



An Overview of Tourism Sector in the Post-Covid-19 Period and beyond among East Africa Countries

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Abstract: *The paper gives an overview of the tourism sector in the post Covid-19 period among East African Countries which forms the East African Community (EAC) an intergovernmental organization comprised of 7 nations in East Africa. The article introduces the EAC region and tourism industry, its current status, and significance. The study's findings are based on desktop research methodology that relied on published reports, studies, and statistics. Further, the paper summarizes the tourism industry of member states before, during, and the period after the Covid-19 pandemic in the region. The article provides statistical evidence on the Post Covid-19 tourism numbers reflecting growth and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, the study provides the pathways and opportunities for states and region for the recovery, growth, and development beyond the pandemic. In conclusion, the statistical evidence provided finds that most of East African countries are at above 50 percent recovery level. The study recommends a more organized open data collection regarding the tourism industry in the east African countries for a longer period as a necessity. The growing body of research on the tourism industry necessitates the emphasis on this rigorous data collection and documentation.*

Keywords: *East African Countries, Overview, Post Covid -19, Tourism*

1. EAST AFRICA COUNTRIES AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

The East African countries form a regional intergovernmental institution by the name East African Community (EAC), which is made up of seven Partner States: the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Uganda, and the Republic of South Sudan. About 283.7 million People live in the EAC, and more than 30% live in cities. With a total land area of 4.8 million square kilometers and a combined Gross Domestic Product of US\$ 305.3 billion, its realization is highly significant from a strategic and geopolitical perspective and offers opportunities for the revitalized and reenergized EAC (East African Community, 2023). The Community's activities are all governed by the EAC Treaty, which established it. The EAC's Treaty, which created the Community, is the basis for its operations. After being ratified by the original three Partner States, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, it was signed on November 30, 1999, and enacted on July 7, 2000 (East-African Community, 2001). The Republic of South Sudan joined the EAC Treaty on April 15, 2016, and became a full member on August 15, 2016. The Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of Burundi joined the Treaty on June 18, 2007, becoming full members of the Community with effect from that date. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Community's newest member, ratified the EAC Treaty on 8 April 2022 and was admitted as a full member on 11 July 2022 (East African Community, 2022). The EAC, one of the world's fastest-growing regional economic blocs, is expanding and deepening cooperation among its Partner States in several crucial areas for their mutual benefit. These include political, economic, and social realms (East-African-Community, 2023).

Tourism is one of the most critical industries in the EAC region's economies, contributing around 17% to export profits and a sizable 10% on average to GDP (East-African Community-Tourism, 2023). It contributes to 7% of the region's employment. Between 2006 and 2019, the number of international tourists visiting the EAC Partner States increased from 3.47 million to 6.95 million. Due to years of political instability, Burundi, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are still in the early phases of tourism development, while Kenya and Tanzania are popular travel destinations with saturated tourist markets (Nibigira, 2019). Rwanda and Uganda are also developing.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020, caused a substantial decline in foreign visitors in all EAC Partner States, disrupting this steady rise. Despite the downturn, the region is recovering well, and before the pandemic, performance criteria may be restored by 2024 (EAC-Tourism, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to ascertain how the tourism sector is faring in the post-Covid-19 period.

1.1. The Purpose of the Study

The study aims to give an overview of the tourism sector during the post Covid-19 period among Eastern Africa Countries. Hence, answer the research question; what is the state of tourism sector in the post-covid-19 period and beyond in East Africa countries?

2. REVIEWED LITERATURE

2.1. Tourism Industry pre and during Covid-19 in East African Countries

The record of pandemics has demonstrated that they are likely to have a breakthrough detrimental effect on the tourism industry (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2020). There is an imperative for cautiousness because such products are likely to be disproportionate in societies and can lead to unpredicted and detrimental vicissitudes (Dube, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic significantly influenced foreign tourism (Gössling, 2021). Covid-19 reportedly resulted in an anticipated trillion-dollar loss in export revenues, 11 times more than the loss seen during the global crisis of 2009, according to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (UNWTO, 2021). Terrorist attacks and the COVID epidemic proved how tourism is vulnerable to circumstances that restrict mobility, which can cause a decline in tourism spending and a short- and long-term downturn of the economy (Bacsi, Gebbisa, Dávid, & Hollósy, 2023; Njoya, Efthymiou, Nikitas, & O'Connell, 2022; Soliku, Kyiire, Mahama, & Kubio, 2021). Despite the exponential boom in tourism that the African nations have seen since the 1970s, the tourist-receiving communities have not reaped economically, socially, or environmentally as a result (Juma & Khademi-Vidra, 2019). Natural resources rank among East Africa's top tourism draws, making it one of the continent's most popular travel destinations (Lind, Sabates-Wheeler, Caravani, Kuol, & Nightingale, 2020; Okello & Novelli, 2014).

East African nations such as Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania were not immune (Kideghesho, Kimaro, Mayengo, & Kisingo, 2021). All international passenger flights to the rest of the globe were suspended following the first documentation of COVID-19 victims in East Africa (March 2020). In contrast to Tanzania and Burundi, who turned to censorship and protectionism, Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya adopted more forceful tactics to stop the spread of COVID-19 (Ezra, Kitheka, Sabuhoro, Riungu, Sirima, & Amani, 2021). The East African countries, particularly Tanzania, were the first to re-open their borders during the Covid-19 pandemic (Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority; TCAA, 2020). Most EAC countries saw a significant drop in international tourism due to Covid-19; for instance, In Kenya, the leading airline, Kenya Airways, is predicted to have lost at least US\$5.54 million each month. In addition, on March 16, 2020, Jambojet, a Kenyan airline, abruptly ceased service to Rwanda and Uganda (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2020). The Ministry of Tourism reports that by June 2020, hotel reservations in Uganda had decreased by 92.1% and 99.8% among tour operators and travel agencies, and the majority of tourism-related businesses (91.8%) had reduced their workforces as a result of the financial blow from the COVID-19 epidemic. According to Uganda, the loss of 1 million guests and a decrease in tourism earnings of US\$ 1.6 billion in the 2020–2021 fiscal year resulted in the loss of 7/10 jobs (Biryabarema, 2020; Kyamutetera, 2020; Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

Despite criticism for failing to publish COVID-19 data and criticism from adjacent nations and the global community for their responses to the pandemic, government statistics in Tanzania show that every international flight and park was forced to close in March due to COVID-19 (Nakkazi, 2020). Following the instruction, the number of visitors entering the nation decreased by 76%, and more than 437,000 jobs were lost, along with a more than 80% decrease in revenue (Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Due to COVID-19, Rwanda saw a 76% net loss in 2020 compared to 2019, as it just generated USD 498 million (Rwanda Development Board, 2020). With almost 90% of their income lost during the same period, restaurants and hotels remained the most severely impacted (Muvunyi, 2020). The Rwandese Hoteliers' Association (2020) reported losses amounting to over US\$11.006million that financial year due to Covid-19 in about 7,000 hospitality establishments (restaurants, hotels, bars, lodges, and other accommodations facilities) in their country with over 84,000 employed workers (Rwigema, 2021).

It is important to note that data on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector in Burundi, South Sudan, and the Republic of Congo are still being determined, as reflected in Table 1. The situation may be associated with the history of continuous social unrest and political instability in those partner nations within the EAC region. The EAC member states should focus on developing new tourism aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (ADB, 2021) rather than trying to recreate the tourism of the pre-pandemic era. Regardless, the possible futures envisaged by the Forum for the Future (2020) present a framework to evaluate dangers and possibilities for future tourism pathways after the pandemic. The East African Business Council (EABC) announced that the EAC States lost tourism revenues worth US\$4.8 billion in 2020 and that about 4.2 million international travelers could not travel to their preferred EAC destinations during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is further projected that tourism jobs in the region decreased from about 4.1 million jobs to 2.2 million jobs and a significant decline of about 65% of visitors to national parks.

Due to its ability to improve travel destinations for the general public, especially older adults and people with disabilities who have limited mobility and after the stay-at-home order to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus, many nations adopted virtual tourism during the coronavirus pandemic (Lu, Xiao, Xu, Wang, Zhang, & Zhou, 2022). The virtual tourism sector has a bright future, and people are still ready to use it even when the pandemic is gone, and travel restrictions are abolished (Lu et al., 2022). Tourism locations should incorporate virtual tourism as a significant part of their goods and services, especially museums and indoor scenic areas.

2.2. The Evolutionary Economic Theory

Higher-order emergent processes that combine industry growth rates to form an aggregate growth rate, particularly in the post-Covid-19 period, constrain tourism growth rates. The economic growth through tourism varies widely depending on the country in question (Pedak, 2018). As a result, the development of tourism's production, output, and employment depends on variables bilaterally and endogenously, and its values depend on changes in the system's primary cause factors. Therefore, the Evolutionary Economic Theory is the study's foundation (Michael & Abbas, 2023). The theory is supported by three key pillars: (a) system dynamics, characterized by a continual innovation process in which conditions emerge endogenously from the framework of the economy. The other two factors are time and historical aspects, which denotes an established irreversible route dependency and the innovation processes, from inventions to diffusion in the sector. The theory informs this overview since change is a continual process in tourism. When comprehending innovations in tourism, the randomness and lengthy nature of innovation processes in the tourism sector, technical advancements, and system changes are more realistic. The considerations of time, seasonality, and prior choices in the tourism industry influence a particular course of action. The actions of organizations and related entities or agencies in the tourism industry are coming alongside to learn, share, and create information that could lead to developments that directly affect the economy and people as they use technology in their businesses and practices.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used desktop research methodology, a technique frequently based on information found through reports, studies, and statistics that the public can utilize and synthesize. Materials about the tourism sector and industries in East African nations were used for this study. The technique was chosen because it was acceptable and could offer data on the study's goal, which needed the researcher to describe the state of tourism in East African nations during the Post-Covid era. The World Bank, CIEC, and individual East African countries' statistical offices provided the data for this study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Tourist Numbers for East Africa Countries

The study reveals that the number of visitor arrivals in the EAC region is slightly below those of the pre-COVID-19 period, and the industry is recovering. Table 1 below shows the tourists number in millions pre, during, and post Covid era of different EAC states.

Table1. *Tourist Numbers for individual EAC States in "Millions", (000,000) from 2014-2022*

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kenya	1.350	1.180	1.343	1.475	2.025	2.049	0.580	0.871	1.541
Uganda	1.270	1.300	1.320	1.320	1.510	1.540	0.473	0.513	0.815
Tanzania	1.140	1.140	1.280	1.330	1.510	1,53	0.616	0.923	1.455
Rwanda	1.220	1.300	1.380	1.570	1.710	1.636	0.490	0.512	1.100
DRC	0.334	0.354	0.351	0.151	0.158	-	-	0.461	-
Burundi	0.235	0.131	0.187	0.299	-	-	-	-	-
South Sudan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; Tanzania Bureau of Statistics; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Rwanda Development Board; Burundi, Congo, Republic of CG: CEIC and is reported by World Bank, South Sudan data not available at all.

Previously, the global financial crisis in 1997 and 2008, the SARS epidemic in 2003, various social unrests, and earthquakes are just a few examples of "black swan" major crisis events that have had a significant negative impact on the tourism industry (Abbas, Mubeen, Iorember, Raza, and Mamirkulova, 2021; Lee and Chen, 2021).

The East African Community countries' initial policy reaction to COVID-19 was prevention-focused. The governments planned for an immediate response while keeping their borders open to countries like China that had already reported COVID-19 cases. Because of the rise of COVID-19 infections, the government implemented containment measures that caused fear, panic, and mortality (Ombuor & Bearak, 2020). As a result, tourism in the East African Community began to decline. East African Community member nations devised policies and incentives to revitalize tourism and keep it from collapsing. For example, when the COVID-19 epidemic began, all EAC partner states re-engineered their fiscal policies (Ezra et al., 2021). Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania relaunched tourism by boosting domestic markets to increase visitor numbers. Most Kenyan destinations decreased visitor fees and tariffs and offered eco-lodge operators a one-year moratorium on rent payments (Kenya Wildlife Service, 2020). This enabled the domestic market to access previously unavailable tourism services (Wanjiru, 2020). Rwanda has cut park fees for Rwandans, residents of the East African Community, and international residents (Rwanda Development Board, 2020). Rwanda has provided a tax exemption (pay-as-you-earn) and a USD\$ 200 million COVID-19 recovery fund to help local firms (July 2020).

On the other hand, Tanzania opened for business in August 2020 and enhanced its control systems and procedures to protect workers and tourists (MNRT, 2020). At the start of the COVID-19 epidemic, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Sudan implemented health and safety protocols. Kenya went much further to establish public-private partnerships and market intelligence as recovery solutions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNWTO foresees the recovery of 80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels throughout 2023, even as the tourism sector faces health, economic, and geopolitical challenges. An increase in international visitor arrivals in the EAC region is associated with the continued relaxation of COVID-19-related travel restrictions by tourism markets countries and other nations worldwide opening their borders for travel (UNWTO, 2023).

In their post-Covid 19 recovery plans, East African Community partner states are fostering regional tourism by targeting emerging tourist markets like China and using niche products like cruise, adventure, culture, and sports tourism as countries look to lessen their reliance on traditional source nations in Europe and the US, whose financial turmoil and travel bans during the Covid-19 pandemic shutdowns in 2020 caused the tourism sector and their economies to a halt (Anyanzwa, & Tairo, 2023).

Member states and regional organizations are using a variety of tactics to promote the tourism industry in the post-Covid era. For instance, In Kenya, tourism generates 4.2% of the nation's gross fixed capital formation (new investments), 10.4% of Kenya's GDP, and 5.5% of the country's formal employment (Kenya Tourism Satellite Account, 2019). Domestic tourism is strategically positioned to help Kenya's tourism industry recover fully. This increased tourism earnings to \$2.1 billion in 2022 from \$1.16 billion in 2021 (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2022). Domestic travel was urged to shift away from visiting friends and family and toward leisure tourism. Kenyans were encouraged to visit local tourist destinations to revitalize the tourism business (Muragu, Nyadera, & Mbugua, 2021). Total international visitor visits in Kenya increased by 83 percent to 1.48 million in 2022 from 870,465 million in 2021 (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2022). Compared to 2019, a 72% recovery level was noted in 2022 (KATSPR, 2022).

According to Kenya's annual Tourism Sector Performance Report for 2022, the country's total number of foreign tourists increased by 70.45% to 1.48 million from 870465 in 2021, and revenue increased by 83.0% to \$2.1 billion \$1.15 billion in the same period in 2021 (Ministry of Tourism, 2023). Further, the hotel bed-night occupancy rose by 27.0 percent to 7.009 million in 2022 from 5.517 million in 2021 due to increased visitor arrivals. It is also estimated that 43 percent (641975) were from Africa, mainly for business and to visit family or friends (Kenya National Bureau Statistics; KNBS, 2023). With an increase of 88.74 percent to 151121 tourists from Uganda in 2022 compared to 80067 in 2021, Uganda has surpassed all other African countries as Kenya's leading source of visitors. Tanzania came in second with 123836 visitors, followed by Rwanda with 48232, Somalia with 40133, South Sudan with 35760, Burundi with 22291 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 21428 (KNBS, 2023; Ministry of Tourism, 2023). Due to uncertainty in the traditional markets, Kenya is moving its focus to boost regional tourism in a post-COVID-19 plan (Anyanzwa & Tairo, 2023).

The Rwanda Development Board (RDB) reported that more than 1.1 million foreign visitors came to Rwanda overall in 2022. More than 60% of these, the research said, were from African nations, demonstrating the country's increasing recognition as a travel destination on the African continent. Gorilla trekking, a distinctive tourism attraction in East Africa, brought in 113 million dollars in revenue in 2022. According to the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), in 2022, the nation welcomed 110000 tourists to its national parks, a rise of 142.4 percent from 2021. Due to the easing of travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide and greater connection provided by Rwand Air and other airlines, particularly to and from Kigali International Airport, this growth indicates a remarkable 89.3% recovery compared to the pre-pandemic period (RDB, 2022).

In 2022, Uganda welcomed 814508 foreign tourists, an increase of 59% from the previous year. Tourist arrivals decreased by 47.8% to 473085 in 2021, down from over 1.5 million before Covid-19. According to the survey, foreign visitors spent an average of 7.6 nights nationwide, accounting for 6.5 million bed nights. Africa continued to be the top source of tourists for Uganda, accounting for at least 87.8% of all foreign arrivals (Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, MoTWA, 2023). Asia and Europe were the following two most significant sources of tourists.

Tanzania is classified as the fifth-best country in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and 81st overall out of 117 nations, up from 86th in 2019. According to the World Economic Forum ("WEF"), Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021 (published in May 2022 and themed "Rebuilding for a Sustainable and Resilient Future"), Cape Verde (82nd), Namibia (88th), and Rwanda (89th), Zambia (98th), and Ghana (101st) take the 1st to 4th places within SSA. South Africa (68th), Botswana (76th), and Kenya (78th) take the 6th to 10th places. Tourists are beginning to return to Tanzania after suffering a heavy blow during the Covid-19 pandemic, with 742133 visits between January and July 2022, a 62.7% rise over the prior year (PWC Tanzania, 2022).

4.2. Pathways for Tourism in East African Countries Post Covid-19 Period

In its 2020 Tourism Policy Brief, the United Nations writes that “...rebuilding tourism is also an opportunity for transformation with a focus on leveraging its impact on destinations visited and building more resilient communities and businesses through innovation, digitalization, sustainability, and partnerships.” The notion of building back better has been promoted widely in the industry, recognizing that “The pandemic has exposed long-standing structural weaknesses in the tourism economy (for example, fragmented sector, mainly SMEs, seasonality, over-dependence, productivity), as well as gaps in government and industry preparedness and response capacity” (OECD 2021). Due to the significance of tourism, the East African Community has a Tourism Marketing Strategy 2021–2025, where the Partner States have committed to creating an integrated and synchronized strategy for the marketing and promotion of high-quality tourism into and within the region, as outlined in Article 115 of the EAC Treaty. Partner States commit to creating a regional plan supporting their efforts (EAC tourism marketing strategy, 2020).

The EAC Tourism Marketing Strategy (2020) aims to leverage the benefits and possibilities in each partner State to accelerate the development of the tourism industry in the region, taking into account the desired outcomes of each Partner State as expressed during the national stakeholder consultative fora (EAC tourist marketing strategy, 2020). The approach is coupled with individual state approaches that all endeavor to rebuild a robust tourism sector. Due to its superior performance in marketing over brochures or images, virtual tourism has been revealed as a powerful marketing tool for businesses, organizations, and governments to advertise tourist and hospitality locations (Wan, Tsaur, Chiu, & Chiou, 2007; Yeh, Wang, Li, & Lin, 2017). Internet sales of mementos and associated products might be combined with virtual tourism to help the tourism industry revive. Tourism destinations are urged to incorporate virtual tourism as a significant part of their goods and services, especially museums and indoor scenic areas (Lu, Xiao, Xu, Wang, Zhang, & Zhou, 2022).

East Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda) has many tourist-related assets. Of a total of more than 1776 designated conservation areas that make up more than 27% of its land area, 186 "strict" safeguarded areas are administered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (excludes those in DRC and South Sudan; Riggio, Jacobson, Hijmans, & Caro, 2019). The region should focus on protecting, conserving, and developing them sustainably. According to UNCTAD (2018), the EAC is the second leading Regional Economic Activity in Africa in terms of intraregional tourist arrivals, with an average of 30% compared to the South Africa Development Community, which is the leading with 65% intraregional tourists (Okello, & Novelli, 2014) hence, domestic and intraregional tourism among EAC should be prioritized during this Post Covid Era.

Rwanda is advancing in conservation, further solidifying its efforts and dedication to promoting environmental protection, resource management, and climate change readiness as essential economic assets. The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund's Ellen DeGeneres Campus opening, the Gishwati-Mukura National Park becoming operational as the country's 4th national park, and the World Bank join forces as a new partner on the Volcanoes National Park extension project (Musoni, 2022; RDB, 2022). According to Usman, Olanipekun, Iorember, and Abu-Goodman (2020), the pandemic impacted how much energy was consumed and had an effect on globalization, which led tourism to changerground innovations for viable recovery approaches, particularly policies that would boost tourist arrivals, expand the use of clean energy, and guarantee sustainability for both the economy and the environment in the post-pandemic period.

Kenya's tourist industry, along with the ministry, created a 5-year plan called the new tourist Strategy for Kenya 2021–2025, and it is currently being implemented to support the sector's recovery and growth in the post-Covid-19 period. The strategy is based on four strategic changes making Kenya an all-year-round tourist destination; developing new and more varied customer experiences and products; refreshing the brand image and repositioning Kenya as a feasible destination; developing catalysts, such as unlocking creative and different forms of funding and maximizing the sector's adoption of digital innovations and cutting-edge technologies (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). Researchers argue that governments should keep offering financial incentives to the tourism and hospitality industries in the post-corona virus period to support this recovery effort (McCartney, 2021)

Uganda Tourism Satellite Account (UTSA, 2023) reports that World Bank is supporting the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities in the development of a Tourism Information Management System (TIMS), which would form the backbone of evidence-based policymaking in the sector under the ongoing Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) (UBOS, 2023). Encouraging innovative new products –like heritage and cultural tourism, culinary tourism, agro-tourism in coffee and tea estates, and community tourism development featuring Uganda’s diversity– offer viable avenues for growth and a brighter future for Uganda (Qursum, 2023). Uganda and Kenya inked a contract in 2022 to cooperate in promoting the region's beaches and parks. The partnership with coastal tourism stakeholders aims to capitalize on Kenya's beach tourism (The Daily Monitor, 2023).

The government of Tanzania is focusing on establishing a clear legislative and regulatory structure for tourism while enhancing public and private sector dialog and partnering in tourism marketing, according to a report by the Bank of Tanzania in 2021. Key initiatives include diversifying, promoting, and creating new tourist destinations in Tanzania's southern regions, which receive fewer visitors than in Zanzibar and northern Tanzania. Additionally, Tanzania is one of eight African nations (the others being Kenya, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Mauritius, and Zambia) that the China National Tourism Administration in Beijing has approved for Chinese tourists (Bank of Tanzania BoT, 2021). Aiming to draw Chinese tourists to its historical monuments and wildlife parks, Tanzania also monitors China. Marketing and business initiatives are aimed at the 150 million Chinese tourists who visit other countries each year, according to The North Africa Post (TNAP, 2023). Air Tanzania Company Limited is implementing an aviation agreement with China to run direct flights between Dar-es-Salaam and Guangzhou (TCAA, 2022). To promote Tanzanian tourism in China, the Tanzania Tourist Board signed a memorandum with the Touch Road International Holdings Group of China (BoT, 2021). The government of Burundi waived visa processing through its embassies in December 2022 and implemented visa-on-arrival for all foreign nationals willing to visit or invest in Burundi. Burundi, a small country compared to other partner states in the EAC region, has more than 120 tourist attraction sites.

The recovery process is anticipated to be drawn out and sluggish, particularly in the international tourism business; it is essential to develop a marketing mix that focuses on the domestic, regional, and worldwide tourism markets (Dube, 2021). The tourism industry's recovery activities fall within the business's crisis and disaster management guidelines, focusing on post-crisis restoration and open engagement with government-sponsored loans as essential to the industry's existence (Yeh, 2021). Utilize the benefits of working from home, a successful strategy for Cape Town Tourism's remote working holiday campaign in collaboration with Airbnb, where Cape Town is positioned as an ideal location for remote working and vacation (Business Day, 2021b; Dube, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, before COVID-19, tourist growth in East African countries appeared promising. Most East African countries, particularly Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, experienced a rise in foreign tourist arrivals and revenue from tourism-related activities. However, COVID-19 significantly hampered this growth trajectory by bringing down numerous tourism-related firms. Nonetheless, it prompted individual countries to reconsider their tourism strategy. Intra-regional tourism operations have become a reality in the EAC, as indicated by the arrival of inbound tourists in each nation. Tourism development has become a responsibility of the entire region and the world rather than a single country.

On the other hand, the East Africa Tourism Platform should maintain impartiality and refrain from brokering for any country-specific goals while pursuing the objectives of building cooperation among member nations (Nibigira, 2019). Research advises the member nations to integrate their tourism laws and align them with an EAC treaty. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and South Sudan had limited information on tourism status in their nations, making it difficult to generalize these findings in the EAC. In particular, governments like Burundi, the DRC, and South Sudan, must invest in tourist data collection and make such data available to adjacent states and other international partners. The call aligns with a global call for implementing e-measures to aid daily data collection on residents’ employees, non-resident employees, and tourists as a post-coronavirus tourism recovery strategy (McCartney, 2021).

To help stakeholders in EAC tourist enterprises make informed decisions and foster the sector's growth, the report suggests that individual nations should routinely update significant and current data on their websites. The challenges encountered in data gathering and the tiny dataset created prevent us from performing more extensive statistical evaluations, which are two of the study's limitations. To address this, a more organized data collection regarding the tourism industry in the East African region for a more extended period and all states would be necessary. As shown in this study, a few nations presently need to gather precise information concerning the tourism industry. The growing body of research on the tourism industry necessitates an emphasis on this rigorous data collection. The issue is becoming more crucial in light of the impending changes brought on by the degradation of the environment and climate change, highlighting the region's tourism industry's importance and excellent reputation.

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