

So far so KAZA: An assessment of the contribution of the KAZA UNIVISA to tourism performance in Victoria Falls

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Abstract: Ever since the launch of the KAZA UNI-VISA in 2014, seemingly; no study has been carried out to assess the contribution of the UNI-VISA system to tourism performance in Victoria Falls. Limited research on common visa systems has to date focused on countries of the same economic background such as European Union (EU) countries and South East Asian Nations (SEAN). The goal of this paper was to assess the contribution of the KAZA UNI-VISA system to tourism performance in Victoria Falls. A survey was carried out to collect data. Findings from the study indicate that the KAZA UNI-VISA is contributing positively towards tourism performance in Victoria Falls. In order to benefit more from the KAZA UNIVISA, the study recommended that the systems be put in place to ensure that visa stickers are always available. The study also recommended the improvement of accessibility into the Victoria Falls area by means of enhancing air transport links into the region.

Keywords: KAZA, TFCA, Visa, UNI-VISA, tourism performance

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I. INTRODUCTION

Most countries have imposed visa restrictions on travellers from foreign countries (Artal-Tur, Pallardo`-Lo`pez&Requena-Silvente, 2012). This however, has a negative impact on tourism performance in the country as it dissuades foreign visitors (Neumayer, 2010). The movement of tourists is affected and this has a potential of damaging the country's tourism industry (Muther, 2017). In order to ease travel restrictions for travellers to Southern Africa, a pilot UNIVISA regime was been launched for SADC (The Sunday Mail, 2014, Anon., 2014). The project of the Kavango-Zambezi Trans-Frontier Area Uni-Visa (KAZA Trans-Frontier Conservation Area (TFCA)), between Zambia and Zimbabwe attempts to test systems for an open visa regime in Southern African Development Community (SADC) and eventually across Africa. The KAZA UNIVISA was introduced in 2013 when Zambia and Zimbabwe co-hosted the UNWTO 20th General Assembly (Zambia Tourism Board, 2013). An academic evaluation of the KAZA UNIVISA is yet to be done, hence this study which sought to make an evaluation of the contribution of the KAZA UNIVISA to tourism performance in Victoria Falls.

II. BACKGROUND

For a country to fully reap the benefits that international tourism can bring to an economy, it is essential to put in place conditions that make the country easy to visit (UNWTO/WTTC, 2014). The majority of countries enforce visa restrictions on travellers from some foreign states for security reasons (Neumayer, 2010; CIC, 2012; Artal-Tur *et al.*, 2012; Vezzoli & Flahaux, 2017). Such constraints are likely to discourage foreign visitors from affected countries as travellers are forced to plan their trips well in advance (Boratyński&Szymborska, 2006). A significant amount of tourists from several countries criticized the tight restrictions on travel and visa requirements during the Olympics Games held in China in 2008 and those held in UK in 2012. These tourists ended up spending their holiday elsewhere (Song *et al.*, 2012; Thomas, 2012). According to the UNWTO (2015:4), 'destinations around the world still require on average approximately two thirds of the world's population to obtain a traditional visa prior to departure. Some 18% of the world's population is able to enter a destination without a visa, while another 15% can receive a visa on arrival and 6% is able to obtain eVisas.' South-East Asian, East African, Caribbean and Oceania destinations remain the most open sub regions while Central African, North African and North American destinations remain the most restrictive sub regions. "Traditional visa requirements are most prevalent in Central Africa (92%) and North Africa (84%), and North America (83%), followed by the four European sub regions, Southern Africa and the Middle East (all higher than 70%)" (UNWTO, 2015: 13).

A fruitful UNIVISA case in point is the Schengen visa and the added easing of intra-regional movement by the European Union's (EU) regional integration. These efforts have directly contributed to the high levels of intra-regional tourism flows in Europe (Anastasiadou&de Sausmarez, 2006). According to the EC (2014) due to cumbersome, lengthy and costly visa procedures a total of 6.6 million potential travellers from six of the countries with the most travellers was lost. This loss shows that more flexible and accessible visa rules could lead to an increase in trips to the Schengen area of between 30% and up to 60%, only from these six countries. This could mean as much as €130 billion in total direct spending over five years (in accommodation, food and drink, transport, entertainment and shopping), and could translate into some 1.3 million jobs in tourism and related sectors' (EC, 2014: IP/14).

Taking into consideration the long-standing negotiations on the SADC UNI-VISA since the mid-1980s (SAIIA, 2014) the member states of the KAZA TFCA suggested a less vigorous UNI-VISA project to be piloted during the August 2013 UNWTO 20th General Assembly meeting co-hosted by Zambia and Zimbabwe under a World Bank grant. Following the successful hosting of the Zambia-Zimbabwe open border policy during the UNWTO general assembly meeting, the KAZA UNI-VISA was then launched on the 28th of November 2014 (The Sunday Mail, 2014, Anon, 2014). After a year of preparation, the two countries were selected by the KAZA TFCA partner States to pilot the KAZA UNI-VISA project. Later on, the UNIVISA was intended to be rolled out to three other countries in the KAZA region: Angola, Botswana and Namibia. More countries in the SADC region are expected to join in the UNIVISA initiative at later phases (KAZA VISA, 2014). Below is the expected roll out of the VISA system.

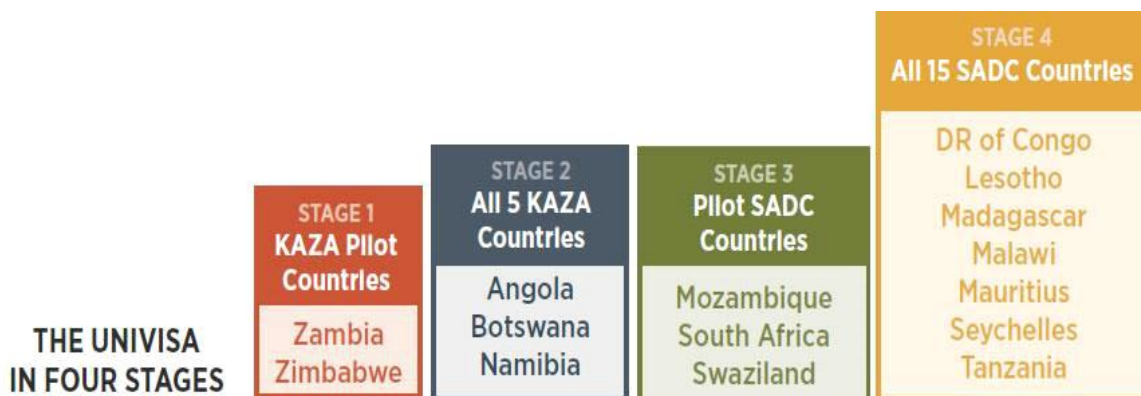


Figure 1: The UNI-VISA in Four Stages
(Source: The Safari Source, 2015)

The KAZA TFCA is one of the eighteen TFCAs found in the SADC region, based on the SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement of 1999 (KAZA TFCA, 2015-2020). On the 18th of August 2011 the KAZA TFCA Treaty was signed at a SADC summit in Luanda, Angola amongst the five KAZA TFCA partner states, that is, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The purpose of this Treaty was to harmonize policies, strategies and practices for the management of shared natural resources that connect the international borders of the five partner states (KAZA TFCA Treaty, 2011).

According to the KAZA TFCA IDP (2015-2020: XI), 'there has been a general trend of growth in international arrivals to KAZA TFCA countries since 1995. This is due in part to the three World Heritage Sites that are found within the KAZA TFCA – Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls, the Tsodilo Hills and, the Okavango Delta in Botswana.' However, there was a restriction in the facilitation of cross border tourism in the KAZA TFCA in relation to entrance into one-member country from another. It required the tourists to have specific visas for each partner state and in many cases the legal requirements for obtaining a visa proved to be the most problematic (Page & Connell, 2006). Moreover, these specific visas were a deterrent for multi-country travel in the region. It is for this reason that the development of a common visa, deemed a KAZA UNIVISA, was endorsed by five Heads of States of the KAZA TFCA.

The KAZA UNI-VISA initiative stems from the SADC Protocol on the Development of Tourism of 1998. One of the objectives of this protocol (1998:5) is 'to facilitate intra-regional travel for the development of tourism through easing or removal of travel and visa restrictions and harmonization of immigration procedures'. The protocol (1998:6) further states that 'member states shall endeavour to make the entry and travel of visitors as smooth as possible and shall remove practices likely to place obstacles to the development of travel and tourism, both regional and international.'

The main objective of the KAZA UNI-VISA is to promote tourism through the use of the UNI-VISA system. This was planned to facilitate easier and cost-effective movement of tourists between Zimbabwe and

Zambia, increase tourists' arrivals in the region and stimulate economic and regional integration. AfDB (2016) states that only six destinations in Southern Africa, that is, Seychelles, Mozambique, Mauritius, Madagascar, Tanzania and Zambia managed to make it into the top 20 most visa-open countries list. 9% of the African nations have an e-visa in place and these include Zimbabwe. In spite of this strength Zimbabwe ranks 27 out of 52 countries ranked in Africa for visa openness (AfDB, 2016). According to the ZTA (2015) while the top 15 visa-open destinations require no visa in advance (except Mauritius and Djibouti), Zimbabwe requires 67% of the tourism markets in the world to apply for a visa in advance.

Visa systems that have been imposed in some tourism destinations have not enhanced tourism performance (Katunga, 2015). According to Thomas (2012) tourism players in UK increased pressure on their Government to ease arduous visa restrictions for the wealthy Chinese tourists. This was as a result of the 5% decrease in number of overseas tourists that visited Britain during the Olympics in 2012 compared to 2011. If Visa systems are not evaluated optimum results might not be achieved (UK visa bureau, 2012). According to the APEC (2016) visa requirements have the strongest impact on tourist's arrivals as imposing visas alone reduces bilateral tourists' arrivals by 0.5%.

According to ZTA (2000) the tourism sector experienced rapid growth since the country gained independence in 1980. During the decade 1989 – 1999, tourist arrivals grew at an average growth rate of 17.5% whilst tourism receipts increased at an average annual growth rate of 18% in US\$ terms and 25% in Zimbabwean Dollar terms. However, due to the economic, social and political crises, the sector experienced its worst performance registering an 11% decline in arrivals and a 38% drop in receipts (US\$) in 2000. This was the epoch of decline as the sector continued to witness a decrease in arrivals and receipts in the ensuing decade further registering the worst tourist arrival decrease of 18% in 2004, which was the local record.

Such poor performance prompted the need for a paradigm shift in terms of visa restrictions and the need to open the border and relax the visa restrictions was inevitable.

Since the launch of the KAZA UNI-VISA there seems to be a dearth of scholarly research on whether the UNI-VISA system yielded positive tourism performance or not to the nation's tourism industry. Using a quantitative research methodology this research therefore sought to assess the contribution of the KAZA UNIVISA to tourism performance in Victoria Falls.

Destination accessibility and visa regimes

For any destination to achieve a competitive advantage for its tourism business, it must make certain that its overall 'appeal', and the experience offered to the tourist, is superior and unique to that of the alternative destinations (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Similar to the above assertion; Morrison (2012) listed 10 'As' as a valuable set of aspects for judging the success of tourism destinations among which is the issue of accessibility. Adeyinka-Ojo and Nair (2006) are of the opinion that destination accessibility is the major factor which cannot be ignored in a tourism destination. As such, entry and exit facilitation is crucial to the success or failure of a nation's tourism industry. When it comes to inbound tourism; visa requirements, ports of and easy destination accessibility must be considered as part of the attraction for visiting such a destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Few studies focus on the impact of visa regime change on tourism receipts (SAIIA, 2014). Ever since the launch of the KAZA UNI-VISA in 2014, no study has been carried out to assess the relationship between the UNI-VISA system to tourism performance in Victoria Falls. The EC (2013) conducted an impact assessment study to review the Schengen visa policy in facilitating legitimate travelling. San Andres (2016) presented a paper on tourist arrivals and inclusive growth in the APEC region while the UNWTO (2014) discussed the impact of Visa Facilitation in ASEAN Member States. Douglas *et al.* (2012) presented a paper on the potential of a single regional visa in the SADC region. If the relationship between the KAZA UNI-VISA and tourism performance in Victoria Falls is not evaluated, Zimbabwe can lose potential revenue from arrivals and tourism receipts by continuously implementing a system that has no benefits to the country. Hatry (2006) states that if performance of an intervention is not measured or is measured inaccurately, those using the data will be misled and bad decisions will likely follow. If implemented effectively and efficiently, the KAZA UNIVISA has the potential to strategically position Zimbabwe on the global market as an attractive destination for investment and tourism as evidenced in the Schengen area (Anastasiadou & de Sausmarez, 2006). Using the quantitative research methodology this paper assessed the contribution of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance in Victoria Falls.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research adopted both the exploratory and descriptive designs. The study assumed 3371 people are employed in the tourism industry in Victoria Falls (based on ZIMSTATS, 2012) and used that as the study population. Using Kraecjie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population, a sample size of 342 was determined for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents for this

study. Data was collected from Government officials, boats, cruises, camping and caravans, conference organizers, hotels, lodges and guest houses, incentive travel organizers and motor vehicle hire, photographic and non-consumptive safaris, hunting operators, restaurants, tour operators, airlines, national tourism offices and tourism representative bodies in Victoria Falls. A questionnaire comprising of closed ended questions in which the respondents provided responses on a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data for the survey. A response rate of 29% was achieved for this study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study are presented and discussed below:

Relationship between the KAZA UNI-VISA and tourism performance

This section deals with the general views of the respondents regarding the relationship between the KAZA UNI-VISA system and tourism performance. The respondents had been asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the outlined links. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics- Relationship of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance

	N	Mean		Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Increased tourist arrivals	99	3.77	.077	.767	-.959	.243	2.341	.481
Increased investment	99	3.60	.074	.741	-.108	.243	-.225	.481
Increased length of stay	99	3.08	.112	1.113	-.162	.243	-.687	.481
Increased tourism consumption	99	3.83	.066	.655	-.475	.243	.710	.481
Increased employment in the tourism sector	99	3.64	.083	.826	-.558	.243	.378	.481
Increased generation of foreign currency	99	3.67	.082	.821	-.327	.243	-.304	.481
Increased cross border tourists movement between Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana	99	4.32	.303	3.013	8.944	.243	85.955	.481
Increased tourist expenditure	99	3.69	.068	.680	-.710	.243	1.811	.481
Increased air traffic	99	3.86	.079	.783	-.657	.243	1.118	.481
Increased hotel/lodge occupancy levels	99	3.74	.079	.790	-1.014	.243	2.023	.481
Improved standard of living for the local residents	99	3.25	.097	.962	-.179	.243	-.138	.481
Valid N (listwise)	99							

The data analysis from the descriptive statistics table above shows that there is increased cross border tourist movement between the three member states (Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana). This is evidenced by the highest mean value of 4.32, a leptokurtic nature of distribution with a very high positive kurtosis of 85.955 coupled with a positive skewness of 8.944. The statistics show that the respondents had coherent/harmony responses on this section of the questionnaire highlighting that there is a relatively strong relationship between cross border movement and the KAZA UNI-VISA. The results concur with UNWTO (2017) which notes that a single visa for multiple countries attracts more tourists and promotes cross-border tourism. The relationship between visa systems and tourism performance is also shown in East Africa where Ministers of Tourism are contemplating a UNI-VISA system for the region so that tourists can travel within the region on a single visa (Zengeni & Zengeni, 2012). Amrik (2002) also points out that tourists actually prefer a situation where they have to one visa to travel in the region.

Second most significant relationship is the increase on air traffic which had a mean of 3.86 and also exhibiting a leptokurtic distribution with high positive kurtosis of 1.118 and a high negative skewness off -0.657. The link between visa systems and increase in air traffic is also revealed by Budapest Business Journal (2017) who postulates that the European Union decision to waive visas for Ukrainian citizens would increase air traffic from Transcaucasia to Western Europe and Israel.

Other factors which exhibited high coherence in respondent data are increased occupancy levels in hotels, increased tourist expenditure, increased tourist arrivals, increased tourism consumption which had a kurtosis of 2.023, 1.811 and 2.341 respectively. In comparison the BBJ (2017) notes that the EU's visa waiver for Ukrainian citizens also has a positive impact on tourism turnover of the region and Ukraine itself. The findings also concur with several scholars who agree that relaxing visa restrictions can have a positive economic gains related to tourism and trade (Neumayer 2006; Neumayer 2010; Vezzoli & Flahaux 2017).

Hatry (2006) posits that performance measurement is generally defined as regular measurement of outcomes and results, which generates reliable data on the effectiveness and efficiency of programs. Measuring the contribution of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance was significant so as to find out if the UNI-VISA was contributing in a positive or negative way. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the variables outlined to find the relationship between the KAZA UNI-VISA and tourism performance in Victoria Falls.

The study revealed that 70.7% of the respondents agreed that there are increased tourist arrivals while 82.9% agreed that there is increased cross border tourist movement between Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. This reflects a positive relationship between the KAZA UNI-VISA and tourism performance. This study reinforces the link that is propounded by Siskin (2004) that the lifting or elimination of travel restrictions increases the demand for and freedom to travel. The overall mean rankings show a positive relationship of the contribution of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance in Victoria Falls which supports Amrik's (2000) assertion that tourist would prefer a situation where they at least have one visa to travel in the region. Respondents to this study felt that the KAZA UNI-VISA system has a positive influence on tourism performance in Victoria Falls.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test- Relationship of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.699
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	248.217
	Df
	55
	Sig.
	.000

Having a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of 0.699 with a Bartlett p-value of 0.000 meeting the acceptable ranges, a factor analysis was done.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix` Relationship of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Increased tourist arrivals	.511			
Increased investment	.571			
Increased length of stay			.831	
Increased tourism consumption	.599			
Increased employment in the tourism sector	.613			
Increased generation of foreign currency	.641			
Increased cross border tourists movement between Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana				.952
Increased tourist expenditure		.787		
Increased air traffic		.785		
Increased occupancy levels in hotels and lodges			.577	
Improved standard of living for the local residents	.823			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

From the above analysis, the extracted link classifications comprise of:

Factor 1: Investment and economic issues

- tourist arrivals
- investment
- standards of living for the local residents
- tourism consumption
- employment in the tourism sector
- generation of foreign currency

Factor 2: Expenditure

- increased tourist expenditure
- increased air traffic

Factor 3: Length of stay

- increased length of stay
- increased occupancy

Factor 4: Intra-regional travel

- cross border tourists' movement between Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana

The relationship classification according to the rotated component matrix shows relationship areas that need urgent attention. These include tourist arrivals, investment, standards of living for the local residents, tourism consumption, employment in the tourism sector and generation of foreign currency.

Four components were extracted which had an Eigen value of greater than 1 with a cumulative frequency 62.646%. The first component had a variance frequency of 31.654%, followed by 11.227% then the third had a frequency of 10.193% and finally 9.572%. The contribution of the KAZA UNI-VISA system to tourism performance in Victoria Falls can be explained up to 62.646%. This cumulative frequency shows that the KAZA UNIVISA is contributing to tourism performance in Victoria Falls to a great extent. However, 37.354% of the tourism performance in Victoria Falls can be attributed to other factors.

Table 4: Total Variance Explained- Relationship of the KAZA UNI-VISA to tourism performance

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.482	31.654	31.654	3.482	31.654	31.654
2	1.235	11.227	42.881	1.235	11.227	42.881
3	1.121	10.193	53.074	1.121	10.193	53.074
4	1.053	9.572	62.646	1.053	9.572	62.646
5	.852	7.749	70.395			
6	.809	7.352	77.747			
7	.719	6.536	84.282			
8	.586	5.323	89.606			
9	.525	4.777	94.382			
10	.377	3.426	97.809			
11	.241	2.191	100.000			

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be noted that the KAZA UNIVISA has contributed positively to tourism performance in Victoria Falls. The empirical study indicates that relaxing or removing travel restrictions increases the demand for and freedom to travel, which in turn has a positive result on tourism performance of the destination. The findings of the survey also indicated that tourism performance in Victoria Falls actually improved after the implementation of the KAZA UNI-VISA system. However, the improvement of tourism performance cannot be entirely given credit to the KAZA UNI-VISA, the improvement may also be as a result of the expansion of the Victoria Falls International Airport which has resulted in an increase of airlines flying into the resort town and other factors.

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