

From Fragmentation to Fluidity: Regional Travel Integration in SADC

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Abstract: *The integration of regional travel within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) offers a unique potential to boost economic growth, cultural interaction, and environmental sustainability. This article investigates the several advantages of regional travel integration, focussing on successful examples from the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). By reviewing case studies of successful travel integration, the article emphasises the need of policy coordination, infrastructure investment, and regional collaboration. Furthermore, it tackles SADC's problems, such as institutional hurdles and security concerns, while highlighting the opportunity for economic growth through increased connection. The report emphasises the necessity for SADC to embrace best practices from other regional blocs, such as implementing a single visa policy and establishing modern border facilities. Finally, this article proposes for a deliberate approach to regional travel integration that not only allows for movement but also supports Southern Africa's unity and prosperity.*

Keywords: Regional Travel Integration, Economic Growth, SADC

I. Introduction

In the heart of Southern Africa, where the sun rises over varied landscapes and cultures, stands the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a light of hope for regional integration and economic development. This community, which includes 16 member states, has long struggled with the issues of fragmentation, with borders frequently representing hurdles rather than bridges. SADC's historical tapestry depicts a path defined by hopes for unification, but plagued by the complexity of political and economic differences. As the winds of globalisation blow throughout the continent, the desire for seamless regional travel integration becomes more urgent than ever, mirroring the visions of a linked and prosperous Southern Africa.

Statistical data highlights the importance of this integration, intra-regional commerce within SADC remains at just 20% of overall trade, in striking contrast to the 60% found in more connected areas such as the European Union (Pretorius et al., 2017). The potential for development is enormous; improving connection might catalyse economic growth by encouraging job creation and lowering poverty, while particular statistics on potential growth rates differ between research and circumstances (Buzdugan, 2013). However, the route to fluidity is plagued with challenges, ranging from bureaucratic red tape to infrastructure deficiencies. Historical attempts at integration, such as the SADC Free Trade Area, have paved the way, but the road is far from over (Moyo & Roux, 2020).

Thus, this article contends that regional travel integration is more than just a logistical requirement; it is a pillar of SADC's economic growth, capable of converting the area into a thriving hub of commerce and collaboration. The moment has come to go beyond fragmentation and embrace a future in which boundaries are transformed into corridors of opportunity and the spirit of collaboration prevails.

II. The Current State of Regional Travel in SADC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is at a key crossroads in its journey towards regional transport integration, which is both hopeful and plagued with obstacles. Existing travel restrictions and infrastructure in the SADC area represent a hodgepodge of policies that frequently impede rather than promote cross-border transit. While the SADC has made progress in liberalising commerce and travel, the reality on the ground is a complicated environment with bureaucratic roadblocks and limited infrastructure. For example, the SADC Free Trade Area was established in 2008 with the goal of improving economic cooperation among member nations; nevertheless, the advantages of such initiatives have not entirely translated into smooth travel experiences for individuals and companies alike (Thow et al. 2015).

One of the most serious barriers to regional travel in SADC is the complex visa policy, which hampers cross-border transit. Many member nations have strict visa rules that discourage intra-regional travel, restricting chances for commerce and tourism. According to a research by Pretorius (2022), just 24% of SADC nations offer visa-free entry to nationals of other member states, in sharp contrast to places such as the European Union, where free movement is a core premise. This restricted environment not only stifles economic progress, but also weakens the spirit of regional integration that SADC seeks to foster.

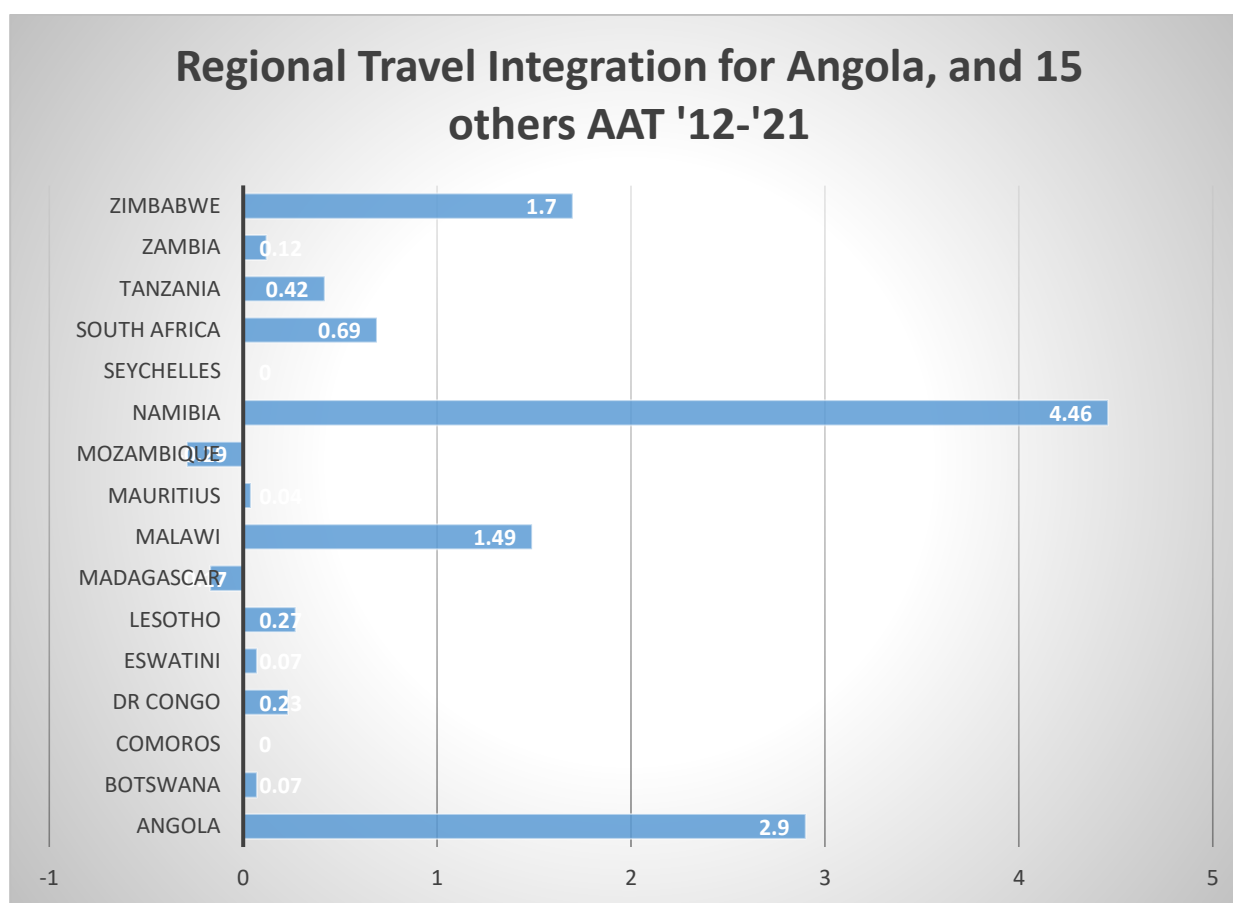
Border restrictions compound the problem, frequently resulting in lengthy wait times and inefficiencies that upset travellers. The absence of standardised customs processes, as well as the presence of non-tariff barriers, cause delays and raise expenses, making

regional travel difficult. According to one research, the average time it takes to cross customs at SADC borders may be more than 10 hours, which has a substantial impact on commerce and tourism. This inefficiency is especially damaging to small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), who rely on timely access to regional markets to succeed.

Another key impediment to successful regional mobility is inadequate transport infrastructure. Many SADC nations face insufficient road networks, limited rail connections, and underdeveloped air transportation infrastructures. According to the African Development Bank, just 30% of the region's roads are paved, making travel between nations difficult and time-consuming (Mutanga, 2023). The lack of efficient transit choices not only impedes people's movement, but also inhibits the flow of commodities, suffocating intra-regional trade.

Statistics provide a grim picture of intra-regional travel and commerce within SADC. Despite the region's potential, intra-regional commerce accounts for about 20% of overall trade, in stark contrast to other areas such as East Asia, where intra-regional trade reaches 50% (Pretorius et al., 2017). This underperformance might be linked to the aforementioned impediments, which together create an atmosphere that discourages travel and commerce. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded these obstacles, resulting in a considerable reduction in regional travel and trade activity, with estimates indicating a 30% drop in intra-SADC commerce during the pandemic's height (Konstantinus et al., 2019).

Fig.1 Regional Travel Integration for Angola, and 15 others Annual Average Trend '12-'21



SOURCE: (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024)

This analysis looks at the present stage of regional travel integration in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) by comparing member states' performance from 2012 to 2021 using Annual Average Trend (AAT) indicators. The report finds Angola and Namibia as the best-performing nations, with considerable advances in travel integration, while countries such as Madagascar indicate alarming decline. By tying these performance indicators to the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons and each member state's national policy, the research illustrates the link between regional commitments and domestic changes. Using theoretical frameworks like as Neo-Functionalism and Pure Intergovernmentalism, the paper investigates how economic

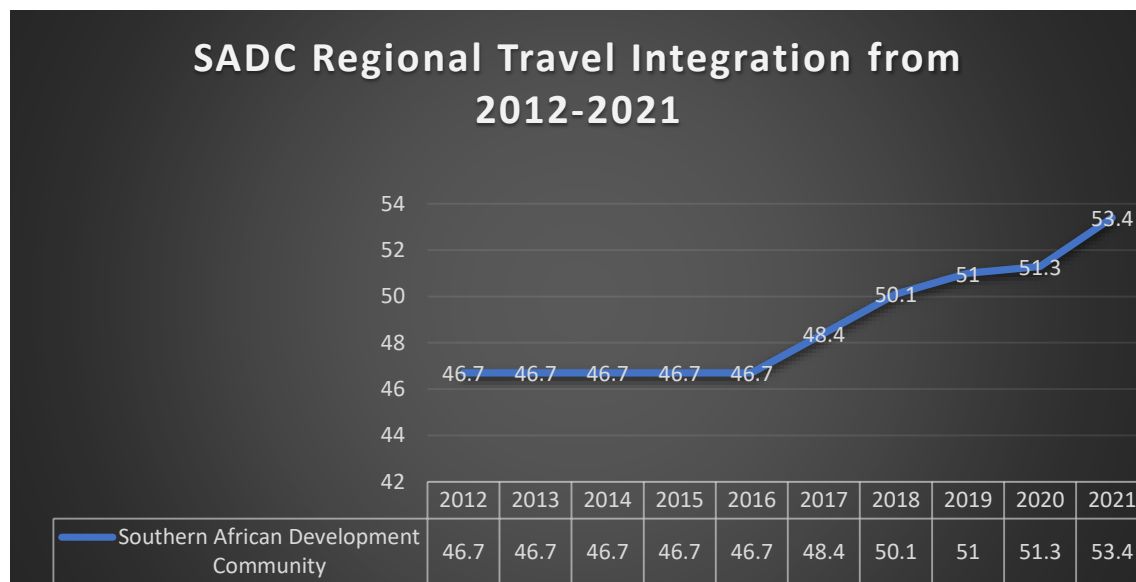
interdependence promotes political changes and the constraints provided by national interests. Finally, the findings show SADC's beneficial influence on regional travel integration, but with much opportunity for improvement in policy execution and infrastructure development.

Analysis of Best and Worst Performing Countries

Angola's AAT score of 2.9 shows significant development in regional travel integration. The government has made progress in revising visa regulations, providing SADC residents better access. The implementation of the "Angola Visa on Arrival" program illustrates this dedication by easing travel for regional inhabitants and encouraging tourism. However, infrastructure difficulties continue, notably in transport networks, which require further investment to meet rising travel demand. Namibia leads the way in regional travel integration, with an exceptional AAT score of 4.46. The government has enacted measures that are closely aligned with the SADC Protocol, such as the introduction of one-stop border stations and simplified customs processes. Namibia's dedication to improving its transport infrastructure has resulted in increased connection with neighbouring nations, promoting economic growth and tourism. Namibia's proactive attitude to regional cooperation has established it as a role model for other SADC member nations.

In contrast, Madagascar's AAT score of -0.17 suggests a decline in travel integration. The country has experienced political instability, which has hampered the execution of important reforms. The absence of a consistent national strategy on regional travel has resulted in stringent visa procedures and inadequate infrastructure. Madagascar's reluctance to align its policies with the SADC Protocol has hampered its potential to profit from regional integration, emphasising the importance of comprehensive changes to improve connectivity. Botswana, the Comoros, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrate varied degrees of success and obstacles. Botswana's AAT score of 0.07 highlights red flags, highlighting the need for policy changes to improve travel integration. The Comoros, with a score of 0, exhibits no change, indicating stagnation in its travel policies. DR Congo's score of 0.23 shows a decreasing improvement, requiring further measures to harmonise with regional guidelines.

Fig. 2 SADC Regional Travel Integration Trend '12-'21



SOURCE: (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024)

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has achieved great progress in regional travel integration, as indicated by the progressive rise of the travel integration index from 46.7 in 2012 to 53.4 in 2021. This increased trend shows a larger commitment to improving member states' connection and mobility, which is critical for economic development and regional collaboration. The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) encapsulates the region's integration initiatives, laying forth a framework for economic integration, infrastructural development, and trade facilitation.

Recent efforts in the SADC area show a continuous emphasis on enhancing transport infrastructure and services, which are critical for enabling regional travel. For example, the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan emphasises the need of an

efficient goods transport system in tackling the issues faced by an over-reliance on road transport and the related negative externalities (Konstantinus et al., 2019). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the necessity of resilient transport networks, with travel limitations having a considerable impact on regional mobility and economic activity (Yingi, 2022). Travel has increased during the recovery period, with international travel expected to reach 80% of pre-pandemic levels by early 2023, showing a strong return in tourism and cross-border travel.

Furthermore, the SADC has taken aggressive steps to overcome hurdles to travel integration, including as non-tariff barriers and poor infrastructure. The formation of the SADC Free Trade Area in 2008 was intended to improve trade and economic integration, which is directly related to travel facilitation (Fadeyi et al., 2014). However, obstacles persist, including as political instability, economic differences among member states, and the need for harmonised policies that facilitate cross-border travel (Mlambo & Mlambo, 2018). Continuous efforts to boost tourism skill development and strengthen the tourist industry are also crucial in creating a favourable climate for travel integration (Rasethuntsa, 2022).

While data from 2012 to 2021 show a favourable trend in SADC travel integration, the current condition of regional travel is influenced by both the constraints and possibilities given by recent events. The commitment to developing infrastructure, removing obstacles, and encouraging economic cooperation is critical for sustaining development and improving the overall travel experience in the SADC area.

Theoretical Frameworks: Neo-Functionalism and Pure Intergovernmentalism

The Neo-Functionalism and Pure Intergovernmentalism perspectives can be used to examine regional travel integration in SADC. Neo-Functionalism holds that early collaboration in economic spheres may lead to deeper political integration. In the case of SADC, if member states participate in economic integration through initiatives such as the SADC Free Trade Area, they are likely to see spillover effects that promote political reforms and improve governance standards. For example, Namibia's proactive travel policy reforms demonstrate how economic interdependence may force political responsibility. On the other hand, Pure Intergovernmentalism emphasises the role of national governments in determining integration processes. This viewpoint emphasises the difficulties SADC has in attaining its integration aims, since member states frequently choose national interests above common aspirations. Madagascar's political instability exemplifies how national politics may thwart regional integration aspirations.

The findings support the notion that SADC has a favourable influence on regional travel integration in its member nations. While nations like Angola and Namibia make great progress via successful reforms and adherence to regional conventions, others, such as Madagascar, face the obstacles of political instability and national interests. The interaction of Neo-Functionalism and Pure Intergovernmentalism offers a complete picture of the forces at work in SADC's integration efforts. As SADC navigates these issues, the possibility for improved regional travel integration remains a critical component of its overall economic and social development objectives.

III. Benefits of Regional Travel Integration

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is on the verge of a transformational period, with regional travel integration promising to unlock a slew of benefits that go far beyond convenience. This integration is more than a logistical need; it is a driver of economic progress, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and political stability. SADC's ability to evolve as a cohesive entity with boundaries that serve as gates rather than obstacles is a goal worth pursuing.

Economic Benefits

One of the most prominent advantages of regional travel integration is its economic benefits. Enhanced travel promotes trade, tourism, and investment, resulting in a strong economic environment. For example, the World Bank believes that lowering travel obstacles within SADC may greatly boost intra-regional commerce, however particular statistics may differ between studies Chen & Petrick (2014). This increase in commerce will not only strengthen local economies but also offer job opportunities, lowering unemployment rates throughout member nations. Furthermore, the tourist industry stands to benefit greatly from regional transport integration. Tourists would be able to explore numerous SADC nations more easily, increasing their vacation experiences while also helping to local businesses. In 2019, tourism accounted for a sizable portion of the region's GDP, demonstrating its potential as a big economic driver.

Investment possibilities abound in an integrated travel system. As firms get better access to regional markets, foreign direct investment (FDI) is expected to rise. A research by the African Development Bank shows that regions with integrated travel rules attract more FDI than those without (Dimitrovski & Seočanac, 2018). This infusion of capital can result in infrastructural improvements, technological advancements, and increased economic resilience.

Social Benefits

The social fabric of SADC is woven with a variety of cultures, languages, and customs. Regional travel integration promotes cultural interaction by allowing residents to explore neighbouring nations' rich history. This cultural immersion fosters understanding and tolerance among many ethnic groups, so contributing to social cohesiveness. Educational exchanges become increasingly viable since students and professionals may travel freely for academic purposes. The potential for collaborative research and information exchange is enormous, since institutions across boundaries may work together to address similar concerns (Massad et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the social advantages encompass health and well-being. Increased travel options can enhance public health outcomes by allowing residents to access better healthcare facilities in neighbouring nations. For example, cross-border health efforts can be formed to battle illnesses that impact numerous countries, such as malaria and HIV/AIDS (Woodcock et al. 2013). By pooling resources and knowledge, SADC can improve its collective health security.

Environmental Benefits

In an era when climate change is a major danger, regional travel integration may also provide environmental benefits. SADC may lower its carbon footprint by supporting sustainable modes of mobility, like as public transit and cycling. Rojas-Rueda et al. discovered that replacing automobile trips with cycling might result in considerable health advantages, including lower air pollution (Klößner, 2013). Promoting active transportation not only benefits the environment, but it also improves public health by encouraging physical exercise. Furthermore, integrated travel systems can aid in the creation of environmentally sustainable transportation networks. By prioritising low-carbon travel choices, SADC may link its travel regulations with global environmental objectives. Implementing effective public transport systems may dramatically reduce dependency on private automobiles, resulting in fewer greenhouse gas emissions and cleaner air (Batista et al., 2023).

Political Benefits

The political environment of SADC is frequently marked by instability and violence. However, regional travel integration has the potential to increase political collaboration and stability. SADC may increase communication and collaboration on key problems such as security, commerce, and the environment by improving member nations' connection. Travel fairs and cultural exchanges may be used as venues for diplomatic engagement, allowing leaders to create ties and resolve disputes via conversation rather than confrontation (Maizlish et al. 2017).

Furthermore, a uniform travel policy can help SADC's standing on the world stage. When member nations exhibit a united front, they may negotiate better trade accords and attract international alliances. SADC's collective voice may strengthen its influence in regional and global forums, ensuring that its citizens' interests are represented (Wang et al., 2021).

IV. Key Components of Regional Travel Integration

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is set for a dramatic leap towards regional transport integration, which is dependent on many essential components. These components, which range from infrastructure development to legislative changes, technology breakthroughs, and regional collaboration, serve as the foundation for a comprehensive travel framework that may boost economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. By tackling these important areas, SADC can pave the path for a future in which borders are doorways to opportunity rather than barriers.

Infrastructure Development

At the heart of regional travel integration is the need for strong infrastructure development. Transportation systems, such as roads, railroads, and airports, must be integrated and efficient to allow for smooth cross-border travel. The SADC area now has enormous infrastructure deficiencies; for example, just 30% of the region's roads are paved, greatly limiting mobility and trade (Udechukwu, 2023). Investment in transport infrastructure is more than just a logistical problem; it is also an economic requirement. Improved connection may shorten travel times, cut transportation costs, and boost trade efficiency.

Border facilities also need to be significantly upgraded to accommodate rising passenger numbers. Modernising customs and immigration procedures may speed up border crossings, reduce wait times, and improve the entire travel experience. In some places, one-stop border checkpoints have proven beneficial, allowing travellers to perform all essential formalities in a single spot. For example, the East African Community successfully constructed such infrastructure, leading in shorter crossing times and higher trade volumes (Sardan et al., 2017). By using comparable ideas, SADC may create a more integrated travel environment that promotes movement and economic cooperation.

Policy Reforms

The policy changes required to allow regional travel integration are as significant. The present visa regimes in SADC nations frequently function as impediments to movement, with several member states implementing rigorous visa requirements that restrict

cross-border travel. A change towards more liberal visa rules, such as visa-free entry for people of SADC nations, might greatly improve intra-regional mobility. For example, the implementation of a regional visa, similar to the Schengen visa in Europe, might make travel easier for both tourists and business travellers, promoting increased economic contact (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Customs processes must also be improved to allow for more efficient trade and travel. Harmonising customs laws among member states can eliminate bureaucratic delays and increase efficiency. Electronic customs systems, which allow for real-time processing of products and travellers, have proven effective in a variety of situations and might serve as a model for SADC (Fardhiyanti and Wee, 2022). By simplifying these processes, SADC can improve the climate for regional travel and trade.

Technological Innovations

In today's increasingly digital environment, technical advancements are critical to improving regional transport integration. The use of digital payment systems can make transactions for traveller's easier, making cross-border commerce more accessible. Mobile payment platforms, which have grown in popularity in many African nations, can promote frictionless financial transactions, promoting trade and tourism (Altrichter & Gamsjäger, 2017).

Furthermore, innovations in travel documents, such as biometric passports and digital identity verification systems, can improve security while speeding up the travel process. Countries that have used such systems report considerable savings in border processing times, resulting in a more efficient travel experience. For example, biometric technologies at airports have improved passenger flow, resulting in faster boarding and less congestion (Jiang et al., 2022). By embracing these technological advancements, SADC can modernise its travel infrastructure and improve travellers' overall experiences.

Regional Cooperation and Institutional Frameworks

Finally, regional collaboration and solid institutional frameworks are critical to the effective implementation of travel integration programs. Collaboration among SADC member states can help to establish a unified vision for regional travel by aligning policies and practices to accomplish similar objectives. The formation of a regional travel integration committee, made up of members from each member state, might improve conversation and cooperation on travel-related issues (Banalieva et al., 2014).

Furthermore, utilising existing regional organisations, such as the SADC Secretariat, might improve the efficacy of integration initiatives. By offering a venue for information sharing and best practices, these institutions may assist member states in learning from one another and implementing effective travel integration initiatives. For example, the SADC Secretariat might organise seminars and training sessions on best practices in border management and customs processes, allowing member states to improve their skills (Pagès and Egidio, 2020).

V. Challenges and Opportunities

As the Southern African Development Community (SADC) begins on its road towards regional transport integration, it faces a slew of problems that must be solved in order for the effort to fully realise its promise. Overcoming institutional and physical barriers is critical, as they impede the flow of people and products across borders. However, these issues provide considerable opportunity for economic growth, social development, and increased security. By deliberately addressing these concerns, SADC may alter its travel scene to one that promotes collaboration and development.

Overcoming Institutional and Infrastructural Barriers

The institutional and infrastructural hurdles to regional travel integration are well established. Many SADC member nations have outmoded policies that make travel and trade difficult. For example, the lack of standardised customs processes frequently results in delays at border crossings, irritating both travellers and traders. While detailed data on typical wait times at SADC crossings is not easily accessible, studies from other countries show that border delays have a substantial influence on trade efficiency and passenger pleasure. To overcome these impediments, SADC must prioritise infrastructure modernisation and institutional framework simplification.

Investment in transport infrastructure is critical. Improved roads, railroads, and airports may make travel easier, while new border facilities can improve the efficiency of customs and immigration procedures. The implementation of one-stop border checkpoints, as seen in the East African Community, might serve as a model for SADC, lowering wait times and encouraging economic cooperation.

Harnessing Regional Travel for Economic Growth

The potential for economic gain from regional travel integration is enormous. SADC can increase commerce and tourism, two important components of its economy, by improving connectivity among member nations. Intra-regional commerce now accounts

for only 20% of overall trade within SADC, although this percentage might be greatly enhanced with greater travel facilitation. For example, the implementation of a regional visa system might make travel easier for tourists and business travellers, drawing more visitors and investment to the region.

Tourism, in particular, represents a profitable prospect for economic expansion. The SADC area is rich in cultural richness and natural beauty, but it is underexplored by both regional and international tourists. SADC can attract more visitors by streamlining visa processes and improving transport networks, producing money and job opportunities. According to a World Travel and Tourism Council research, travel and tourism contributed 8.6% of Africa's GDP in 2019, highlighting the sector's potential as an economic development engine.

Addressing Security Concerns and Illegal Activities

While the potential for regional travel integration appear good, security issues and criminal activity present substantial difficulties. The increase of transnational crime, like as human trafficking and smuggling, needs a coordinated response from SADC member nations. These hazards can be mitigated by strengthening border security measures and improving coordination among law enforcement authorities. Security is an important aspect of the tourism business; the level of safety at a tourist location has a direct impact on perceptions and future travel behaviour.

Furthermore, tackling illicit tourist operations is critical to long-term development success. The tourist industry may unintentionally contribute to environmental deterioration and societal problems, such as illicit logging and wildlife trafficking. By enforcing rigorous laws and encouraging responsible tourist practices, SADC can ensure that the advantages of travel integration do not come at the price of its natural and cultural assets.

VI. Success Stories and Best Practices

As the Southern African Development Community (SADC) works towards regional transport integration, it may learn from successful case studies and best practices used by other regional blocs. The European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) teach vital lessons on how successful regional travel integration may boost economic growth, cultural exchange, and cooperation among member countries. By reviewing these success stories, SADC may discover techniques that are appropriate for its own environment and goals.

Case Studies of Effective Regional Travel Integration

The European Union is a model of regional integration, notably through its Schengen Area, which allows for free movement of persons between member states without internal border inspections. This program not only helped tourism, but it also considerably increased regional trade. According to the European Commission, the Schengen Area provides around €1.1 trillion to the EU economy each year, highlighting the significant economic benefit of frictionless travel (Isoda et al., 2017). The freedom of mobility between member nations has developed a sense of oneness, boosting cross-border collaboration and cultural interchange.

Similarly, ASEAN has made significant progress towards regional travel integration through programs such as the ASEAN Free Visa policy. This policy allows residents of ASEAN member states to freely travel within the region, boosting tourism and strengthening economic relations. In 2019, ASEAN had over 130 million intra-regional tourist arrivals, demonstrating the success of its travel integration initiatives (Kjellberg, 2020). The success of these efforts emphasises the necessity of reducing obstacles to travel and providing a favourable atmosphere for commercial contact.

Lessons Learned from Other Regional Blocs

The experiences of the EU and ASEAN provide some important lessons for SADC. First, the significance of aligning policies and regulations cannot be emphasised. Both the EU and ASEAN have shown that coordinating visa and customs processes may greatly improve travel efficiency. Adopting a uniform visa policy might let SADC inhabitants and visitors travel more easily, thereby increasing intra-regional commerce and tourism.

Second, investment in infrastructure is critical to effective travel integration. The EU has prioritised the building of transport networks to ensure that member nations are properly linked. Similarly, ASEAN has prioritised regional connection via the ASEAN connection Master Plan, which aims to improve transport infrastructure throughout member nations. SADC must follow suit, investing in transport networks and border infrastructure to improve travel experiences.

SADC's Progress and Future Plans

SADC has made significant progress towards regional travel integration, including efforts such as the SADC Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons, which aims to improve regional mobility. However, there have been obstacles in implementing this

agreement, including differing degrees of commitment among member nations. To expand on this gains, SADC must prioritise the creation of a regional travel framework that suits each member state's specific requirements and circumstances. Looking ahead, SADC may learn from the accomplishments of the EU and ASEAN while adjusting its approach to its own situation. The creation of a SADC Single Visa might be a game changer, streamlining travel for both citizens and visitors. Furthermore, promoting regional collaboration among member states will be critical for overcoming obstacles and guaranteeing the effective implementation of travel integration efforts.

VII. Conclusion

To summarise, the transition from fragmentation to fluidity in regional travel integration within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is both a difficulty and an opportunity. The research has highlighted member states' diverse achievements, with Angola and Namibia leading the way in implementing changes that are consistent with the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons. In contrast, nations such as Madagascar and Botswana have severe obstacles that inhibit their advancement. The interaction of national policies and regional commitments emphasises the importance of coordinated initiatives that prioritise the free movement of people, products, and services. As SADC member nations work through the obstacles of integration, the potential for economic development, cultural interaction, and increased security is enormous. The future possibilities for regional travel integration depend on member states' joint willingness to embrace reform and partnership.

To realise this vision, a call to action is required. SADC member states must commit to enacting policies that make travel easier, invest in infrastructure, and promote regional collaboration. By doing so, they can convert the region into a thriving hub of connectedness and opportunity, eventually improving inhabitants' quality of life and fostering long-term growth.

Recommendations

To improve regional travel integration, SADC member states should implement a set of policy suggestions targeted at increasing collaboration and travel facilitation. First and foremost, a uniform regional visa policy must be implemented. This policy should permit visa-free travel for SADC citizens, therefore encouraging tourist and economic interactions. Countries like Namibia have seen the benefits of such programs, which may boost economic activity and cultural interaction.

Second, member states should prioritise the modernisation of border facilities and transportation infrastructure. Investments in one-stop border checkpoints and upgraded road networks may dramatically shorten travel times while improving the entire travel experience. For example, SADC can learn from the East African Community's effective deployment of one-stop border checkpoints.

An actionable plan for implementing these suggestions should include quarterly progress reviews, stakeholder participation, and the formation of a regional task force committed to monitoring and assisting travel integration projects. SADC can establish a more integrated and affluent area by encouraging member states to collaborate and aligning national policies with regional goals, ultimately achieving its vision of a linked Southern Africa.

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