

## **IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF LIVINGSTONE TOWN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper looks at the impact of Covid 19 epidemic and how it affected the socio-economic development of Livingstone town which is the tourist capital of Zambia in the Southern Province of Zambia. This pandemic COVID-19 has given rise to in global trials, economic and healthcare crises, and modelled spillover impacts on the global industries, including tourism and travel that the major contributor to the service industry worldwide and Livingstone town. The tourism and relaxation industry has stumble upon the COVID-19 tourism impacts hardest-hit and lies among the most impaired global industries. The freedom and internal tourism point out a steep decline amounting to trillion US dollars, which computed more than 50% revenue losses. The paper explores the results and settings of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has changed the livelihood people in the tourism industry. The paper discusses COVID-19 tourism impacts, attitudes, and practices in accomplishment the leisure industry's boom and recovery. In the third phase, the study recommends to note the characteristics and COVID-19 tourism consequences on the travel and tourism research. The findings provide insights in regaining the tourism industry's operational activities and offer helpful suggestions to government officials, scholars, and tourism firms to reinvest in the tourism industry to set it back to a normal position.

## **Introduction**

The COVID-19 viral disease caused the coronavirus 2019 pandemic instigated by a fatal infection. The health experts first identified this virus in Wuhan, China, in late December 2019. The WHO declared an outbreak of the COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern in January and a global pandemic in March 2020. As of March 15, 2021, this pandemic has infected more than 119 million people, of which more than 2.66 million individuals have died from the lethal infectious disease. It has made this fatal virus one of the deadliest pandemics in human history. The symptoms of the coronavirus virus infection vary widely, from non to most lethal and life-threatening diseases. When people approach each other, the virus is mainly transmitted through the air. It leaves the infected person breathing, coughing, sneezing, or talking and entering another person through their mouth, nose, or eyes. It can also spread through contaminated surfaces. Individuals remain infected from the virus for up to two weeks and may spread the virus even if there are no symptoms among infected people. In Zambia, Livingstone town was one the district to have been greatly affected by this pandemic because of being at the heart of tourism. Tourism in Livingstone plays a critical role as a strategic pillar of the economy's GDP. The tourism and holiday industry plays a vital role in economic activities and customer satisfaction, but it has also become the most vulnerable industry member. The propinquity to the Zambezi River and the mighty Victoria Falls has led Livingstone to come to be a base for travelers from all over the world wanting to explore this Wonder of the World. There are several Adventure Companies offering River boarding, White water rafting, Canoeing, Horse riding trails, Abseiling, as well as Boat cruises, Walks with lions, Elephant back safaris, Quad bikes riding, Kayaking and tours to the Victoria Falls, Mukuni Cultural Village and the places of interest in Livingstone. Many tour companies and lodges offer a booking agency service in Livingstone to help make your stay as easy and enjoyable as possible. Tourist can fly directly into Livingstone via Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula airport in Livingstone. Europe region is the major contributor to the international travel and tourism industry of Livingstone and presents one trip out of two by making up a 50% share of worldwide tourism. Tourism in European countries makes up nearly 48% of the entire outbound travel and tourism activities internationally. The leisure industry is one of the main components of the global service industry. Travel and tourism provide a substantial contribution to business operations and ultimately contribute to the worldwide economy. The travel and tourism sector is an economic driver to the destination district local. Since late December 2019, the advent of the present pandemic COVID-19 has

developed unprecedented global health crises, social emergencies, and profound adverse consequences on the economy of Livingstone.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on the Socio-economic development on Livingstone**

Livingstone town is popular worldwide as a tourist capital of Zambia and COVID-19 has resulted in massive financial losses and caused health and economic crises in the livelihood of people who are majority employed by the private sector such as hotels, lodges, clearing and forwarding companies and pleasure resorts etc. When the lock down was pronounced on in March 2020, many workers from the private sector were only allowed to be working on shifts and later put on half salaries. Many failed to meet on their basic needs such as paying rental, sending children to school and paying hospital bills. This made families to relocate from medium cost residential areas such as Dambwa North, Dambwa Central, Ellen Brittle, Highlands and shifted to shanty compounds such as Libuyu, Marota, Moolite Maloan and Sowmill. Those that lost their jobs completely failed to pay rentals relocated to their home villages. These private sector could not maintain their workers on payroll as a result of loss of business and laid off from duties.

The pandemics unpleasantly also impact tourist and their mental wellbeing of majority population. As a result, many tourist a period January 2020 to January 2021 dropped their planned tour for Livingstone. This was as a result of fearing the disease infection, as it looks impossible to avoid transmission of the virus during travel. Above and beyond, tourists travel increases infection risk to other air passengers in the absence of effective vaccines. Travelers play a significant role in transferring viruses, epidemics', outbreaks, or pandemics between local communities' destinations which Livingstone was one of the epicenter. From 2019, the entire district of Livingstone has also been facing crisis communication in the media. The adverse consequences of the COVID-19 on the travel and leisure industry resulted in novel viral disease appurtenance. Infectious viruses are highly contagious, mutate rapidly and increase mortality. Travel and tourism is the significant contributors to a leading sector for job creation, socio-economic and cultural development in Livingstone.

The COVID-19 pandemic in Livingstone has resulted in challenges of, economic and healthcare crises, and posed spillover impacts on tourism and travel which is the major contributor to the service industry. It has massively affected the business firms' such lodges, hotels, bars, restaurants to have sustainable performance. The most popular hotels and lodge are Avan,

Faremount, Protea, Eliba, Cross Roads, Golden Days Lodge, and these have maintained their business despite the hit of pandemic with few workers laid off. Those that lost business and closed are Wasawange, Court yard, Zambezi Way Lodge, Sunset etc. Majority of these surviving hotels and lodges are operating below standards. These private sector role has become critical to take innovative decisions to revive economic performance. The tourism industry in Livingstone have experienced COVID-19 tourism impacts the most hardest-hits. This industry falls among the most vulnerable industries. The relaxation, travel, and inbound tourism activities designated a sudden drop causing trillion US dollars losses that made up 50% plus loss in revenues to the government and private sector.

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, has disrupted economic activities in Livingstone and constitutes a significant shock to tourism development. In the wake of comprehensive economic recovery evidenced by the loosening of lockdowns and commencement of complete internal air travels, there is a need for concerted policies that would increase tourist arrivals, broaden clean energy use and ensure economic and environmental sustainability. The pandemic has pretentious energy consumption patterns and impacted tourism to rethink innovation for sustainable recovery strategies. The pandemic has influenced stock markets and caused inflation in Livingstone.

The pandemic has also effected government's budgets for expenditures in all the ministries and a result of loss of revenue more in the Ministry of Tourism. Inbound travel and tourism activities profoundly impact communities with their positive effects on the arrivals of international tourists' interfere with residents of destinations societies' social, cultural, and socio-economic growth and prosperity. The virus's outbreak has impacted travel and tourism activities and caused international travel collapse since mid-March 2020. The arrivals of international tourists showed a sharp decline of from January to May 2020, and dropped drastically by June 2020.

The pandemic's appearance is still sweeping and various regions and borders have closed with all kinds of travel restrictions to combat the virus transmission. Livingstone town is bordering Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia and immediately a lock down was pronounced on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 all these borders were closed. From that time when borders were closed the economy of the town has changed and borders are now operating below expected level because people who were in cross boarder business have changed their business hence loss of revenue to the government.

The pandemic also brought social stigma and mental health issues. Social stigma determines a negative linkage between persons or groups who share specific features and particular diseases. It explains that local communities are labeled, discriminated and treated in particular ways because people consider them transmitters of infectious disease and pandemic. This behavior has led to negative social behaviors and affect people, family members, relatives, friends, and patients' caregivers. Individuals with infections but have other features can also suffer social stigmatization in the appearance of the pandemic COVID-19 is leading social stigma in the communities of Livingstone. People of various socio-economic backgrounds, religious and racial identification have caused some problems to Chinese people with increasing discrimination. This behavior has also affected tourists' minds from the Chinese community. The pandemic has also affected marital life through domestic violence. Religiosity levels among people have helped to maintain marital satisfaction. The coronavirus infection disease has proved to be more dangerous to elderly diabetic patients. Women with mental health issues also face severe stress due to the emergence of the deadliest disease.

### Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed social, emotional and socio-economic, and cultural influences on tourism in Livingstone. This has created a big problem and suffer from the adverse effects for a longer time. COVID-19 is a factual threat to Livingstone tourism industry and there is a high risk that many more businesses will closed down and disappear, undermining any ultimate economic recovery when international travel resumes. Zambia's neighbours are acting swiftly and boldly to arrest the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and allied sectors. Given limited fiscal resources, it may be advisable for the policy response in Zambia to focus on effective public health measures at the borders and providing regulatory relief, particularly with regard to flexibility in the application of labour regulations and licensing requirements for firms in the tourism sector. There is urgency for the Zambian government to engage the sector in view of having a better understanding of some these pressing challenges and determining how best to address them in the short, medium and long term

### References