism product inflation. Air tickets on some popular routes doubled or tripled. This situation was compounded by reduced airlift capacity, which had been compromised by the closure and reduced capacity of airlines that service the region. Routes such as Johannesburg and Cape Town and Johannesburg and Harare, for example, became unbearable and expensive for many domestic tourists.

In the global north at the beginning of the year 2022, pent-up demand resulted in capacity issues associated with various sectors of tourism and hospitality failing to handle the high number of tourists due to a sudden upsurge in arrivals and staff shortages (Plzáková & Smeral, 2022), these were not pertinent to Africa. Travel demand did not grow drastically as international tourist arrivals remained largely subdued. Tourism companies in the global south were battling with other generic challenges, such as a shortage of finance for recovery. At the height of the pandemic, most central banks lowered their interest rates to stimulate the economy. Still, with COVID-19 infections lowered, inflation pressures started to emerge as a global threat at the end of 2021 and intensified in 2022. Many banks responded by hiking interest rates to tame inflation (Gunter et al., 2022). This had an adverse effect on tourists and businesses as their cost of borrowing significantly increased. Tourists had to deal with the subsequent financial squeeze scuttling recovery.

The situation in 2022 also triggered different sorts of challenges for the region. The strengthening of the US dollar resulted in the weakening of currencies for developing countries, making it more expensive for tourists from the region to travel abroad, forcing them to look for alternatives in the domestic travel market. Of course, travel conditions also inhibited many from travelling to other countries. This development also made it easier or cheaper for tourists from countries such as the USA and other critical source markets, which increased demand for travel between the USA and South Africa. This increased the number of flights between Cape Town and South Africa and other routes where the number of flights per week was increased, for example. With South African Airways' capacity compromised, meeting demand was a challenge on this route and others, which curtailed the country and region from taking advantage of this. As of September 2022, domestic tourism had recovered by 71% against 66% from the international market (Fig. 17.2). Despite some airlines having suspended operations to and from Cape Town amidst fuel shortages at Cape Town International Airport, hampering the sector's recovery on that route.

With the uncertainties in Europe over the war in Ukraine and the winter season, southern Africa offered an opportunity as an attractive and affordable alternative tourist destination. South Africa, however, had to deal with the double blow over the murder of a German tourist outside Kruger National Park's Numbi Gate. Crime and attacks on tourists in South Africa have been an issue for some time, particularly in

CPT Domestic Terminal Passenger Performance

Year/Month	2019	2020	2021	2022						Year-to-Date
				Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	
Two-way passengers	8 363 307	3 167 542	4 221 365	539 049	504 172	407 626	456 785	456 785	486 396	4 352 208
Passenger recovery*	100%	38%	50%	75%	83%	62%	68%	68%	66%	71%
Average load factor	78%	64%	67%	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	
				81%	75%	84%	92%	92%	90%	
				Departing	Departing	Departing	Departing	Departing	Departing	
				82%	73%	91%	85%	85%	91%	

* Passenger recovery compared to same period in 2019

Passenger data source: ACSA

CPT International Terminal Passenger Performance

Year/Month	2019	2020	2021	2022						Year-to-Date
				Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	
Two-way passengers	2 606 398	810 811	525 441	156 933	119 729	124 783	150 938	148 366	152 843	1 237 950
Passenger recovery*	100%	31%	20%	76%	74%	73%	87%	83%	81%	66%
Average load factor	82%	63%	46%	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	Arriving	
				77%	60%	63%	86%	77%	82%	
				Departing	Departing	Departing	Departing	Departing	Departing	
				83%	75%	81%	71%	81%	80%	

* Passenger recovery compared to same period in 2019

Passenger data source: ACSA

Fig. 17.2 Domestic and international aviation recovery at Cape Town International Airport. (Source: Wesgro Cape Town Air Access)

areas around Cape Town, Kruger National Park and other tourism hotspots. Again, a factor can be blamed on the country’s high levels of poverty and inequality, with some blaming the same for high crime levels. The incident sparked negative media publicity and subsequent travel alerts from some key markets, such as Germany, the USA and France. These alerts were heightened in the last week of October 2022 when the US embassy issued a terrorist attack warning, further heightening security issues among tourism stakeholders regarding South Africa as a destination.

All this occurred when the country (South Africa) was dealing with rolling electricity blackouts, which threatened tourism enterprises, some of which could not operate optimally without electricity. This also casts negative aspersions on the country’s competitiveness as a tourist destination. On the other hand, Zimbabwe, which was billed to go for elections in 2023, was battling heightened political tensions, with already some political leaders having been incarcerated after a spate of violence and counter-accusations of perpetrating violence between the long-time ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU PF) and Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC). This was likely to affect the recovery process in that country adversely. Years of elections in Zimbabwe have often been associated with low tourist figures as people fear visiting the country due to the perceived threat of violence (see Chap. 1).

On the other hand, the anti-foreign sentiment targeted at black Africans was another threat that the South African government had to deal with to ensure the viability of the regional tourism market. The xenophobic attacks, which resulted in the deaths of some black foreign nationals, were a concern as they tainted the country as a destination of choice for Africans, and evidence showed that already some

tourists from the African region were looking elsewhere for tourism purposes. The country had to enact immigration laws that balance national and regional interests.

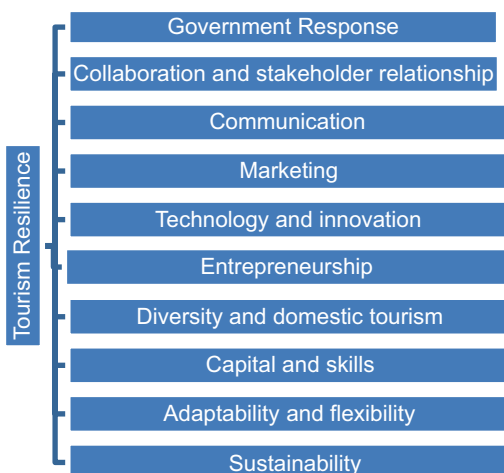
17.3 Tourism and Resilience Post-COVID-19

The sustainability of the tourism industry is vulnerable to various temporal and spatial environmental, socioeconomic and political challenges, including global health pandemics (Nhamo et al., 2020a, b; Matanzima & Nhiwatiwa, 2022). This exposes the sector to various shocks and stresses with the ultimate need for strategising towards promoting recovery. This process entails building resilience to allow for recovery and further growth. Building tourism resilience is a key panacea towards the recovery and sustainability of the tourism industry following the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hartman (2018) defines resilience as ‘the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while changing to retain the same function, structure, identity, and feedback’. Folke et al. (2010) define resilience as ‘the tendency of a socio-ecological system (SES) subject to change to remain within a stability domain, continually changing and adapting yet remaining within critical thresholds’. This study proposed that the term resilience is multifaceted and can focus on three aspects of social-ecological systems (SES), that is, resilience as persistence, adaptability and transformability. Magis (2010) describes resilience as ‘the community members’ existence, development, and engagement of community resources to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise’. Due to COVID-19, tourism businesses were drastically affected, thus prompting industry players and related stakeholders to adapt further and build future resilience.

The National Tourism Stakeholder Forum (NTSF) Secretariat (2022) identifies ten strategic pillars/critical success factors for resilience within the tourism sector (Fig. 17.3). The pillars require a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach to resilience building to ensure the sustainability of the tourism sector. The identified aspects are indeed critical in answering to both the digital demands of the sector and environmental responsiveness and responsibility during and after COVID-19. For example, issues of environmental pollution control within the tourism sector are matters of concern for tourists and businesses in South Africa and Zimbabwe going forward, which the sector cannot afford to ignore.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its member countries, particularly Zimbabwe and South Africa, are potentially vulnerable to external disturbances, including environmental, economic and social shocks (Pretorius et al., 2022). For example, the SADC region is already highly vulnerable due to its reliance on natural resources and other inherent economic challenges. This chapter contributes to an enhanced understanding of resilient tourism, particularly the management and governance implications related to practical tourism resilience based on the results and lessons learnt from case studies in Zimbabwe, South Africa and their implications for the SADC region.

Fig. 17.3 Strategic pillars/critical success factors for resilience. (Source: NTSF Secretariat (2022:14))



Previous research focused on building resilience after environmental or climate-induced disasters such as drought, earthquakes, floods, cyclones, storms and hurricanes (Sobaih et al., 2021). Musavengane et al. (2021) highlighted a need for research to investigate organisational resilience and employees' livelihoods to develop sustainable tourism recovery efforts. This chapter, therefore, highlights the major findings on the impacts, strategies for recovery, key attributes and considerations for building a resilient tourism sector at local and national levels using case studies from Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The book starts by providing an overview of the contextual perspectives of tourism and COVID-19 in Zimbabwe and South Africa. This is followed by detailed chapters presented under three sections focusing on (i) the impacts of COVID-19 on tourist destinations, (ii) the management of COVID-19 in tourist destinations and (iii) tourism recovery and resilience in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The case studies are drawn from different typologies of tourists, which include trophy hunting as a tourism enterprise in selected protected areas, hotels and lodges tourism destination areas, traditional African food and beverage expo in the Matobo Hills, heritage sites, nature-based tourism, rural tourism enterprises, community-based tourism, ecotourism, biophysical resources, wildlife destinations, domestic leisure tourism and coastal tourism. The tourism typologies identified are based on the type of activity and land-use category and key stakeholders, which include tourist destinations in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The next section presents some key findings and conclusions from the book based on the following questions addressed by the chapters: What are the key impacts and critical solutions for prompting a resilient tourism sector behind the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the major tourism and management strategies for enhancing recovery and resilience?

17.4 Tourism Resilience and Recovery Strategies in Zimbabwe's Tourism Sector

The travel and tourism sector has come up with several strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which include minimising labour costs, promoting domestic travel and tourism and improving health and safety practices. The recovery of the travel and tourism sector in Zimbabwe requires a multi-pronged transformative approach that adequately addresses the diverse socio-economic and political challenges that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes developing short- and long-term strategies to survive current and future global pandemics. Such strategies can include diversifying the travel and tourism business activities and creating a safe and enabling environment for continued travel and tourism activities in the likelihood of similar pandemic incidences in the future. It is also necessary for the government and financial institutions to provide relevant support to revive the travel and tourism sector going forward in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. This can be done through the government providing bailouts and tax incentives and the financial institutions providing low-interest loan facilities to the travel and tourism business entities.

For example, the Government of Zimbabwe launched the tourism recovery and growth strategy (TRGS), which acknowledges the devastating effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had, nationally and globally, on the fortunes of tourism (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). To strengthen the sector's resilience nationally and to quicken its recovery and growth, the government has already put in place a tourism support facility (TSF) to ensure financial support for the sector. The financial support will enable the sector to refurbish, modernise and expand its facilities in line with international standards. Furthermore, the government will continue to avail investment incentives designed to attract more investments in the tourism sector. Key highlights of the TRGS in Zimbabwe have been indicated in Table 17.1. The recovery strategy for the Government of Zimbabwe focuses on 13 pillars (Table 17.1).

Post the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic tourism is expected to provide a cushioning effect to the sector as international source markets are projected to take a long time to recover. Despite this, the country has also taken advantage of the Open Skies policy to expand its flights, as witnessed by the recent launch of the Ethiopian Airways Flight route from Addis Ababa to the second-largest city Bulawayo. This is meant to promote international travel by linking travellers with prime destinations in the Matabeleland province of Zimbabwe.

In order to remain operational, the events and festivals sector adopted digitisation, evidenced by hybrid events, online, contactless payment systems and turned to the domestic market as a widespread recovery strategy. Musavengane et al. (2022) noted that technology seems to have brought people closer since the emergence of COVID-19. However, the question remains whether virtual tourism is the way forward for the sector and whether the Southern African region is ready for this move (ibid.). Thus, the sustainability of digitisation is a concern as it cannot replace the

Table 17.1 Summary recovery strategy pillars for the tourism sector in Zimbabwe

Pillar	Key actions
Tourism support package	Provide a tourism sector support scheme to include waiver of value added tax on domestic tourism and exemption of duty on tourism and mobilisation of the tourism revolving funds to help support more investments in the sector. The foreign currency denominated loan will enable the sector to expand, refurbish and modernise its facilities in line with international standards.
Domestic tourism promotion	Extensive promotion of domestic tourism development in close collaboration with the private tourism sector.
Destination branding and image transformation	Destination image and transformation programme aimed at generating factual and unbiased storylines and messaging for Zimbabwe, thereby projecting a balanced image and perception of the destination in the source markets.
Regional tourism promotion	Sensitive product pricing, effective stakeholder collaboration and deployment of promotional packages targeting the different market segments.
Product development	Diversify and upgrade the tourism product to provide a competitive market-driven, innovative and diversified product range. Promote cultural tourism through products that preserve and showcase our culture and heritage, including Zimbabwe's Stone Age architecture.
Diaspora tourism promotion	Post-COVID-19 diaspora tourism promotion will be targeted at markets such as SA, the USA, Australia and the UK.
Digital marketing campaign	Promotion of virtual tours on online platforms, targeting regional and international markets supported by the development and deployment of market relevant content in the form of news articles, editorials, virtual tours, videos, podcasts, blogs and vlogs, underpinned by a robust tourism communication framework for the destination.
International tourism promotion	Enhance market presence in the source markets by deploying tourism attachés and market representatives. The engagement of international travel trade will support this, conducting travel trade training and participation in key international travel fairs after the COVID-19 pandemic is contained.
Promotion of meetings incentives conference and events (MICE) tourism	Engagement of relevant stakeholders to reconvene MICE activities such as conferences, events, fairs and festivals with the potential to bring people and businesses together, thereby building trust and boosting confidence in the destination.
Wide-scale roll-out of the service excellence programme	Training frontline service staff in the sector to enhance hospitable actions in the tourism value chain.
Human capital development	Promote human capital development in the tourism value chain and review and redesign the curriculum to meet industry requirements.
Tourism, health, safety and hygiene protocols	Develop comprehensive health and safety protocols to guide the operations of the tourism sector to protect travellers and employees in the sector and to inspire confidence in external markets.
Tourism communication plan	Development and cooperating partners will craft and roll-out a tourism communication plan on possible risks and natural phenomena to help tourists make informed decisions regarding their travel plans.

Source: Government of Zimbabwe (2021)

in-person interaction of most festivals and special events in the long term. The recovery of the events and festivals sector would continue to be hamstrung by uncertainty and fear on the part of festival consumers, as well as health protocols such as the need to maintain social distancing.

More investment needs to be scaled up on information and communication technologies (ICTs) or digital platforms. Similarly, there is a need to scale up innovative practices, build capacities and stimulate the local market. However, the historical challenges in the form of an unstable macroeconomic environment remain an albatross causing Zimbabwe's event and festivals sector to be even more vulnerable. The environment militates against the sector's quick recovery compared to the regional average. Additionally, the fact that Zimbabwe's tourism sector is anchored on the overseas market also implies that it would be a while before the events and festivals sector claws back to pre-2019 levels, given that most of the source markets were adversely impacted by COVID-19. Destinations which rely on the domestic markets are forecast to rebound much faster. Thus, ICT readiness or digital engagement coupled with a deliberate approach targeting small-scale events are likely to be key factors critical to the full recovery of the event tourism sector in the country. Adopting digital and spatial technologies is also key to managing the threats and offering virtual destination experiences and packaging, enabling tourism destinations' sustainability.

Even though the impacts of COVID-19 are generally the same, the scale of impacts and ability to recover is dependent on some context-specific factors. This would also determine the level of resilience and, ultimately, pace of recovery. The unique circumstances characterising Zimbabwe's tourism events and festivals sector implies that its recovery would be longer than anticipated. While stakeholders in the broad tourism industry are optimistic that business tourism will pick in line with global trends following vaccination programmes, this may not apply to the events and festivals sector in Zimbabwe. A key challenge as the event and festival sector looks to recover is how to get all interrelated parts of the event tourism supply chain to work together again to provide seamless event tourism experiences for the delegates. The COVID-19 pandemic broke out against a complex macroeconomic environment, suggesting that the country's events sector is likely to be stretched further.

Lessons learnt from the various destinations indicate different levels of resilience for future tourism survival. Tourism recovery and resilience in Zimbabwe and South Africa rely on unique location advantages and gender-sensitive stakeholder engagement. Musavengane et al. (2020) revealed that sub-Saharan Africa is set to increase its tourism sector in urban areas. However, urban tourism destinations already face various urban risks associated with the collective inter-linkages between urbanisation, urban growth, urban governance, poverty and inequality and ecological degradation (Musavengane et al., 2020). These challenges further threaten the sustainability of urban tourism in sub-Saharan African cities. Bertella (2022) noted that resilience is a critical factor for sustainability depending on the socio-economic set-up of the tourism destination, among other inherent factors.

Key findings that can inform future pathways from the chapters indicate that the situation is extremely vulnerable and has resulted in changing long-established

patterns of behaviour and the effects of tourism on economies, communities and environments. Building tourism resilience in the SADC region is therefore driven by four main attributes: (i) type of destination and its competitiveness, (ii) promoting local gastronomy and traditional cuisines, (iii) taking advantage of the domestic tourism market and (iv) taking advantage of the virtual tourism market. The importance of private-owned reserve towards promoting the tourism industry in the Zimbabwean economy and employment sector is also emphasised. However, regional tourism's future is generally positive in the long term. Still, agents of change opposed to the traditional patterns of tourism may create a negative environment that could cause severe disruption to the industry and its customers unless tourism displays a willingness and resolve to correct previously inappropriate ways of operating.

17.5 Tourism Recovery Plans for the South African Tourism Sector

In order to emerge from the pandemic, the travel, tourism, hospitality and events sector in South Africa had to be responsive to all identified challenges ranging from perception management on crime and xenophobic sentiments, inflationary pressures, high-interest rates and other related challenges identified earlier in this chapter such as reduced air connectivity. The government policymakers have to make bold moves to address shortcomings in the market as a way of triggering growth and the desire to project South Africa as a preferred tourist destination in the region and the world. As the country launched its recovery slogan in March 2022, the 'Live Again' campaign, it did so with full knowledge of the challenges for the tourism sector.

Consequently, the country as a destination came up with a comprehensive plan that needed to respond to three aspects of the sector, namely to protect and rejuvenate supply, to reignite demand and to strengthen capability, as shown in Fig. 17.4. One of the aspects that the country needed to do was to adopt safety protocols which resulted in several destinations having stamps of health and safety providing some level of assurance to tourists. South Africa also sought to trigger domestic travel, which resulted in several destinations in the country recovering to levels higher than in 2019, largely due to the recovery of the domestic travel market. The recovery plan for South Africa also talks about several issues that need to be addressed to ensure tourism recovery such as regional tourism integration.

Given the challenges that South Africa has faced since the formulation of the recovery plan, there might be a need to revisit the plan to address other issues that have emerged, such as the issues of tourist safety and security, and to address challenges of extreme weather events that have seen the destruction of infrastructure and holiday homes in places such as Durban after the floods in early 2022. Shortages of electricity demand that part of the tourism recovery must consider critical aspects of green tourism at a much more invigorated pace than before equally as a way of responding to SDG 13 on climate action.

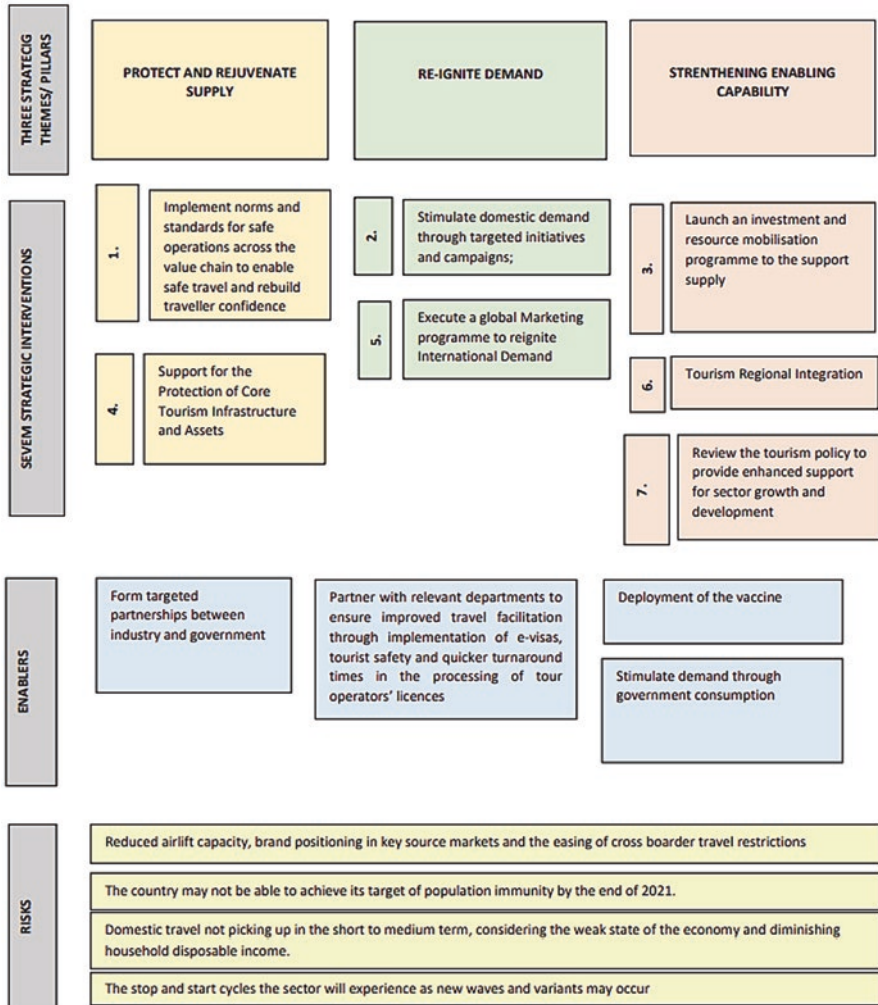


Fig. 17.4 South Africa tourism recovery plan and approach. (Source: SA Tourism (2021:25))

17.6 Policy Recommendations for Tourism Resilience in the SADC

This policy recommendations section is structured around the DRR and management framework and cycle focusing on (1) preparedness, (2) relief and response and (3) recovery and reformation. Conclusions emanating from the chapters also focus on the need to adopt a resilient approach to support the tourism sector in the face of any crisis. According to the South African National Tourism Stakeholder Forum (NTSF) report, a resilience approach covering all phases of a crisis, namely

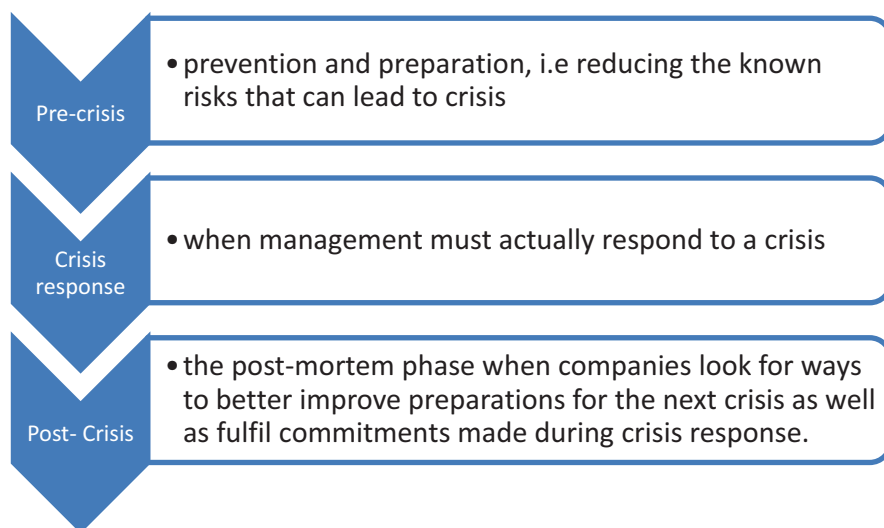


Fig. 17.5 Stages of crisis management. (Source: NTSF Secretariat (2022))

pre-crisis, crisis response and post-crisis (Fig. 17.5), is vital for building a strategic resilience framework. The stages are built on resilience principles, each linked to the crisis's initial phase (NTSF Secretariat, 2022). However, it is essential to note that a resilience framework's holistic and flexible nature means that all components play a role during every crisis phase.

The resilience, recovery and sustainability (RRS) also guide the recommendations are key common threads calling for new approaches mitigating negative impacts, upscaling resilience capacity and boosting tourism recovery in the post-pandemic era (Meyer et al., 2022). Three emerging policies further inform the RRS approach of creativity and cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in regional policy design and implementation, that is, smart specialisation strategies (S3) within regional innovation strategies (RIS) and regional diversification policy frameworks. These emerging concepts are based on the nexus between culture, technology and innovation solutions which promote sustainable tourism initiatives.

Building resilient destinations, therefore, will depend on several factors which promote co-creation and co-management by various stakeholders, particularly the local communities who provide the much-needed support for the sector. The role, organisation and unique attributes of a destination are critical to promoting spatially and temporally across the SADC region. Based on the RRS strategy, this chapter presents a proposed framework that highlights critical conditions derived from the book findings that are crucial for building resilience. Critical reflections allow for governance and management considerations towards building a resilient tourism sector in the SADC region. Figure 17.6 presents a proposed conceptual framework which summarises the findings based on conclusions from the authors' findings:

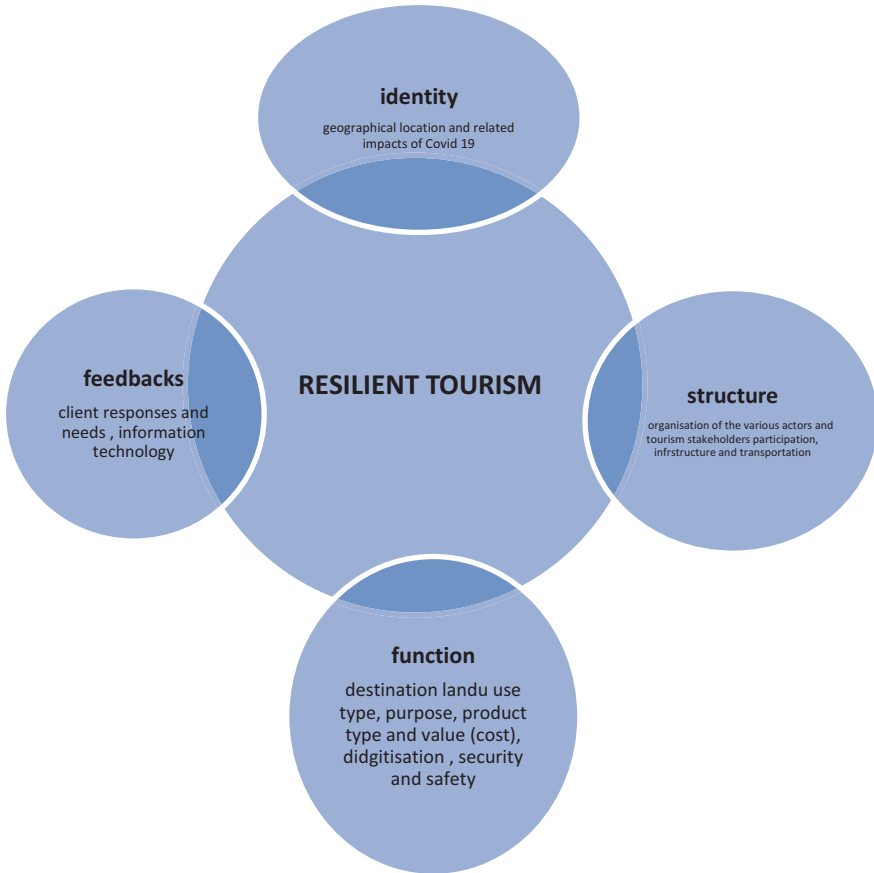


Fig. 17.6 Proposed framework for assessing a resilient destination. (Source: Authors)

Findings from this chapter call for the need to further buttress and implement major interventions in the tourism sector in the event of future pandemics. The SA Advisory Panel, which commenced its work in November 2020 by reviewing the 1996 Tourism White Paper to identify gaps in the tourism sector, concluded that the following key policy areas need to be addressed: tourism safety and security integrating the COVID-19 pandemic, digital economic transformation and seamless travel require reflection alongside cross-cutting areas such as e-visa-related considerations. Domestic tourism policies like the white paper still need to integrate rural tourism. The forum identified key objectives and focus areas of the tourism and safety action plan, including case management, fast-tracking of cases, establishment of provincial tourism safety forums, management of the tourism monitors programme and tourism safety awareness programmes (NTSF Secretariat, 2022).

Janusz et al. (2017) noted that although residents tend to support tourism due to accrued benefits, the state of the viability of tourism also tends to be influenced by

the supersession of infrastructure serving the residents by tourist-oriented amenities. Sustainable and resilient tourism in the future relies on resilience capabilities (Wieczorek-Kosmala, 2022), including appreciating citizen science and understanding the local communities' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions (KAP).

Maclaren et al. (2022) reported that the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Commission for Africa acknowledged that the COVID-19 crisis could lead to an opportunity to encourage and expand intra-African tourism. Delegates agreed on the urgent need to work together in designing a continental roadmap both for the response to the crisis and in preparation for the post-pandemic recovery that prioritised the following initiatives: (i) unlocking growth through investment promotion and public-private partnerships; (ii) promoting innovation and technology; (iii) promoting travel facilitation, including enhanced connectivity and tourism visa policies; (iv) fostering resilience, including through promoting safety and security and crisis communications and (iv) advocating for 'Brand Africa'. Tourism operators and policymakers need to transform the crisis into an opportunity by understanding the situation deeply and shifting towards innovative models and settings. Tourism policies need mainstream strategies that nature-based operators can adopt to attract tourists and responsibly manage Southern African destinations.

The regional policy emphasises interventions to ensure long-term growth and development in the face of potential disturbance. Wentworth and Cloete (2022) noted that by focusing on greater regional interconnectedness and regional competitiveness, SADC should increase resilience and preparedness for future global shocks. However, the current emphasis is placed on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 rather than building resilience. However, the need for long-term adaptation and associated policy is evident to reduce national and regional vulnerabilities in the travel and tourism sector. Musavengane et al. (2022) reiterated that conducting tourism businesses now requires strong collaboration with the 'new' actors to ensure the safety of employees and visitors. Social network analysis and collaboration theories need to be explored to establish strong relationships between tourism players and the medical fraternity, including promoting good tourism governance in a crisis. The closure of tourism businesses has far-reaching effects. Value chain analysis in the tourism sector is critical to establish how COVID-19 has disrupted the value chain. What strategies should be implemented to ensure continuity of the affected sectors—destination recovery strategies.

Research is an important source of evidence to support policymaking, with specific importance to institutions in developing regions, such as the SADC, during times of global change and disruption. SADC development policy related to resilience outcomes ought to be informed by research. This book presents evidence for building resilient and recovery pathways in tourism. The evidence from the research supports regional resilience policymaking in the tourism sector. Overall, the research on resilience in the SADC tourism sector also identifies potential limitations and delineates areas of future research to be considered by researchers that contribute to knowledge and evidence creation.

17.7 Conclusion

The findings from this book provide the tourism industry with a tangible document that can be used in establishing resilient frameworks and sustainable management strategies and securing funding and assistance for recovery post-COVID-19. More effort should be channelled towards strengthening tourism safety and security, particularly health considerations as an integral part of the safety and security policy area, economic digital transformation e-visa-related considerations and enhancing rural tourism. Governments within the subregion rendered differential support to their travel and tourism industry, and Zimbabwe was one of the countries that offered minimal help because of a lack of financial capacity. This resulted in increased vulnerability, especially for smaller players in the industry. Therefore, tourism businesses should develop innovative strategies to enhance their preparedness in the event of the eruption of similar pandemics in the future. Creating a collective fund financed by service providers can go a long way towards promoting resilience among tourism businesses in the face of sudden negative happenings/shocks such as pandemics and even natural disasters. In the context of Zimbabwe, a small portion of the 2% levy that tourism service providers pay to the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) can be set aside as an emergency fund for such happenings.

Consequently, national governments will have to come up with relevant policies that will pave the way for the establishment of such initiatives. For quick and resilient recovery from the devastating effects of COVID-19, deliberate policies that promote the development of physical and technological infrastructure, including subsidisation of Internet services, will go a long way towards enhancing the use of virtual platforms for promoting and selling tourism packages. Now that virtual platforms have increased in importance in the post-Covid era, it is necessary for policies that protect tourism resources from being pirated by foreigners to be formulated. It is common knowledge that some people earn much revenue by showing other attractions that do not belong to them. Digital (skills) and information technology-oriented curriculum coupled with cyber security skills building should be the norm at every stage of the learning process.

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