

An Assessment of the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Employment in the Tourism Industry in Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment within Zambia's tourism sector, focusing on the years 2020 to 2022. Four key objectives guided the study; identifying affected segments, assessing employment level changes, pinpointing affected job types, and exploring resilience strategies adopted by businesses. The study used a quantitative research design in which 120 respondents from different tourism sectors participated. The findings revealed that; accommodation, tour packages, and entertainment segments were the most affected during the pandemic. These observations align with global trends, emphasizing the intricate interplay between various sub-sectors and underscoring the pivotal role of accommodations in the overall health of the tourism ecosystem. Examining the extent of employment disruptions during this period exposes the interconnected nature of jobs within the sector. Notably, the study also highlights the mutual relationship between hotels and tourist visits, highlighting the ripple effects of downturns in one area on the entire ecosystem. The study recommends that fostering resilience and adaptability in the Zambian tourism industry amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, several strategies are recommended. Diversification, adaptive marketing, and collaborative initiatives are crucial for enhancing the sector's resilience. Ongoing monitoring, supported by government interventions and industry-specific plans, can effectively address the adverse impacts on employment within the tourism sector.

Keywords: *employment, covid 19, tourism sector, human resource, management, Zambia*

I. INTRODUCTION

On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a global pandemic. The nature and spread of COVID-19 caused massive disruption to the normal flow and operations of the global economy and society at large. The Covid-19 pandemic triggered not only a public health crisis but also a social and economic crisis (Cucinotta, D., & Vanelli, M., 2020).

In response to the rapid and widespread transmission of the coronavirus, governments worldwide took measures to contain the outbreak by imposing travel restrictions and limiting social interactions. This led to the closure of businesses, factories, schools, universities, and on-site dining at restaurants. All gatherings and tourist attractions were also prohibited, resulting in social isolation that undoubtedly saved lives. However, these restrictions had a profound impact on the economy, effectively putting it on hold. (Fajar, 2020).

The outbreak of COVID-19 has had far-reaching consequences on both the global economy and people's mental well-being, plunging the world into a severe socioeconomic crisis and causing widespread psychological distress. Among the worst affected sectors, the tourism industry has suffered greatly. This situation has led to heightened feelings of job insecurity and fear of unemployment among workers, exacerbating the negative impact on their mental health (Khan et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all major economic sectors, but it is widely acknowledged that the tourism industry has been the hardest hit (UNWTO, n.d.). Among the most economically significant sectors, tourism plays a crucial role in the global economy (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). Studies have shown that the tourism industry is highly sensitive and exceptionally vulnerable to crises (Duan et al., 2021; Pforr, 2009). This susceptibility stems from its heavy reliance on various external factors, such as political stability, economic conditions, environmental factors, and weather conditions (Okumus et al., 2005, as cited in Ritchie and Jiang, 2019, p. 1).

According to estimates from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the travel and tourism industry experienced an alarming loss of over 60 million jobs in 2020 (World Travel and Tourism Council, n.d.). The pandemic's impact has been far-reaching and devastating for the tourism sector, resulting in widespread job losses and severe disruptions to the industry's operations. Zambia is one of the countries that have been affected by the pandemic, with the tourism sector

being one of the most affected. Zambia, situated in Southern Africa, is a landlocked country boasting an abundance of natural beauty, with 20 national parks and 34 game management areas spread throughout its territory. Recognizing the potential of tourism as a catalyst for economic development, Zambia has strategically leveraged its natural assets to boost the industry. Over the years, the country has witnessed a steady growth in tourism earnings, with annual revenues increasing from K3.9 billion in 2014 to K4.4 billion (equivalent to USD 401 million) in 2015, underscoring the vital role of tourism in the Zambian economy (Ministry of Tourism and Arts, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment in the tourism sector in Zambia. The objectives of the study were; to identify the specific tourism sectors in Zambia that were most affected by the pandemic, identify the types of jobs that were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the tourism industry and to establish the extent to which employment levels were impacted in the tourism industry between 2020 and 2022

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Impact of COVID 19 on the Tourism Segments

In 2021, Adebayo and his team conducted a study to examine the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and hospitality industry in Nigeria. The findings shed light on the significant challenges faced by this sector during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the tourism and hospitality industry in Nigeria, leading to various adverse consequences. One of the major impacts observed was the widespread escalation of cancellations in hotels and travel bookings. As travel restrictions and health concerns intensified, many tourists chose to cancel or postpone their plans, resulting in substantial revenue losses for businesses in the sector. Furthermore, show business, which is an essential part of the tourism and hospitality industry, also experienced increased cancellations and postponements of events. The entertainment sector's reliance on gatherings and public events made it particularly vulnerable during the pandemic, leading to further revenue losses and job disruptions.

2.2 Impact of Covid-19 on Employment Levels

Quintana et al., (2021) conducted a study to explore the effects of job insecurity, anxiety, and depression stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic on the self-rated task performance of hotel employees. The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the global service industry, affecting the livelihoods of millions of individuals. The researchers specifically focused on how job insecurity influenced hotel employees' feelings of anxiety and sadness, and how these psychological stressors, in turn, affected their job performance during the pandemic. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate the potential moderating role of employee resilience in this challenging context.

The importance of job security in the relationship between work happiness and job satisfaction has been highlighted in previous research (Yeves et al., 2019). The study emphasizes that while job insecurity can have detrimental consequences, job security itself contributes to employees feeling valued, which is crucial for achieving efficiency and enhancing organizational competitiveness. Job security not only directly impacts employees' promotion opportunities but also plays a role in recognition and involvement in decision-making processes, which collectively contribute to overall job satisfaction (Mehrabian et al., 2013).

2.3 Strategies for Improving Employment Levels

Mills (2020) highlights that one significant strategy adopted by tourism businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic was the increased focus on digital marketing and online presence. Utilizing social media, influencers, and virtual experiences allowed businesses to maintain engagement with potential customers, even when physical travel was restricted. Similarly, Novelli et al. (2021) emphasize that companies embraced digital transformation by transitioning to contactless services, online booking systems, and virtual tours, which not only adhered to safety measures but also catered to changing consumer preferences.

Gössling et al. (2020) emphasize another crucial strategy employed by tourism businesses to survive the pandemic, which involved the diversification of offerings. To mitigate the impact of restricted travel and reduced tourist numbers, many businesses repurposed their spaces and services. For instance, hotels turned their rooms into remote workspaces, restaurants shifted to takeaway and delivery services, and tour operators developed domestic-focused experiences, catering to the needs of the local market.

Smeral (2020) points out the importance of collaboration within the tourism industry and support from the government in helping businesses survive during the pandemic. Sharing resources, best practices, and information among businesses allowed them to adapt faster and navigate complex challenges. Additionally, financial aid packages, tax relief, and subsidies provided by governments eased the financial burden on businesses, preventing widespread closures (Einav et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Novelli et al. (2021) emphasize that while dealing with immediate survival, some tourism businesses also invested in sustainability and responsible tourism practices. Incorporating green initiatives and community development projects not only enhanced their resilience but also improved their long-term prospects as travelers increasingly sought eco-friendly and socially responsible experiences.

III. THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Economic Theory of Demand and Supply

Economic theory of demand and supply, a foundational concept in economics, has been shaped by influential economists across history. Adam Smith, often hailed as the father of economics, introduced key ideas in "The Wealth of Nations" (1776), emphasizing self-interest and the invisible hand's role in unintentionally benefiting society. Neoclassical economist Alfred Marshall further refined the theory in "Principles of Economics" (1890), providing a systematic and mathematical foundation. Marshall's contributions, including refining demand concepts, introducing consumer surplus, and discussing demand elasticity, enriched analytical tools for understanding market dynamics, solidifying the theory's evolution. The use of this theory is attributed to the fact. By employing the demand and supply framework, researchers can systematically examine the cascading effects of reduced demand on tourism businesses, leading to layoffs, furloughs, and job losses, as observed in studies such as Faulkner & Russell (2020). This theoretical foundation aids in understanding the intricate dynamics between market forces, consumer behavior, and employment outcomes, offering valuable insights for crafting effective strategies to mitigate the impact of such crises on the tourism sector

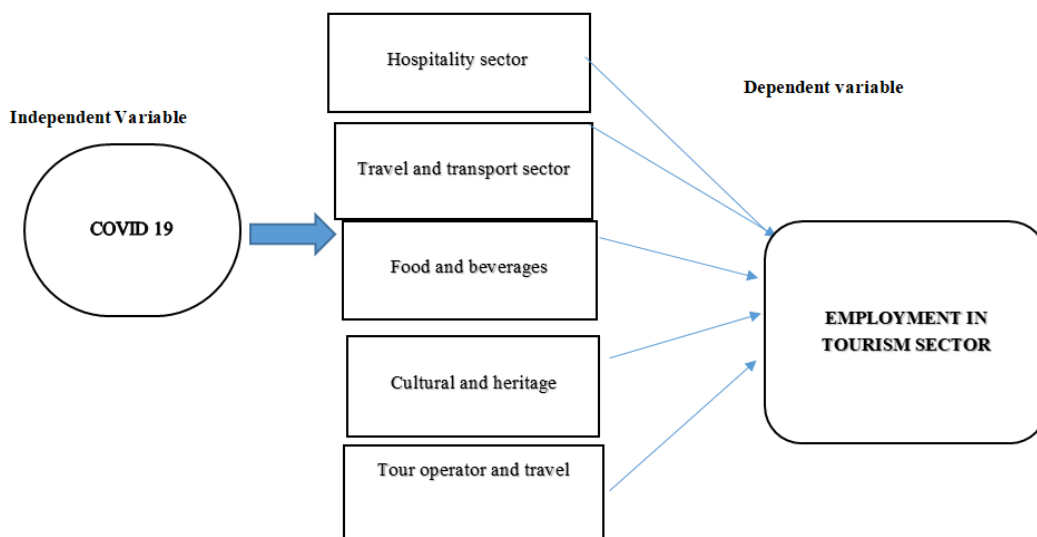
The pandemic caused a significant reduction in demand for tourism services due to travel restrictions, lockdowns, and safety concerns. This decline in demand led to a decrease in revenue for tourism businesses, resulting in layoffs, furloughs, and job losses (Faulkner & Russell, 2020).

3.2 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was developed by economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1950s and 1960s. Both scholars contributed significantly to the development and popularization of this economic theory

Human capital theory posits that formal education plays a crucial role in enhancing the productivity and capacity of a population. Advocates of this theory argue that an educated population is more productive, as education increases the cognitive abilities and skills of individuals, making them more economically capable. This perspective views formal education as an investment in human capital, which is considered equally or even more valuable than physical capital (Woodhall, 1997). The theory's application provides a lens through which researchers can analyze how the education levels of the workforce correlate with their adaptability to changing circumstances. It helps in understanding how a more educated workforce may be better positioned to explore alternative avenues within the tourism sector or transition to emerging areas, mitigating the negative impact on employment.

3.3 Conceptual Framework



3.4 Research Hypothesis:

1. Covid-19 impacted employment levels in the tourism sector
2. Covid-19 did not impact employment levels in the tourism sector.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative research design to comprehensively assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment within the tourism sector in Zambia. The primary research instruments employed were questionnaires, strategically designed to elicit quantitative data on various aspects related to the subject matter.

In terms of data collection, a total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to a representative sample of businesses operating within the tourism sector in Zambia. Notably, the study received responses from 120 businesses, including entities such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators. The data collection process encompassed a mix of electronic communication and on-site visits to ensure a well-rounded representation of the industry.

For data analysis, the study utilized statistical methods, employing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS. The quantitative data gathered through the surveys underwent thorough statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including percentages and averages, were applied to summarize the key perceptions and responses of the participants. This statistical approach provided a structured and quantitative understanding of the impact of the pandemic on employment within the tourism industry in Zambia, contributing to a comprehensive assessment of the challenges faced by businesses in the industry.

4.1 Reliability and Validity

To ensure that the concept of reliability is adhered to in this study, questionnaires were distributed to all the staff of the Tourism industry as targeted population. The entering of data on a computer was validated and all calculations were done on a spreadsheet. The data set was also checked to minimize mistakes. The following measures were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire:

- (i) The author distributed the questionnaires to the selected population to ensure that the recipients understood the instructions, to avoid spoiled or incomplete questionnaires.
- (ii) Appropriate random sample selections were used to analyze the information collected.

V. RESULTS

5.1 Firm Characteristics

In this study, the response rate represents the total number of questionnaires that were completed and submitted by the respondents. A total of 120 questionnaires were received from the various employees in the tourism industry representing 80% as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Participants' Response Rate

Sample Size	Actual Response	Response Rate
150	120	80%

5.2 Employments Levels Affected by the COVID-Pandemic

The cross-tabulation data, derived from responses of 120 participants, offers an understanding of the diverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment within distinct segments of Zambia's tourism sector (Table 2). Within the accommodation sector, a substantial reduction in employment is evident, with 32 respondents noting this impact. Transportation, while limited in responses, indicates some level of impact, with two respondents reporting significant reductions. In the tour packages segment, a noticeable impact is observed, with 7 respondents noting a significant reduction and 6 reporting a moderate reduction in employment. The entertainment sector faces a substantial impact, as highlighted by 18 respondents noting significant reductions. Group travel services exhibit a potential impact, though caution is warranted due to limited responses. The "other services" category, representing diverse services within the tourism sector, shows a notable impact, with 12 respondents perceiving significant reductions. These findings underscore the widespread and varied consequences of the pandemic on employment across different service areas within Zambia's tourism industry.

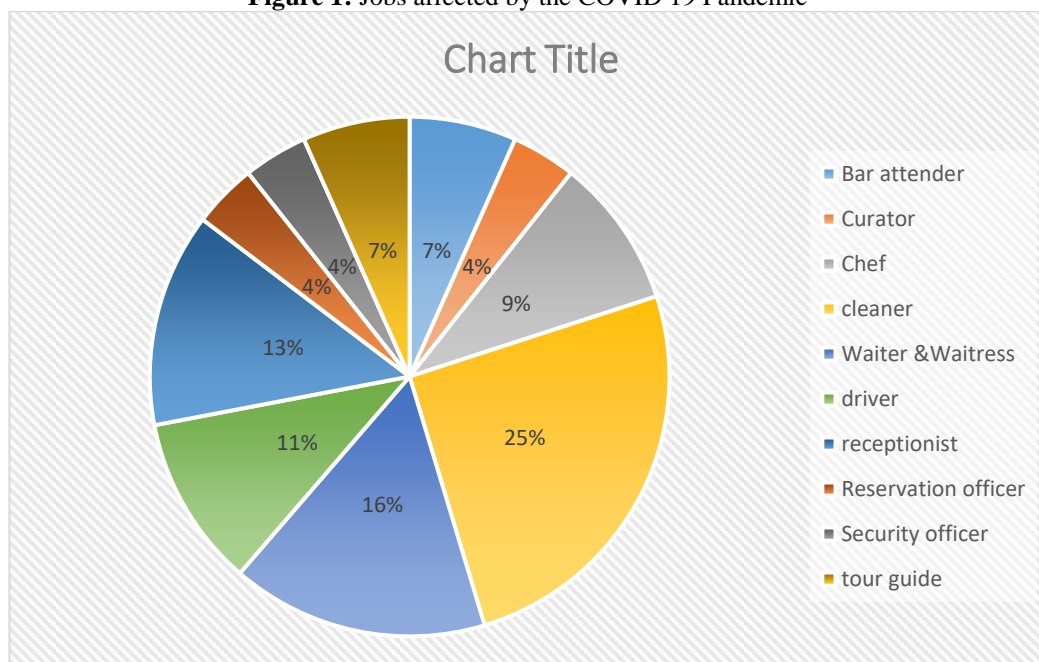
Table 2: Effect of COVID 19 Pandemic on Employment Levels

		To what extent has COVID19 impacted employment levels in the tourism sector in Zambia?						Total
		Significantly reduced	Moderately reduced	Slightly reduced	Increased	Un certain	99	
What kind of services do you offer to tourist?	Accommodation	32	12	0	1	1	0	46
	Transportation	2	0	0	0	0	1	3
	Tour packages	7	6	1	0	0	2	16
	entertainment	18	9	2	0	2	0	31
	group travel services	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
	others	12	5	0	0	1	0	18
	Nonresponse	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		75	34	3	1	4	3	120

5.3 Jobs of the Tourism Sector Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic

The study obtained information regarding types of jobs affected due to COVID 19 in the tourism industry (Figure 1). As seen from the pie chart below, the jobs affected included cleaners depicting 25%, waiter and waitresses representing 16%, front office workers who represented 13%, drivers representing 11%, Chef depicted 9% and tour guide constituted 7%, others affected were curators, bar attenders, security personnel’s and reservation officers. These largely represented an average of 4%.

Figure 1: Jobs affected by the COVID 19 Pandemic



Descriptive Statistics on Impact of COVID 19 on Employment in Tourism Sector

The descriptive statistics (Table 3) offer a quantitative insight into respondents' perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment across diverse sectors within Zambia's tourism industry. In the hotel sector, the higher mean score of 4.1417 for negative employment impact indicates a more significant perceived adverse effect compared to the positive impact with a mean score of 2.3917. Similarly, in game viewing, respondents perceived a relatively higher negative impact on employment (mean score of 4.0583) compared to the positive impact (mean score of 2.9667). The transportation sector showed a moderate positive impact on employment (mean score of 3.0333) and a considerable negative impact (mean score of 4.0583). These findings underscore the nuanced nature of perceived employment impacts, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to address challenges within specific tourism segments.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the impact of COVID-19 on Employment Levels

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
IMPACT OF Covid-19 on employment of tourism sectors-positive impact on employment-Hotels	120	2.3917	8.92103
IMPACT OF Covid-19 on employment of tourism sectors-negative impact on employment-Hotels	120	4.1417	0.74806
IMPACT OF Covid-19 on employment of tourism sectors-positive impact on employment-game viewing	120	2.9667	8.89049
IMPACT OF Covid-19 on employment of tourism sectors-Negative impact on employment-game viewing	120	4.0583	1.04757
IMPACT OF Covid-19 on employment of tourism sectors-positive impact on employment-transportation	120	3.0333	9.32236

5.4 To Establish the Extent to which Employment Levels were Impacted in the Tourism Sector

The cross-tabulation data sheds light on the relationship between the perceived negative impact of COVID-19 on employment in the hotel sector and its effect on tourist visits. Among the 120 respondents, 115 acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on tourist visits at their companies (Table 4). Within this group, a significant number (72) strongly agree that COVID-19 has negatively affected employment, with an additional 33 respondents expressing agreement. On the contrary, four respondents assert that the pandemic has not influenced tourist visits at their establishments, with two of them expressing agreement with the negative impact on employment.

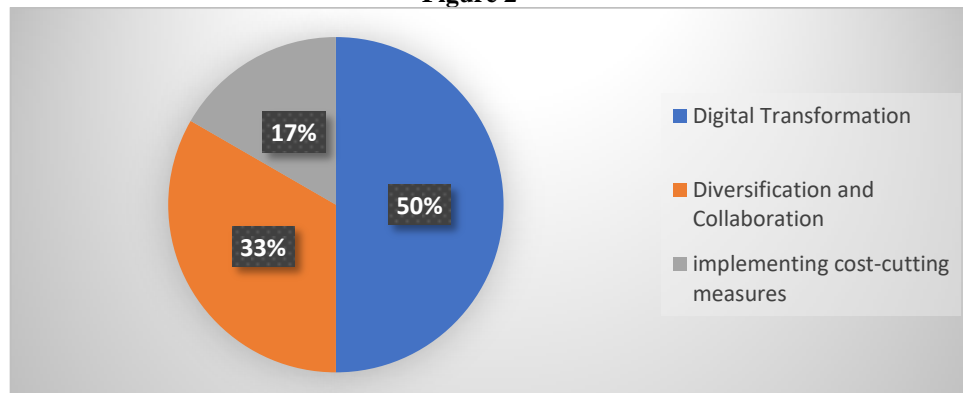
Table 4: Extent to which Employment Levels were Impacted in the Tourism Sector

Count							
		IMPACT of Covid-19 on employment of tourism sectors-negative impact on employment-Hotels					Total
		strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	strongly agree	agree	
Has COVID 19 impacted visits if tourist at your company?	Yes	2	1	7	72	33	115
	No	0	1	1	0	2	4
	No response	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total		2	2	8	73	35	120

5.5 Strategies that Business in the Tourism Employed to remain in Business during the Pandemic

The investigation into strategies employed by businesses in the tourism sector to endure the challenges of the pandemic reveals a diverse range of adaptive measures and resilience tactics. Faced with unprecedented disruptions to global travel and shifting consumer behaviors, many tourism businesses have demonstrated agility in response to the crisis. Notably, several research participants embraced mainly in digital transformation in their respective businesses, leveraging online platforms to reach and engage with customers virtually. Virtual tours, online booking systems, and enhanced digital marketing efforts became pivotal tools to maintain visibility and connectivity with potential tourists. Additionally, businesses demonstrated flexibility by diversifying their offerings, such as introducing unique packages, catering to local markets, and collaborating with other sectors. Cost-cutting measures, including workforce adjustments, were also implemented to navigate financial constraints. Furthermore, health and safety protocols were prioritized, with businesses implementing stringent measures to reassure visitors and comply with evolving health guidelines.

Figure 2



5.6 Discussion of Results

To identify the specific tourism sectors in Zambia that were most affected by the pandemic

The observed impact on employment levels in specific segments of the tourism sector, including accommodation, tour packages, and entertainment, aligns with global trends outlined in studies by Gössling et al. (2020) and reports by the UNWTO (2021). These segments, which constitute integral components of the tourism ecosystem, have experienced severe repercussions in terms of employment, reflecting the vulnerability of these sub-sectors to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic

To identify the types of jobs that were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the tourism industry

The study revealed various job categories affected by COVID 19 Pandemic within the tourism industry,. The data revealed distinct proportions of affected occupations, with cleaners constituting the largest group at 25%. Following closely were waiters and waitresses at 16%, front office workers at 13%, drivers at 11%, chefs at 9%, and tour guides at 7%. Additionally, a cluster of other roles such as curators, bar attenders, security personnel, and reservation officers

To establish the extent to which employment levels were impacted in the tourism industry between 2020 and 2022

The detailed breakdown of responses allows for an understanding of the non-uniform effects on employment across various tourism services. This variability underscores the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics and vulnerabilities of each sub-sector within the tourism industry. While some services may experience a more pronounced impact on employment, others may navigate the challenges with more resilience, emphasizing the need for targeted and tailored strategies to address specific sub-sectors' distinct needs.

Secondly, the strong association observed between the perceived negative impact on employment in hotels and its correlation with a downturn in tourist visits underscores the interconnected and symbiotic relationship between these two crucial elements within the tourism ecosystem. This correlation aligns with scholarly perspectives highlighted by Becken et al. (2020) and Sigala (2020), emphasizing the interdependence of employment and tourist visitation in the tourism sector.

To investigate the strategies that businesses in the tourism employed to remain in business during the pandemic.

Furthermore, the strategies employed by businesses to adapt to the pandemic mirror global trends documented in the literature. Digital transformation has been widely acknowledged as a crucial resilience strategy in the face of travel restrictions and changing consumer behaviors (Gretzel et al., 2020; Sigala, 2020). The emphasis on online platforms, virtual tours, and enhanced digital marketing aligns with recommendations for tourism businesses to embrace technology for engagement and marketing purposes during crises.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this study of the impact of COVID 19 on employment in the tourism industry, the findings provide a detailed understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on employment within the first objective was to specify tourism sectors affected by COVID 19 Pandemic and these included accommodation, tour packages, and entertainment, resonates with global trends outlined in studies .Accommodation services, characterized by hotels and lodgings, have been significantly affected, The other objective was to identify the types of jobs that were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the tourism industry. The study highlights distinct proportions of affected roles, with cleaners constituting the largest group at 25%. This underscores the immediate and widespread impact on occupations responsible for maintaining hygiene and sanitation, crucial factors in the industry's operation

Another objective discussed was the extent to which employment levels were impacted in the tourism industry during the pandemic period. The observed effects on employment levels, particularly in accommodation, tour packages, and entertainment segments, align with global trends and emphasize the vulnerability of these sub-sectors.

Lastly the study investigate the strategies that businesses in the tourism employed to remain in business during the pandemic. The strategies employed by businesses to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic reflect global trends documented in the literature. Digital transformation emerges as a key resilience strategy, with businesses leveraging online platforms, virtual tours, and enhanced digital marketing to maintain engagement with consumers.

The Study Recommends

- Diversification, adaptive marketing, and collaborative initiatives to enhance sector resilience.
- On-going monitoring, government support, and industry-specific plans are suggested for addressing employment impacts.
- Successful strategies include digital transformation, diversification, and sustainability practices.
- Overall, foster a resilient and adaptive tourism industry in Zambia.

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