Navigating through a pandemic crisis: strategies for tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya

Navegando em uma crise pandêmica: estratégias para o setor de turismo e hospitalidade no Quênia

Navegar a través de una crisis pandémica: estrategias para el turismo y la hostelería en Kenia

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to offer answers as to what can be done to mitigate devastating effects of pandemics on tourism and hospitality operations. The research systematically reviewed 40 articles which were selected using the PRISMA flowchart criteria. The review examined reactive and proactive coping strategies that have been devised to help the industry bounce back during different pandemic crises. Based on the analysis, promotion of domestic tourism, tax waivers, economic aids and demonstration of commitment to safeguard health were found to be the most common reactive strategies. On the other hand, diversification of products, shifting to other market niches and review of travel policies were found to be the most common proactive strategies. The study proposed the following as survival strategies for the tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya; market and product diversification, a cohesive cross-border collaboration within the EAC, substantial automation of sectors, endorsement of certified safe destinations, establishment of business alliances and building a special emergency fund for the industry. The study provides practical implications and advances knowledge on sustainability of the tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya, amidst the recently encountered pandemic predicaments and those that are unforeseeable.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, coping strategies, tourism and hospitality resilience, sustainability.
RESUMO
Este artigo tem como objetivo oferecer respostas sobre o que pode ser feito para mitigar os efeitos devastadores das pandemias nas operações de turismo e hospitalidade. A pesquisa analisou sistematicamente 40 artigos que foram selecionados usando os critérios do fluxograma PRISMA. A revisão examinou as estratégias de enfrentamento reativas e proativas que foram criadas para ajudar o setor a se recuperar durante diferentes crises pandêmicas. Com base na análise, a promoção do turismo doméstico, as isenções fiscais, as ajudas econômicas e a demonstração de compromisso com a proteção da saúde foram consideradas as estratégias reativas mais comuns. Por outro lado, a diversificação de produtos, a mudança para outros nichos de mercado e a revisão das políticas de viagem foram consideradas as estratégias proativas mais comuns. O estudo propôs o seguinte como estratégias de sobrevivência para o setor de turismo e hotelaria no Quênia: diversificação de mercados e produtos, colaboração coesa entre fronteiras dentro da EAC, automação substancial de setores, endosso de destinos seguros certificados, estabelecimento de alianças comerciais e criação de um fundo de emergência especial para o setor. O estudo fornece implicações práticas e avança o conhecimento sobre a sustentabilidade do setor de turismo e hospitalidade no Quênia, em meio às situações de pandemia recentemente encontradas e àquelas que são imprevisíveis.


RESUMEN
El objetivo de este artículo es ofrecer respuestas sobre qué se puede hacer para mitigar los efectos devastadores de las pandemias en el turismo y la hostelería. La investigación revisó sistemáticamente 40 artículos que se seleccionaron siguiendo los criterios del diagrama de flujo PRISMA. La revisión examinó las estrategias reactivas y proactivas que se han ideado para ayudar a la industria a recuperarse durante diferentes crisis pandémicas. Según el análisis, la promoción del turismo interno, las exenciones fiscales, las ayudas económicas y la demostración de compromiso para salvaguardar la salud resultaron ser las estrategias reactivas más comunes. Por otro lado, la diversificación de productos, el cambio a otros nichos de mercado y la revisión de las políticas de viajes resultaron ser las estrategias proactivas más comunes. El estudio propuso las siguientes estrategias de supervivencia para la industria del turismo y la hostelería en Kenia: diversificación de mercados y productos, colaboración transfronteriza cohesiva dentro de la CAO, automatización sustancial de los sectores, aprobación de destinos seguros certificados, establecimiento de alianzas empresariales y creación de un fondo especial de emergencia para la industria. El estudio aporta implicaciones prácticas y avanza en el conocimiento de la sostenibilidad de la industria turística y hostelería de Kenia, en medio de los predicamentos pandémicos encontrados recientemente y de los imprevisibles.

Palabras clave: pandemia, COVID-19, estrategias de afrontamiento, resistencia del turismo y la hostelería, sostenibilidad.
1 INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of human civilisation, pandemics have been a serious public health issue. A number of communicable diseases have been witnessed throughout the world in the last 100 years. The most prominent ones include the Spanish Flu in 1918, the Asian Flu in 1956, the Pandemic Influenza in 1968, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002, Avian Flu in 2008, Swine Flu in 2009, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012 and the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in 2019 (Koca, 2020). Amongst these pandemics, Spanish Flu was the deadliest. Globally, Spanish Flu killed between 17-100 million people before the world was officially declared free of the pandemic (Spreeuwenberg et al., 2018).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2021), SARS was the first of readily transmittable novel infections in the 21st century and cautioned it could easily spread through international travel. SARS caused 774 deaths worldwide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). The Avian Flu had a cumulative of 374 deaths (WHO, 2013). Swine Flu related deaths in the first year of the virus spread was estimated to be between 151,700 and 575,400 people worldwide (Dawood et al., 2012). According to WHO (2018) MERS killed 803 people worldwide, since its emergence in Saudi Arabia. Even though these outbreaks had adverse impacts on civilisation, the most recent outbreak of Covid-19 is so far the deadliest in the world since the Spanish Flu in 1918. By November 2023, the global Covid-19 deaths were over 6.9 million (WHO, n.d). This was reported after the WHO had declared the disease no longer a global health emergency (Wise, 2023). The agency further warned that there was a high risk of emergence of new variants which could cause new surges in infection cases and deaths.

Besides being a key health concern, pandemics can also lead to disruption of social and economic activities especially those related to tourism and hospitality. In fact, Hung et al. (2018) claim that accommodation facilities are the primary transmission points of local epidemic outbreaks that rapidly turn into global pandemics. For that reason, in the event of a pandemic, movement of people from one place to another is swiftly restricted. And since travel is a prerequisite for tourism related activities, the shock waves of a pandemic are first felt by tourism and hospitality enterprises. For instance, when SARS outbreak alert was issued, tourism destinations were greatly affected as a result of cancellations of hotel and events bookings, decline of travel and interruption of capital investments among others (McKercher & Pine, 2006). The H1N1 virus was also
responsible for the loss of approximately 1.6 million visitors in the United Kingdom during the second quarter of 2009 (Page et al., 2012). The outbreak of MERS had a dramatic effect on tourism, with South Korea having lost US$3.1 billion in tourists’ receipts between June and September 2015 (Choe et al., 2021). Although the Avian Flu did not cause many casualties globally, fear of infection drastically reduced the number of tourists, especially bird enthusiasts visiting Rift Valley lakes in Kenya (Selva, 2006).

At the height of Covid-19 pandemic, many coastal hotels in Kenya closed down because of low occupancy rates (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Additionally, tourism receipts worth Ksh 80 million had been lost, and projections indicated that 750,000 jobs could be lost by July 2020 (Ondicho, 2021). All these adversities present obstacles to travel and conspicuously show the fragility of tourism and hospitality operations in case of a pandemic.

Although the impacts and incidences of earlier pandemics did not significantly affect the global tourism and hospitality operations, most recent pandemics portray a different scenario. Possibly it is because the interconnectedness of tourism and travel operations was still at its infancy when the earlier pandemics hit. According to Behsudi (2020), only about 25 million people could take trips abroad at the beginning of the jet age in 1950. Following more transport advancement and connectivity, this figure had risen to 1.5 billion by 2019. Essentially, tourism development is a double-edged sword, causing a disease outbreak in a far flung region to rapidly spread across the world in a matter of days but also brings economic benefits in a number of ways.

Locally and internationally, the tourism and hospitality industry is recognised as a key contributor to economic development. For instance, statistics show that during the pre-Covid-19 periods, tourism accounted for about 10% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and employed over 320 million people worldwide (Behsudi, 2020). In Kenya, tourism generated 27% of foreign exchange, 11% of the national GDP and 12% of the total wage employment (Ondicho, 2021). Above and beyond the direct economic benefits, sectors in the tourism supply chain like agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and so on immensely gained indirectly. In the face of auspicious benefits, there are numerous risks to prosperity of the global tourism and hospitality industry including terrorism (Bowen et al., 2014; Samitas et al., 2018), climate change (Becken, 2005), natural disasters (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2013; Huan et al., 2004), political tensions, economic fluctuations (Redjeki et al., 2021) and pandemics among others.
Recently, the cruel progression of Covid-19 put mounting pressure on economies across the world. The pressure is very intense particularly for the tourism and hospitality industry due to regulated movement and social interactions. Oxford Economics (2020) projected that the economic loss in hotels could outweigh that of the 9/11 attack, 2008 depression and SARS crises combined. Besides that, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2020) issued a caution that 50 million jobs in the global travel and tourism sector were at risk. Some instant reactive actions that were taken during these pandemics included indefinite suspension of both local and international travel, regulated events attendance, suspended restaurant and club operations and so on. Carrying out operations under such uncertainties blur prospects of the industry as they present a major hurdle on business activities that highly depend on mobility and convention of large numbers of people. Behsudi (2020) cautioned that countries which greatly hinged on tourism were likely to experience prolonged adverse effects of pandemics. From the report, the author further indicated that the real GDP among African countries that depended on tourism would plummet by 12%. Previously in Kenya, the tourism and hospitality industry had to contend more with political and economic instability. However, recent occurrences of global pandemics have given rise to a new threat that Kenya had been least prepared for.

Being cognizant of the industry’s susceptible economic sustainability, there is a need for practical strategies that could help the industry in becoming more resilient during and after a pandemic. Presently, Covid-19 is the worst disease outbreak that Kenya has experienced in its brief history as an independent country. This implies that Kenya has little experience in handling global pandemics, hence the need to seek evidence-based pandemic coping mechanisms. Therefore, research on prospective rebound strategies is of paramount importance in order to help Kenyan tourism and hospitality industry to recoup from the upheavals of Covid-19 and similar future pandemics. Moreover, it is essential to combine efforts from various stakeholders to help the industry regain its lost glory. On this account, the aim of this paper was to identify concrete strategies that would enable the industry operators to cope with the present and possible future pandemic crises.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study conducted a systematic review to gather all accessible empirical evidence on coping mechanisms. The targeted evidence was one that would provide
possible solutions to afflictions caused by pandemics in the tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya. The review was interested in studies that were conducted from 2002 when SARS broke out, to 2023 when this research was carried out. From 2002, international travel had really developed to a point where it was considered an agent in the pandemic transmission chain, thus restricted travel was enforced, greatly affecting tourism. This aforementioned period makes a logical starting point for appraisal of literature related to the matter under study from a global perspective. The review specifically analysed recovery strategies implemented by different stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality, with an aim to keep the industry afloat. A narrative synthesis of the findings from the sampled studies was conducted. The approach involved organizing and summarizing knowledge from the selected studies, then conclusions which could inform practice and policy in Kenyan tourism and hospitality industry were drawn.

Resourceful articles were selected using criteria borrowed from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram (see Figure 1). The reviewed publications were obtained from Emerald Insight, JSTOR and Google Scholar electronic databases as well as internet search engines for related grey literature. Using key search words ‘pandemics’ or ‘Covid-19’ and ‘tourism/hospitality/hotel’ and ‘coping/recovery strategies/mechanism’ or ‘reactive and proactive strategies’, the search yielded 191 articles. The first screening for duplication reduced the articles to 138. Further on, 3 articles not written in English were excluded. Then titles and abstracts were examined for eligibility. Where the titles and abstracts were not conclusive, whole articles were examined. In the end, 40 articles were appraised for qualitative synthesis which provides evidence-based strategies for coping with pandemic crises.
3 STUDY FINDINGS

3.1 REACTIVE STRATEGIES

Crises occur without notice and when they do, there are measures that are taken to deal with the immediate challenges that were unforeseen. During the previous and in the current pandemic, tourism and hospitality businesses resolved to different ways of keeping afloat. Tourism and hospitality companies designed and launched marketing strategies aimed at increasing demand. For instance, during the SARS outbreak, big companies in the Pacific Asia Region collaborated to organise a world-class event dubbed ‘Project Phoenix’ aimed at luring back tourists (Dalberg, 2020). At the same time,
Singapore launched ‘Singapore Roars’ campaign to promote the country as a safe tourist destination. The campaigns saw Singapore’s tourist arrivals rise by 76% and a further 43% in the month that followed (Dalberg, 2020). The Prime Park Hotel in Bandung, Indonesia whose major customer base was from overseas markets changed its marketing strategy and focused on the local market. The hotel also targeted specific groups such as retirees, students and families in its sales promotions (Redjeki et al., 2021).

As pandemics continue to become a health concern, there are possible longer term behavioural shifts in tourists’ choice of travel mode and destination. Travel companies have become aware of these concerns and have devised ways of addressing them. For instance, Cathay Pacific Airways placed a newspaper advert which promised to prioritise the health of its passengers and crew. The airline passenger numbers showed some stability in weeks that followed (Pine & McKercher, 2004). Emirates redefined hygiene standards for passengers where complimentary hygiene kits were provided when checking in at the Dubai International Airport and on flights to Dubai (Emirates Media Centre, 2020a). In addition, Emirates planned to offer a free cover against Covid-19 related expenses, a maximum of EUR 150,000 and EUR 100 per day for 14 days for quarantine costs, if diagnosed during travel far from home (Emirates Media Centre, 2020b).

In the same vein, the government of Emirates of Sharjah of the United Arab Emirates launched ‘Sharjah Safe for Tourism’ , a WTTC stamp for institutions that followed the approved Covid-19 control guidelines (Vij et al., 2021). This was in response to concerns that Pardo and Ladeiras (2020) had noted, where tourists were likely to search for safest destinations that are not congested. Similarly, Spain openly communicated to domestic and foreign tourists about sanitary measures it undertook to show commitment to safeguard their health (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). Furthermore, Yu et al. (2020) claims that tourists’ perception of tourism products was likely to be influenced by effects of Covid-19. With respect to this claim, Assaf & Scuderi (2020) emphasised the need to lessen perceived risks by boosting travellers’ confidence. This strategy was used by five large Spanish hotel chains, who sought certification services related to health issues in order to contain the spread of Covid-19 (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). The initiative is similar to those implemented by hospitality facilities in Hong Kong, Singapore and Toronto during SARS pandemic in 2003 (Chien & Law, 2003; Tew et al., 2008). Apart from containment of the disease, Alonso-Almeida & Bremser (2013) alluded that the strategy helps to build confidence of
guests in regard to safety in lodging facilities. McKercher (2020) emphasised the need for strong coordination among all stakeholders in the tourism network, both private and public in order to have consistency and reduce perceived travel risk.

Creation of local demand was also largely practised by many destinations. This was common in countries that highly depend on tourism, thus resorting to seeking refuge in domestic tourism. Arbulú et al. (2021) endorsed the approach asserting that domestic tourism could generate 33% of overnight stays that were attained before pandemic. Different approaches with similar objectives were employed in different destinations. For example, Prime Park Hotel in Indonesia lowered its room tariffs and increased its occupancy rates (Redjeki et al., 2021). Lower room rates fascinated more local clients and helped the hotel to withstand the SARS crisis. When prices are reduced, it makes tourism services which were initially unaffordable to locals more accessible, thereby creating a domestic market. Costa Rica used a different approach where all national holidays were moved to Monday in order to create longer weekends which would give ample time for residents to travel for leisure (Babii & Nadeem, 2021). In the same study, Barbados was reported to have introduced a one-year work permit that allowed visitors to live and work with the hope of extended visits which would enhance travel and leisure. Notable efforts also included those of the Thailand government where an incentive for domestic tourism totaling to US$700 million was reported to have been issued (Babii & Nadeem, 2021). The Chinese government boosted domestic tourism by setting aside some funds meant to encourage senior citizens to travel (Nhamo et al., 2020).

Governments at different levels also provide economic aids and other non-monetary incentives to rescue the industry. When SARS gripped Hong Kong in February 2002, the national government funded a tourism drive to stimulate tourism demand and it included free airline tickets and hotel and restaurant discounts for nine months. A package to restore the image of Hong Kong as a tourism destination was also available. As a result of the drive, tourist arrivals increased by 70%, airline passenger traffic improved by 15% and more than 1,040 weekly flights resumed. Germany extended massive credit facilities to tourism related businesses (Nhamo et al., 2020). National governments of seven countries, that is Italy, Brazil, Japan, Australia, Israel, China and Austria, adopted several recovery strategies that were recommended by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (Kreiner & Ram, 2020). The same study identified job retention, support for the self-employed, safeguarding the most vulnerable groups, backing the liquidity of companies, review of tariffs and enhancement
of travel simplification as the most popular tactics that were partially or fully adopted. These strategies push and reignite tourism within the countries' borders. More emphasis is on the need to promote tourism across borders where tourism destinations can create ‘travel bubbles’ which would allow travel between particular destinations (UNWTO, 2021). Furthermore, the agency echoed the importance of cooperation and synchronisation of international policies to drive more resilient and sustainable tourism.

Other countries supported tourism and hospitality companies in adapting new business models by retraining staff. For example, Jamaica offered free online training certification classes to over 10,000 tourism workers to enhance their skills. Additional approaches involved creating an atmosphere that would attract investment opportunities. For example, governments at different levels were expediting recovery by enticing investors in tourism with tax breaks, lenient land-use rules (Brouder, 2020; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Sharma et al., 2021). Economic policies are commonly used by governments to pull through during global pandemics. Notably when Covid-19 struck, national governments around the world provided economic stimulus packages to enterprises (Elgin et al., 2020).

Fiscal incentives increase liquidity which helps to resuscitate businesses that would otherwise have gone under during the pandemic (Dube et al., 2020). For example, Egypt slashed take-off and landing fees for new entrants, China refunded 70% of quality guarantee deposit paid by travel agencies when they started business while sinking tourism enterprises in Barbados were bailed out with US$15 million. Governments which announced tax cuts to resuscitate tourism and hospitality operations included, Jordan, France, Vietnam, Belgium, Jamaica, and Czech republic (International Labour Organisation, 2009; Nhamo et al., 2020). Hotel establishments in Sharjah in UAE were given a 5% municipal and tourism levy for 3 months (Vij et al., 2021). Ghana made a declaration to financially support hospitality businesses through tax exemptions and deferrals, special credits and loans (Dayour et al., 2020; Ioannides & Gyimothy, 2020). The Ghanaian government also offered economic stimulus such as tax waivers and utility bills rebates in order to sustain small tourism and hospitality enterprises (Dayour et al., 2020). Elsewhere, Vanuatu offered grants to small and medium sized enterprises (Babii & Nadeem, 2021). Spain took financial initiatives such as specified monetary aid and tax exemptions to support its tourism and hospitality industry (Rodríguez Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). Some African governments also stepped up to help the aviation sector. For example, Senegal had a tourism and air transport relief provision of US$128 million;
landing and parking fees was waived in Seychelles; Cote d’Ivoire waived tourism tax for transit passengers and South Africa deferred payroll, income and carbon taxes for the airline industry (International Air Transport Association, 2020).

### 3.2 PROACTIVE STRATEGIES

Pandemics bring about short-term and long-term impacts that require the tourism and hospitality industry to revise, innovate and transform their businesses. Ritchie (2004) emphasises the significance of proactive strategies, citing increasing episodes of pandemics that make the risk apparent in lieu of uncertainty. Following several incidents of global pandemics, industrial players have put measures in place in anticipation of possible future crises as health experts have cautioned. Some investors have opted to tailor their products to be more appealing to local markets which are readily available even when international demand declines. For instance, some operators in Ghana are broadening the spectrum of their products and also shifting their attention to market niches that were more resilient to the impact of the pandemic (Dayour et al., 2020). Facilities that offered lodging services exclusively were expanding to include food and beverage facilities as well. Similarly, tour and travel operators turned their attention to domestic tourism to hasten recovery and secure sustenance (Dayour et al., 2020).

Subscription-based distribution system is another feasible business model that has been adopted. This is practical because of some essential business travel that need to be undertaken during a crisis, especially after its containment. InterContinental and Accor hotel companies launched monthly payment plans for guests to access their facilities for pleasure, short business trip or long-term stay wherever they are (Gilchrist, 2020). This plan creates some flow of revenues for hotel units that have chain affiliations. Other hotel operators resorted to providing both short-term hospitality services and long-term rental contracts to arrest the low occupancy issues (Wynn, 2020). Le & Phi (2021) also advises that hotels should move away from traditional business models and adopt mixed revenue models. For instance, Accor is modifying its guestrooms into private gyms and recording studios (Gilchrist, 2020).

Hospitality and tourism operators have also been proactive in pooling resources to have a better cover during emergencies and crises. Clemence (2020) noted that almost 1000 new hotels were still opening amidst the pandemic. Notably international hotel chains like Hilton and Marriott proceeded with the pre-covid-19 plans to launch new
properties. These findings support an earlier claim by Ritchie et al. (2020) that big hotel chains can cope with a pandemic crisis better than small and medium ones. Crouch et al. (2020) claim that small and medium sized hotels are likely to sign up for mergers and acquisitions. This means that strategic alliances generate a new kind of capabilities which are mutually shared by all parties. In other words, individual hotels leverage group capabilities to sail through a crisis.

Another tactic that has been used to minimise the spread of pandemics is digitalization of services. This approach reduces physical contact which then breaks the chain of infection. A study by Jiang & Wen (2020) found that automated hotel services like contactless registration, digital menus, online service ordering, mobile concierge apps and smart room control are now widely used and accepted. Moreover, Fusté-Forné & Ivanov (2021) argue that many aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry have to be reconsidered since pandemics threaten its human to human contact nature. The authors further opine that despite the challenges in the service experience and sustainability of service providers, increasing safety for service providers and visitors is a priority. A study in Portugal showed that 92% of hotel managers admitted that Covid 19 is a catalyst for hotel digitalization which is a new normal (Nuno & Paulo, 2021; Urban & Łukaszewicz, 2021). Pillai et al. (2021) also uphold the claims that augmenting people and technology would boost operational efficiency in terms of safety and hygiene in the wake of global pandemics. Due to unforeseen travel restrictions, guests are likely to be worried about losing money due to postponed events and cancelled vacations. On the other hand, businesses have to endure an unplanned cash outflow due to refunds. In order to avoid such scenarios, the French government modified the terms and conditions for cancellation of travel bookings. The amendments approved all refunds to be substituted by a credit or voucher of the same monetary value on a service later. As a result, travellers that make reservations with French operators are entitled to a refund if the voucher is not used after 18 months (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - OECD, 2020). Dickler (2020) noted that a number of airlines and hospitality establishments have eased their refund policies. For example, Frontier Airlines which is an American low cost carrier now allows credit for future travel for up to one year, an extension from 90 days previously. Other airlines have followed suit. Such kinds of proactive measures are instrumental in reducing the impacts of failed services. During Covid-19, refund issues were the most common complaints against airlines and travel agents (Baratti, 2020). As
such, there is a need for tourism and hospitality operators to provide some assurance to
visitors at the reservation phase that they will be able to recover most of their money.

4 CONCLUSION

There are many strategies that have been applied to help the tourism and
hospitality industry spring back to its pre-pandemic peaks after disease outbreaks that the
world has experienced hitherto. Multiple viewpoints have been brought forward in recent
research studies. Despite having varied tactics in different set-ups, the discussion shows
that a lot can be done when a pandemic crisis occurs. Travel related operations are
extremely vulnerable to pandemics hence the need to have well thought reactive and
proactive strategies. Although tourism and hospitality industry players in Kenya have
taken a number of similar impressive measures to cushion against immediate and short-
term adversities of Covid-19, more needs to be done for recovery and rebound beyond
2021. As a matter of fact, many stakeholders have largely focused on reactive responses
to pandemics rather than proactive responses. Due to the seemingly recurrent incidences
of global disease outbreaks, it would be judicious to look beyond the ongoing crisis in
contemplation of the emotional, economic and physical wellbeing of all the parties likely
to be affected. Besides, the end of the on-going Covid-19 crisis is still blurred since the
WHO still warns of possible new surges of infections and deaths due to emergence of
new variants. Going forward, it is essential for the industry to proactively address
sustainability in the design of coping strategies. Therefore, this study recommends several
about-turns for the Kenyan tourism and hospitality industry.

Firstly, the current business model requires revision so that the industry is not
highly dependent on overseas markets. This means that diversification of markets and
products is essential for quick recovery and future sustenance. On the same line, a well-
coordinated cross-border collaboration of the six East African Community members
would give way to regional travel bubbles. Therefore, acceleration of approval and use of
East African single tourist visas in all member states is desirable. Secondly, it is important
to revamp the industry so that digital skills can steer transformation especially in
marketing and in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector.
Automation would also promote hygiene which is greatly required to break the contagion
chain of pandemics. Thirdly, the government can endorse certification of tourism and
hospitality operators that have met strict pandemic containment measures to boost
travelers’ confidence and encourage return of international tourism. Fourthly, strategic business alliances would increase resilience and spread risks associated with pandemics in different regions. Lastly, a long-term government economic intervention would sustain public welfare. The government can set aside a special fund for tourism related investments to bail them out instead of letting them go under for the greater good of its citizens who depend on such enterprises for livelihood. The government can also endorse revision of refund policies in order to protect the interest of travelers and stabilise cash outflows of travel operators during a crisis. Avenues for future research include studies on social and environmental aspects of sustainability amidst a pandemic crisis. Additionally, a longitudinal study to examine the efficacy of the recommended strategies in reviving the tourism and hospitality industry would be significant.
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