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# Visa regime policy and tourism recovery and development in Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

This paper reports the results on the impact of the current visa regime policy on tourism recovery and development in Zimbabwe. The focus was on finding out how the visa regime could impact on efforts to bring into the country more visitors following the decline in visitor inflows from 2000 to 2008. Data was collected from selected visitors from different member states which require visas to enter into the county in the period between January 2010 and July 2010. The findings shows that visa restrictions play a small part in discouraging visitors to visit Zimbabwe. The visa regime policy was designed in such a way that it was easy for passport holders from traditional markets to have relatively easy passage into Zimbabwe. It was also discovered that visa restrictions were part of international travel conditions but how to get the visa became the competitive advantage or disadvantage a destination can have compared with its competitors. Zimbabwe's traditional markets believed that the visa was not difficult to get nor was it too expensive as to scare away visitors. However, the emerging markets such as China who are in Group C had problems getting the visa as they were required to apply for the visa before traveling to Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** Visa, Tourism recovery, Tourism development

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## 1. Introduction

This study sought to assess the impact of the current visa regime in Zimbabwe on the efforts being made to revive the tourism industry which has been on the decline since the year 2000. Focus was on visitors who needed visas to visit Zimbabwe, and the challenges/difficulties they encounter in crossing our borders.

The issue of immigration is at the nerve centre of national security and sovereignty of any country. Whilst the private sector feels immigration laws prohibit free movement of people, the government feels more has to be done to have secure borders by controlling movement of people in and out of the country. The government therefore has a direct control over who comes into the country and this control is exercised through the Department of Immigration Control. The Department of Immigration Control in Zimbabwe was formed through an Act of Parliament (Immigration Act, 4: 02, 1979 Revised 1996), to overlook the movement of people in and out of the country on behalf of the Minister of Home Affairs. The department therefore decides on behalf of government who can or cannot come into Zimbabwe. The department has the power to allow or deny entry and to remove from the country any undesirable foreigners. This shows that the Immigration Department is thus at the starting and finishing point of international tourism as all tourists/visitors pass through immigration first when they come into the country and pass through immigration last when they leave the country.

### 1.1. Background to the study

Given the huge number of international visitors, Zimbabwe is not competing favorably against its competitors. The destination should have policies which attract tourists rather than push them away and one such policy is a favorable visa regime. However, when implementing a visa regime, nation-states do not consider the issue of attracting tourists. The aim is to have secure borders for both visitors and residents. It is better to have a safe destination for tourists than to have porous borders that put the lives of visitors and residents at risk.

Table 1. Tourist arrivals and receipts into Zimbabwe: 1999 - 2007

<b>Year</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Receipts (US\$ 000)</b>
1999	2 249 615	201 600
2000	1 966 582	124 700
2001	2 217 429	81 400
2002	2 041 202	75 700
2003	2 256 205	61 050
2004	1 854 488	193 700
2005	1 558 501	98 670
2006	2 286 572	338 248
2007	2 508 255	365 270

Source: ZTA Tourism Trends and Statistics 2007 Annual Report

The tourism sector, as can be seen in Table 1, enjoyed a buoyant trend until 2000 when arrivals and receipts began to fall significantly. This can be attributed to the country's visa regime policy introduced in 2000 and 2001 which now required visitors from Europe, Australia and America to have visas to visit Zimbabwe. The visa requirement was introduced as a reciprocal measure. Tourists require free movement across and within borders and are moving towards a multi-destination approach. See Appendix one for visa requirements and categories.

In light of tourism as a major industry in the world economy, the private sector and national tourism organization are calling for 'permeable borders' to allow free movement of people. Also due to competition among destinations, countries tend to have visa exemptions for major source markets like UK, USA, Japan, France, Germany and China. Zimbabwe is currently going through some challenges in terms of attracting adequate visitors and therefore an assessment into the visa regime is necessary in order to find out why the right amount of visitors are not coming in large numbers despite numerous efforts to attract them.

## 1.2. Problem statement

Most visitors need visas to visit the country. Our competitors have adopted a visa exemption policy for major source markets but Zimbabwe requires visitors to have visas when visiting the country. The problem of visas as a hindrance to free travel is not only to the British but to all Europeans, Asians, Americans, Japanese, Canadians and Chinese.

Destinations compete against each other and this country is not strategically positioned to compete favorably against regional competitors. This is evidenced by dwindling visitor numbers and receipts to Zimbabwe whilst generally; the region is receiving more and more visitors each year (an average annual growth rate of 6% in tourist arrivals during the period 1999 - 2005 in the SADC region). The important thing to recall is tourists, like investors, have a choice.

"They will not favor a regime that uses visas as a punishment, erects obstacles to their movements, and insults their country at every opportunity. While visitors from Britain have fallen considerably over the past two years, the UK remains the most important source market. The trickle of French visitors and a handful from Singapore in the last year are not going to replace what remains our most lucrative market. This study therefore sought to assess the current visa regime in order to determine whether visa requirements are playing any part in militating against desired turnaround of the tourism industry" ([zimbabwesituation.com](http://zimbabwesituation.com)).

## 1.3. Objectives of the Study

The research was guided by the following objectives:

- To establish the impacts of the current visa regime policy on tourism recovery and development in Zimbabwe.
- To establish how the present visa regime is hindering tourism recovery in traditional markets as well as its development in new markets like China.

- To establish any other reasons, apart from visa restrictions, that could be hindering tourism recovery and development in Zimbabwe.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Background to visas

According to Seth and Sethbhat (1998), 'visa barriers are post-World War II developments. There was no passport system in the world before World War II and people could visit foreign lands without passports or visas and settle there if they liked'. "Travellers nowadays need passports or other documents, which only nation-states have the right to issue, in order to enter foreign spaces, together with a valid visa depending on which passport they hold and where they want to travel to" (Neumayer, 2005: 3). Contrary to Seth and Sethbhat (1998), Neumayer (2005) believes that passports and visas in one form or another have existed since medieval times but the "comprehensive system as we know it is inextricably linked to the evolution of modern nation-state" and is "the almost inevitable outcome of the Westphalian state" (Anderson, 2000: 18). According to Torpey (2000, 1998), nation-states have over the years managed to take over the authority to determine who may enter or may exit their borders, supported by the principle of national sovereignty. In Zimbabwe, this authority is exercised through the Department of Immigration, a statutory body governed in terms of the Immigration Act Chapter 4:02 of 1979, Revised 1996. Torpey (2000, 1998) adds that in some countries, it is even difficult to get a passport which is a pre-requisite for international travel while some countries even restrict intra-border movement.

The visa system is an integral part of the tourism industry and therefore the Immigration department plays a critical role in the success or failure of a country's tourism industry. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) is of the opinion that the country's visa regime policy should be used as a competitive tool to attract more tourists to the country as compared with our regional competitors. 'The visa regime is a significant issue especially with our competitors in the region who are targeting the same markets. Our competitors in the SADC region, which are also part of the multi-destination packages with Zimbabwe have adopted a visa exemption policy specifically for the markets of UK, USA, France, Germany, China and Japan (ZTA National Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy, 2007: 18).

According to the Zimbabwean Immigration Policy Document, the requirements for getting a Zimbabwe visa can be summarized as below:

- A statutory application fee (depends on nationality as cited earlier in the report).
- A visa application form.
- Name of host and address in Zimbabwe – for tourists, name of hotel or travel agent.
- Passport size photographs.

On arrival one must show a return ticket plus enough money for personal upkeep whilst in the country. One must also show a confirmed hotel booking in cases of business visitors and tourists, and for those

visiting friends and relatives they must show proof of host and address in Zimbabwe. These are the basic requirements for one to get a visa to visit Zimbabwe. Once a visitor supplies these details, they can get a visa instantly if they are Group B and if they are in Group C, they wait for security vetting and should get a visa in seven days. This is the process that visitors were asked to evaluate whether it is fast or slow, and whether they would recommend friends and relatives back home to visit Zimbabwe after their own experiences with the immigration process.

## 2.2. Why nation-states impose visa restrictions

Every country in the world would wish for free movement of people across borders for its own economic, political and social benefit but at the same time would want to limit that same free movement for security reasons. Countries mostly predetermine which visitors from which countries are not security threats and therefore are welcome to visit without hindrance. For those nationals with perceived security risk, a country would want to discourage them from visiting and this is done by imposing a visa restriction.

According to Neumayer (2005: 7), one obvious reason why nation-states would want to keep foreigners out is the 'concern that visitors might turn into immigrants by staying on illegally in the country instead of going back home'. Therefore, the best way to keep the foreigners out in the first place is to put in visa restrictions. This means that prospective visitors are screened before they travel so that only bona fide visitors who prove that they will go back home are allowed to travel. The other reason why nation-states impose visa restrictions is that would-be immigrants are discouraged from applying for visa. Visa restrictions can represent a simple way of raising a good deal of foreign currency for a major tourist. Countries also impose visa restrictions for reciprocal reasons.

## 2.3. Why countries refrain from imposing visa restrictions

Countries refrain from imposing visa restrictions on passport holders from countries from which they do not fear illegal immigration or entrance of unwanted individuals like terrorists, criminals and drug traffickers (Neumayer, 2005: 14). Visa restrictions are not imposed where there are actual incentives to facilitate international travel. Poor countries usually do not impose visa restrictions on passport holders from richer countries in the hope of getting direct foreign investment and knowledge spill-over into their country. 'Major tourist destinations have an incentive not to impose visa restrictions on sending countries in order to remain attractive in the increasingly competitive market for mass tourism' (Neumayer, 2005: 14). O'Byrne (2001: 399) argues that the relaxation of visa restrictions in many countries can be explained as a direct response to the demands by the tourism industry to whom 'freedom of travel is freedom to trade'. Countries also refrain from imposing visa restrictions for political reasons. Wang (2004: 359) states that visa 'restrictions are likely to be regarded as an unfriendly act, as a sign of suspicion against the citizens of the affected country, thereby impacting negatively on the relations between the two states. Countries are therefore likely not to impose visa restrictions on other countries, with which they share the same geographical region or civilization.'

#### 2.4. The world tourism industry and link with visa policies

Siskin (2004) postulates that the lifting or elimination of travel restrictions increases the demand for and freedom to travel, with Asia Pacific countries as good examples. Siskin (2004) adds that when such countries as South Korea and Taiwan lifted travel restrictions in the 1980s, outbound travel surged. Siskin (2004) reckons that Taiwan's 5-day visa-free entry to nationals of some 15 countries, Malaysia's 3-day visa-free stay, as well as Indonesia's unilateral visa-free entry are good measures that can boost inbound travel. 'The general trend is towards a reduction of travel barriers to promote tourism' (Wieman, 1996).

The link between removal of visa restrictions and the travel industry is also revealed 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. Tourists would prefer a situation where they at least have one visa to travel in the region. (Amrik, 2000)

#### 2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of visa restrictions

The advantages or disadvantages of visa restrictions depend on which side of free movement of persons one is. But for countries facing a high influx of visitors, both long term and short term, visa restrictions is the best and easiest way of restricting immigration. Visa restrictions is the way to control movement of undesirable immigrants before they even travel and this saves money and effort for receiving countries in taking care or detaining deportees and inadmissible travellers. Visas are also a perfectly easy way of raising foreign currency for any tourism destination.

Disadvantage of visa restrictions is that the country is viewed as trying to hide something from the outside world. According to Neumayer, 2005: 13), 'long before September 11, autocratic regimes have always been suspicious that foreign influence might undermine the regime's foundations and have therefore been eager to keep an eye on who enters the country'. Anderson, 2000 believes that the more autocratic and repressive a regime is, the more it is threatened by open borders. Therefore, once a state imposes visa restrictions it is viewed as an autocratic state hiding human rights abuses to the world. Countries with closed borders are associated with communist ideologies like Russia, Cuba and other Asian countries like North Korea where they view outsiders with great suspicion. Visa restrictions therefore represent an important mechanism to monitor and control entry. 'One would therefore expect democracies, all other things equal, are more liberal with their system of visa restrictions than autocracies are' (Neumayer, 2005: 13).

Froelich and Bhattacharjee (2004) note that democracies are too liberal in the eyes of those concerned with national security. This is the reason why the United States has severely restricted the issuance of visas since the September 11 attacks. However, these stringent visa restrictions have created much concern among business groups, research centres and universities of undue delay in granting visas and keeping out students, scientists, businessman and tourists whose entry would be beneficial to US interests. Citizens usually visit foreign countries with good relations with their governments. Once a government labels another government as undemocratic, movement of people between the two countries become severely strained. Visa restriction has the potential to strain relations between governments, leading to accusations of outside interference and

undemocratic practices, and once these strained relations take effect, nationals between the two governments would normally stop visiting each other for personal security and in some cases they are denied visas.

Another disadvantage of visa restrictions is that so much money and effort is spent trying to process visa applications. Security checks have to be done on all applicants and that cost money which is not covered by the processing fee charged. Normally it takes about seven working days to process a visa application and it costs the issuing authority in research and sometimes postage of visas once approved. It is also costly for the applicants who sometimes have to travel to a consulate or embassy and make an application. After submitting the application they will have to come back and check later after several days. For example, an applicant in China will have to travel to Beijing for one to get a Zimbabwean visa. China is a big country and one can imagine the cost of travelling say from Guanzhong to Beijing. This alone puts off prospective travellers to Zimbabwe from China because it is costly. It is the same story with applicants in the USA who have to travel to Washington D.C only for the whole of USA to get a visa for Zimbabwe.

## 2.6. Current visa regime policy in Zimbabwe versus industry sentiments

The visa policy in any country changes from time to time depending on political relations prevailing at the time, as well as trade and bilateral agreements. At the moment, Zimbabwe's visa regime policy is such that countries are divided into three categories:

Group A: Visas are not required for nationals of these countries to visit Zimbabwe.

Group B: Nationals of these countries require visas to visit Zimbabwe and the visas can be issued at the port of entry upon payment of the requisite visa fee.

Group C: Visas are required for nationals of these countries but need to be applied for and obtained prior to traveling.

The visa regime policy for Zimbabwe is on Appendix 1. The visa policy regime is a significant issue in tourism management and Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) and the tourism sector in Zimbabwe is agitating for a review of the regime as the current visa regime 'does not adequately provide easy access for tourists from strategic source markets. Most destinations within SADC have now realized that relaxation and exemption of visas for visitors from strategic source markets give them a competitive advantage. Therefore there is need to benchmark Zimbabwe with its competitors in order to increase tourists arrivals and receipts. The Immigration Systems and procedures need to be upgraded in order to address delays and to facilitate easy access to visas' (ZTA – National Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy, 2007: 50).

## 3. Methodology

This research was done using the survey strategy and in-depth interviews. The sample size of 60 cases was used in this research and it included 45 visitors who need visas to visit Zimbabwe, 5 immigration



Department representative, 5 Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) representative and 5 Associations of Zimbabwe Travel Agents (AZTA) representatives.

As propounded by Leedy (1995) cases for a study must be properly selected as they will affect the research results. The cases for this study were chosen as part of the sample because they are directly affected by the visa regime policy. The tourists are the ones who are affected by the policy and a large number of respondents was sought to have clear and divergent views of how visas affect free movement. The views of the Immigration Department were also critical in assessing the reason why Zimbabwe imposes visa restrictions on some visitors. Zimbabwe Tourism Authority is the national marketer of Zimbabwe tourism and its views were necessary as to how the visa regime is hindering tourism recovery in militating against turnaround efforts. Travel agents normally make visa applications for their clients and this research would be incomplete without input from the people whose jobs are directly affected by a slow down in travel due to an unfavorable visa policy.

Therefore, in selecting the sample, tourist were randomly selected after carefully analyzing how best they could answer research questions and contribute to achieving the research objectives. Tourists who responded to research questions were chosen after studying their travel habits, nationality and whether they required visas or not. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. Distribution of questionnaires was done at Harare International Airport. Harare International Airport was used because it captures a wider variety of travellers from all over the world as it is the gateway to the country and the region. Travellers were carefully chosen as they cleared their immigration procedures and asked to complete the questionnaires once they had settled in their hotel rooms or at home. In some cases, the researcher had to do interview-administered questionnaires in the departure lounge of the airport. Travellers who had taken questionnaires on entry were asked to leave them on exit at immigration counter.

In selecting the sample for ZTA, Immigration officials and AZTA representative, respondents were mostly chosen based on their experience and seniority in the tourism sector. In-depth structured interviews were used to collect data from these representatives. Structured interviewing was used to standardize the whole process as the interviewer will be referring to previously compiled list of questions to obtain information from the respondents. Saunders (2007) and Robson (1993) supported the concept. 39 out of 45 questionnaires issued out to visitors were returned.

## **4. Research findings**

### **4.1. The cost of the Zimbabwe visa**

Fifteen percent (15.4%) of the respondents felt that the cost of the visa is cheap whilst zero percent (0%) believes the visa is very cheap. Thirty percent (30.8%) believes the visa is expensive whilst five percent (5%) believes the visa is very expensive. The majority of the respondents, forty eight percent (48.8%) believe that the visa is fairly priced.



Table 2. The Cost of the Zimbabwe Visa (travellers)

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Cheap	6	15.4%
Very cheap	0	0%
Expensive	12	30.8%
Very expensive	2	5%
Fairly priced	19	48.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

Of those who feel that the visa is expensive or very expensive, the researcher finds that they are married travellers who normally travel with their families. Definitely, paying visa fees for many passport holders at once would make one feel the cost of the visa as compared to business and lone travellers who pay just for themselves. Therefore, basing on the responses given by travellers, one can conclude that the cost of the visa is fair and in line with international standards. Most countries in the region charge between US\$25.00 and US\$40.00 for their entry visas. The responses from Department of Immigration, AZTA and ZTA on the issue of the cost of the visa all indicated that the cost of the visa was fair. They based this on international visa rates.

The cost of an entry visa into Zimbabwe depends on nationality of the applicant. Most nationals pay US\$30.00 for a single entry visa, US\$45.00 for a double entry visa and US\$55.00 for a multiple entry visa. Angolans are only allowed to get a single entry visa and it costs them US\$100.00. British and Irish nationals pay US\$55.00 for a single entry visa, US\$70.00 for a double entry visa, and US\$90.00 for a multiple entry visa. Canadians pay the most when it comes to entry visas – they pay \$75.00 for a single entry and \$150.00 for a double entry visa (Immigration Act 4: 02, 1979 revised 1996). The cost of the visa is a direct response to what Zimbabweans intending to travel to those foreign countries are asked to pay for the entry visas. For example, Canada charges \$75.00 for a single entry visa and therefore the Zimbabwe government charges the same amount to Canadians intending to visit this country.

#### 4.2. Difficultness/easiness of getting a Zimbabwe visa

The response to how easy or difficult it is to get visa to Zimbabwe depended mostly on whether one needed a visa before travelling to Zimbabwe or one could get a visa at the port of entry. Those who can get visas at the port of entry feel that it is very easy or fairly easy to get a Zimbabwe visa whilst those who need visas prior to travelling feel it is difficult or very difficult to get a Zimbabwe visa because of the waiting period associated with the visa application.

Out of 39, 22 people (56%) which is 56% viewed the process of getting visa as easy, 6 people (15%) which is 15% very easy, 1 person (3%) which is 3%, difficulty and 10 people (26%) which is 26%, very difficulty.

Table 3. Difficultness/easiness of getting a Zimbabwean visa

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Easy	22	56%
Very easy	6	15%
Difficulty	1	3%
Very difficulty	10	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

Visitors who require visas and can get it at the port of entry, feel that it is easy or very easy to get a Zimbabwean visa. This is so because these visitors can get visas at the port of entry or if they opt to get the visa from Zimbabwe embassies or consultants abroad, the visa is issued instantly. Zimbabwe gets about 3% of its visitors from Europe, Australia, Oceania and America and it is this market which believes that getting a Zimbabwean visa is not much of a hassle (ZTA Statistics 2006). What most visitors from this market recommended was that proper signage should be put at ports of entry so that visitors can clearly see which counter they can get a visa. The process should be faster as well to avoid long queues in the arrivals sections.

The Asian and the West African markets are the ones which feel that it is difficult or very difficult to get a Zimbabwe visa. Most Asian and West African countries are in Group C with the exception of Ghana in West Africa which is in Group A and Japan, Korea and Thailand from Asia which are in Group B as well as Singapore which is in Group A. Passport holders from the rest of Asia and West Africa face real problems in getting Zimbabwe visas either because there are no Zimbabwe embassies or consultants in their countries or because it is very far to travel to the nearest embassy. For example, the Zimbabwe embassy in China is in Beijing only and other travellers from other parts of China will have a problem travelling to Beijing just to get a visa. The other problem with this market is that they cannot get an instant visa once they get to the embassy. They have to wait for at least seven days whilst their application is being processed. The cost of travel or postage will definitely add to the cost of traveling to Zimbabwe.

#### 4.3. The visa application process

The research shows that 76.92% of the respondents were happy with the visa application process. The application requirements are not out of the ordinary when visiting a foreign country and the time it takes to for one to get the visa is fair, quick or very quick. This group of respondents is from Group B who can get visas from the embassies instantly or can get the visa at the port of entry. However, 23.08% of the respondents felt the visa application process was slow or very slow and this group of respondents is from Group C who makes prior application for visas before traveling to Zimbabwe.

Table 4. The visa application process

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Happy (fair, quick or very quick)	30	76.92%
Not happy (slow or very slow)	9	23.08%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.4. Necessity of visa when visiting a foreign country

The respondents in this research project were asked whether a visa is something to be expected when visiting a foreign country or not. Of the 39 respondents, 35 expected to be required of a visa and only 4 do not expect a visa. Those who expected a visa, view a visa as a necessity when visiting a foreign country.

#### 4.5. Influence of visa when choosing a destination

Respondents were asked on how much influence do visa requirements have on choosing a destination and their responses can be outlined as below:

From the respondents 20 (51.28%) said visa requirements have no influence. The respondents were mostly in Group B who can get visas at the port of entry and consider acquiring a visa as a normal immigration clearance procedure. Visitors from Europe, Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand among other developed countries do not face stringent visa requirements abroad as compared to travellers from Third World countries and developing countries. This concurs with Neumayer's (2005) assertion that passport holders from developed countries do not face difficulties when travelling to foreign countries. Zimbabwean passport holders need to obtain visas prior to travelling to the above mentioned countries yet the above mentioned nationals may obtain visas at ports of entry into Zimbabwe. This inequality is described by Kumar (2000: 20) very clearly: "For those who live in affluent countries, the passport is of use for international travel in connection with business or vacations".

Therefore, because of lax visa requirements faced by these visitors from the developed countries, they do not view visa restrictions as hindrance to travel and do not consider visa restrictions when choosing a destination because they are usually guaranteed of hassle/visa free access into foreign spaces.

On the other hand, 19 (48.72%) of the respondents felt that visa requirements have a role to play when deciding on a destination. A closer analysis of these respondents showed that they are mostly from Group C of countries who need prior application before they travel to Zimbabwe. This can also be explained by the credence that passport holders from developing or less developed countries face numerous visa restrictions when travelling abroad. Neumayer (2005:19 – 20) supports this by saying 'for those living in poorer nations of the world, the passport is without any value if it does not have a visa. In other words, it is meaningless to have a passport'.

#### 4.6. Other reasons which influence destination choice

Issues which were raised included easy accessibility, and accommodation – affordable and of wide variety, activities – a wide range of activities and amenities – like banks, telecommunications, and transportation and food outlets and security.

These are the basic requirements for tourists and where they are found, travellers visit in their droves without worrying about visa requirements. As mentioned earlier, visa requirements are the norm rather than the exception.

#### 4.7. Would the removal of visas lead to an increase of tourists' inflow into the country?

Of the respondents to this question, the ZTA believes the removal of visas or upgrading of some countries like China and India to Group B would result in increased tourist inflow into the country. The private tour operators and travel agents as represented by AZTA believe that the removal of visas would increase tourist inflows only if other economic and political fundamentals are addressed. The Immigration Department has no comment on the matter. Of the 39 respondents to questionnaires issued out to tourists, 14(35.9%) felt that the removal of visas to Zimbabwe would result in increased visitor inflow into the country from their respective countries. Most of these respondents were from Group C countries such as China, Nigeria and India. These passport holders are hindered to travel to Zimbabwe mostly because they find it difficult to get visas and they feel that removing visas is the panacea to the problem of decreased visitor inflows into Zimbabwe. However, the majority of respondents, 25 (64.1%) feel that removing visas to Zimbabwe will not result in an increased inflow of visitors to Zimbabwe from their respective countries. The majority of these respondents were from Group B countries that can get visas at port of entry. These people feel that a visa is something to expect in international travel. According to these visitors, to them a visa is the norm rather than the exception. These respondents feel that other fundamental issues affecting the country's tourism industry need to be addressed then the removal of visa restrictions can be brought on as an incentive to attract more visitors.

#### 4.8. Other Reasons that are Hindering Tourism Recovery and Development in Zimbabwe

The imposition of visas to Europeans, Americans and Australians was done in 2001 after the continual political demonization of Zimbabwe by these western powers. The souring of relations between Zimbabwe and the west followed after Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme. Visa restrictions were then imposed on these nationals as a reciprocal measure after the governments of the western countries had imposed visa restrictions on Zimbabwean passport holders. According to the responses given to questionnaires issued out to visitors, the following are the other reasons why there is a marked decline of visitors to Zimbabwe since 2000:

1. Safety fears after the much publicized violence associated with the Land Reform Programme as well as the 2000 and 2002 general elections. Horrifying pictures were published on the Internet,

newspapers and international television channels such as BBC, Sky News and CNN about Zimbabwe on fire.

2. Travel warnings issued by Western governments to their citizens against travelling to Zimbabwe. Travellers are warned to travel at their own risk.
3. Negative publicity – the western media portray Zimbabwe as an unsafe destination, with no rule of law, disregard of private property, undemocratic governance, acute shortage of basic commodities and unreliable support services such as banking, foreign exchange services, accommodation, and communication and transportation
4. Lack of direct air link to major tourist source markets such as Germany, France, USA, Canada and Japan.
5. A limited range of activities to do whilst in the country, for example if one visits the Victoria Falls; one can cover all activities on offer within one day. This means the length of stay is drastically reduced to less than three days

According to this research, if these political and economic fundamentals are addressed, this may lead to an increased inflow of visitors into the country. Visitors from Europe, USA and Australia feel that it is very essential to improve official relations between their governments and Zimbabwe. Tourism is an extension of political relations whereby citizens visit each other for business, leisure and social reasons. Travellers generally prefer travelling to destinations where they feel safe and with good relations with their government. Also travellers want to travel to destinations where they are represented by an embassy so that their rights can be protected. Thus, the improvement in political relations between Zimbabwe and major source markets will see an improved inflow of tourists into Zimbabwe. This can be evidenced by improved relations between Zimbabwe and Asian countries which has resulted in increased inflow of visitors from that region to Zimbabwe from 37 035 in 2006 to 42 245 in 2007; a 14% increase (ZTA Statistics, 2008). This was also enhanced by the establishment of a direct air link between Zimbabwe and Singapore as well as Beijing and Guangzhou.

## **5. Conclusions**

For the traditional markets, the visa regime had no much effect of tourism recovery. It was discovered by the study that the cost of the visa both for the travellers and representative (ZTA, Immigration officials and AZTA) application is fairly priced. It also did not take long for most applicants to get their visas and hence getting a Zimbabwe visa can be described as fairly easy.

For the emerging markets, such as China and India, the visa regime policy was having some negative impact on tourism recovery and development. This market is in Group C of the visa regime policy and the process of getting a visa is difficult for most applicants. ZTA feels that the upgrading of these markets into Group B or A will increase visitor inflows.

ZTA, Immigration officials and AZTA representative feel that for countries in Group C, the Government must put up more embassies and consulates to enable travellers to have easy access to our visa. Travellers must not travel long distances to apply for a visa.

The study also made it clear that visas have come to be accepted as part and parcel of international travel. Visa restrictions were considered as the norm rather than the exception in international travel as travellers always anticipated being required of a visa when visiting foreign spaces. Therefore, it was concluded from all sources of data (travellers, ZTA, AZTA representatives and Immigration officials) that wavering visa restrictions for visitors would have an added advantage in attracting visitors, but this alone could not be the solution to dwindling visitor numbers as the visitors always expected that they needed visas to visit foreign spaces.

According to ZTA and AZTA officials and Immigration Officials, there is need to address some political and logistical problems which are affecting the marketability of this country in order to improve visitor inflows. These problems include perceived safety concerns, negative publicity, difficult travelling logistics and shortages of basic commodities and services. The removal of visas would therefore be an added incentive to visitors to visit the country but not the real problem that could be impacting negatively on efforts to bring more visitors to Zimbabwe.

## **6. Recommendations**

Visa regime policy is continuously changed to reflect the changing political and trade relations between different countries (Slowski, 2005). Therefore, it is being recommended that the tourism industry should make its own presentations to government so that countries with major potential for generating more visitors to Zimbabwe can be upgraded to grades where they can get visas at ports of entry or grades where they are totally exempted from visa requirements.

It is also recommended that passport holders from emerging markets such as China and India should be upgraded from Group C to Group B. This would encourage more visitors from that part of the world. If this cannot be done, it is recommended that the distribution of visas should be enhanced through establishing more embassies or consulates so that visa applicants do not have to travel to far away places to make their applications. This would increase the speed with which visa applications are processed and issued. To avoid operational costs of establishing embassies and consulates abroad, visas can be distributed through agencies such as airlines, tour operators and travel agents.

As the research study revealed, political and logistical problems need to be corrected to ensure successful turnaround efforts for the tourism industry. It is being recommended therefore that diplomatic efforts to resolve the political impasse between Zimbabwe and western governments should be redoubled. More air links should also be established between Harare and major source markets such as London, Paris and Frankfurt in Europe as well as Washington and New York in the USA as they form the major part of Zimbabwe's traditional markets. This will ease travel logistical problems for most visitors to Zimbabwe. This can be done through luring back to Zimbabwe all the airlines that pulled out of these routes.

Clearer signage should be put up at border posts and airports as to where visitors who need visas can get their visas from. Visitors cited problems with identifying which counters to go to when they want to purchase visas. Correct and up to date information must also be provided to visitors as to their visa requirements at any point in time. Many travellers highlighted the lack of correct and up-to-date information on visa requirements as an inconvenience to travellers. This information must be provided through a constantly updated website for the department of immigration. The country's tourism website managed by the ZTA should also provide such information to travellers and travel agents.

The idea of a uni-visa for the region must also be pursued further as this would encourage visa free travel within the region once one gets the SADC visa. This would operate like Western Europe's Schengen visa area in which residents of the region do not need visas to travel within the region whilst visitors to the region only require one visa to get into the region (Andreas and Snyder, 2009). This enhances regional integration and tourism traffic as well as people visits the whole region. With the coming of trans-frontier parks such as The Great Limpopo Trans Frontier Park between Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa, a uni-visa would be the best option for the park to ensure a one stop shop where visas are applied for at one border post.

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## Appendix 1: Zimbabwe visa regime policy document

### Category A

Countries whose nationals do not require visas to visit Zimbabwe

1. Antigua & Barbuda	9. Grenada	18. Malawi	28. Singapore	36. Turk & Caicos Islands
2. Aruba	10. Hong Kong	19. Maldives	29. Solomon Isl.	37. Tuvalu
3. Bahamas	11. Hong Kong China	20. Malta	30. St Kitts	38. Uganda
4. Belize	12. Jamaica	21. Mauritius	31. St Lucia	39. Zambia
5. Botswana	13. Kenya	22. Montserrat	32. St Vincent & the Grenadies	40. Mozambique
6. Cayman	14. Kiribati	23. Namibia	33. Swaziland	
7. Congo (DRC)	15. Leeward Islands	24. Nauru	34. Tanzania	
8. Cyprus	16. Lesotho	25. Barbados	35. Trinidad & Tobago	
	17. Malaysia	27. Samoa Western		

### Category B

Countries whose nationals are granted visas at the port of entry on payment of the requisite visa fees

1. Argentina	11. Denmark	21. Indonesia	31. Monaco	40. Puerto Rico
2. Austria	12. Dominic Rep.	22. Iceland	32. Netherlands	41. Seychelles
3. Australia	13. Egypt	23. Ireland***	33. New Zealand	42. Spain
4. Belgium	14. Finland	24. Israel	34. Norway	43. Switzerland
5. Bermuda	15. France	25. Italy	35. Palau Island	44. U.A.E
6. Brazil	16. Germany	26. Japan	36. Palestine State	45. Uruguay
7. Britain UK***	17. Ghana*	27. S. Korea	37. Papua New Guinea	46. U.S.A
8. Brunei	18. Greece	28. Kuwait	38. Poland	47. Vatican
9. Canada***	19. Indonesia	29.	39. Portugal	48. Virgin Islands
10. Cook Islands	20. Iceland	Leichtentstan		49. Russia Fed.
		30. Luxembourg		

## Category C

Countries whose nationals are required to apply for, and obtain visas prior to traveling to Zimbabwe

1. Chile	25. Georgia	49. Madagascar	73. Principe	97. Turkey
2. China	26. Gibraltar	50. Mali	74. Qatar	98. Turkmenistan
3. Colombia	27. Guam	51. Marshall	75. Reunion	22. Gabon
4. Comoros	28. Guatatemala	Island	76. Romania	23. Gambia
Islands	29. Guinea	52. Mauritania	77. Rwanda	24. Cote d'Ivoire
5. Congo	30. Guinea Bissau	53. Mexico	78. Samoa (America)	99. Ukraine
Brazzaville	31. Guyana	54. Micronesia	79. San Marino	100. Uzbekistan
6. Costa Rica	32. Haiti	55. Moldova	80. Sao Tome	101. Venezuela
7. Conakry	33. Honduras	56. Mongolia	81. Saudi Arabia	102. Vietnam
8. Croatia	34. Hungary	57. Morocco	82. Sierra Leone	103. Yemen Rep.
9. Cuba	35. India	58. Nepal	83. Slovak Republic	104. Yugoslavia
10. Czech Republic	36. Iran	59. N. Caledonia	84. Slovenia	
11. Djibouti Rep.	37. Iraq	60. Myanmar	85. Somalia	
12. El Salvador	38. Jordan	61. Nicaragua	86. South Africa**	
13. Equator	39. Kazakhstan	62. Nie	87. Senegal	
14. Equ. Guinea	40. Korea (DPRK)	63. Niger	88. Sri Lanka	
15. Eritrea	41. Kyrgyzstan	64. Nigeria	89. Sudan	KEY
16. Estonia	42. Laos	65. Norfolk	90. Suriname	* Gratis visa for
17. Ethiopia	43. Latvia	Islands	91. Syria	Ghanaians
18. Eyrom	44. Lebanon	66. Nn. Maiana Isl.	92. Tajikistan	** Gratis visas at
19. French Guiana	45. Liberia	67. Oman	93. Taiwan	port of entry for
20. French	46. Libya	68. Pakistan	94. Thailand	South Africans.
Polynesia	47. Lithuania	69. Panama	95. Togo	Bilateral
21. French W.	48. Macau	70. Paraguay	96. Tunisia	Agreement
Indies		71. Peru		*** Visa fees
		72. Philippines		charged on
				reciprocity basis.